

Open Data & Privacy Project at German Think Tank stiftung neue verantwortung

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Data-driven innovations are changing our daily life - from media and communications to education and healthcare.

Data technologies are disrupting established industries as well, including transportation, retail commerce, energy and even sports. The same is or will be true for governments. We see an exciting global movement to open up government data to increase transparency, accountability, and innovation; with some governments, including Germany, just beginning to explore its potential.

However, internationally little attention has been paid to the potential risks to privacy arising from data disclosures. In contrast, Open Data supporters have often dismissed privacy concerns - because they are sometimes used as an excuse for locking up data - as a threat to openness. But with fast-moving developments in big data technology and new methods to share and use data, there are new risks to personal privacy, especially in large and combined data sets. Anonymization of personally identifiable information in open data sets is standard practice, but policy-makers must now be aware of the potential for de-anonymization algorithms. And after the shock of the NSA revelations, the benefits of big data as a resource for open government are simultaneously seen as a threat since they could be used for social control.

To ensure the sustainability of Open Government endeavours, we need to find ways to integrate the right to privacy into our policies and practices. We need to anticipate concerns and address them within the openness projects in the public sector. In short, we need to elaborate frameworks to help us balance the Right to Information and the Right to Privacy.

Germany offers a unique gateway for the development of international Open Government and Privacy standards. As a result of German history in the 20th century, a strong commitment to privacy and data protection is a core part of the political culture.

At [stiftung neue verantwortung](#) (SNV), a Berlin based Think Tank focusing on digital policies, we therefore set up the [“Open Data & Privacy” project](#). This cross-sectoral policy project is multi-faceted. It seeks to promote Open Government practice and offers analysis of the potential of data disclosure to improve government services and foster innovation in Germany. But we will also develop new frameworks to incorporate privacy issues in the design of Open Government process. The project also seeks to bring the open data and data privacy communities closer together.

If you are interested in the project, or want to join the discussion, you can contact me ([Julia Manske](#)) at jmanske@stiftung-nv.de