USING OPEN DATA IN ANTI-DISCRIMI-NATION WORK

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Foreword

Which opportunities can open data offer for anti-discrimination work? How can open data be used in civic education? Which challenges arise when using datasets and which skills are needed to move responsibly in the digital arena? These questions were central to a workshop, which took place in Berlin on 12th October 2017, and was organised by ufuq.de. This booklet documents the outcomes of the day and was produced by ufuq.de in collaboration with Open Knowledge Foundation Germany.

The group of experts reflected on how open data could be harnessed as a resource in various areas of anti-discrimination work. People from tech-savvy organisations already using open data in their work were brought together with experts from social and political institutions. Amongst others the panel included the non-profit Open Knowledge Foundation Germany with their project "School of Data Germany," the international peer-to-peer project "IPFS," and a representative of Stadt Moers (city of Moers), a pioneer in the field of open data and transparency at the local level. In discussion with them were representatives from the Berliner Register gegen rassistische und rechtsextreme Vorfälle (Berlin Chronicles Against Racism and Right-Wing Extremism), the Advice Centre of the Anti-Discrimination Office Saxony, I-Päd and Hoaxmap, a project dedicated to uncovering racist fake news. Experts from the University of Münster and the Rosa-Luxemburg Foundation also offered their perspectives to the group. The possibilities and pitfalls of using open data in anti-discrimination work were henceforth discussed.

In Germany, open data is already being heavily used in the economic sector. However, initiatives within civil society still have plenty of potential to use this resource: for example, in order to communicate political issues or to bring social projects into the digital environment. It was the first time that representatives from the open data community had come together with organisations advising victims of racist, gender and disability discrimination, as well as those active in education. We hope that this first exchange of expertise will provide an impetus to further expand the collaboration.

The event was organised by ufuq.de as part of the project "Just and Safer Cities for All" from the European Forum for Urban Security (EFUS). The project, in which ufuq.de was involved as a partner, was funded as part of the Rights, Equality and Citizenship Programme of the European Union.

OPEN DATA AND ACTIVE CITIZENSHIP

The availability of open information is increasingly important for today's knowledge economy and now civil society is also discovering the opportunities digital technology has to offer. In order to make social concerns more public, or to connect communities through new concepts of participation in both analogue and digital ways, digital information is becoming increasingly important. The provision of freely available, open data aims to enhance transparency and participation in the relationship between citizens and the state. But what does the term open data actually mean?

From Closed to Open Data

Texts, music, videos, pictures – in today's world almost all information can be saved digitally and then made available as open data in very diverse areas. Weather and geographic data are popular examples. However, other forms of free digital information can also be offered, for example, on the drinking water quality in a local area or real-time information about public transport. The Open Knowledge Foundation has outlined at which point data is considered open and how to maximise the access to and benefit of digital information:

"Knowledge is open if anyone is free to access, use, modify, and share it – subject, at most, to measures that preserve provenance and openness." [1]

Unrestricted access to data is a prerequisite to being considered open. The fact that anyone is free to modify and distribute data, protects certain societal groups from exclusion and makes it possible for information to be combined in new ways. Legally this is ensured, for example, by Creative Commons (CC) licenses, such as CC-0, CC-BY or CC-BY-SA models. [2] To be transparent about the way the data was collected it must be entirely available in its raw format.

In order for the data to be more easily integrated into software applications, it should be sensibly structured and be both human and machine-readable. Furthermore, the data must be in open format and free of charge to avoid technical dependencies and financial hurdles.

The benefit of projects based on open data is also determined by how current the data is. Timely provision of open, up-to-date data is therefore crucial. Personal data is explicitly excluded from open data.

Why is Open Data Important?

Access to relevant knowledge is a basic requirement when aiming to establish transparency around political decisions. When states make closed data transparent it can become public knowledge. In this way, civil society can strengthen its public control, demand accountability from political decision-makers and ultimately promote democratic processes. There is opportunity to actively shape society and participate in public debates. Open data, thus, serves as a tool to make the relationship between citizens and state institutions more transparent and participative.

How is Open Data Used?

Civil society organisations and activists can use open data for their social purposes in various ways. Practically, the information can serve as a basis for argumentation for progress reports or for strategic organisational decisions. One way that open data can help in campaign work is by communicating complex relationships in a more transparent and differentiated way.

The project "Wo unsere Kinder lernen" ("Where Our Children Learn") schulsanierung.tursics.de analyses the need for redevelopment of schools in the district of Berlin-Lichtenberg. The individual cases are graphically presented on a map. In this way, Berlin's financing problems regarding school policy are made transparent and parents can find out about the condition of the school buildings in their district.

The Bundestag's plenary minutes from the past term of office can be found on offenesparlament.de. This enables citizens to see which topics had been discussed and how often ideas had been expressed by their member of parliament. Additionally, socially relevant debates can be researched, such as same-sex marriage or the Volkswagen emissions scandal.

In order to make particulate pollution more measurable, luftdaten.info details instructions on how to build a particulate matter sensor to measure the air quality of one's environment. The locally collected data is then compiled and visualised on an online map in real-time. Through the active participation of many, this citizen science project creates a critical mass that exposes the problem of air pollution to the public.

1 Further information on the topic of openness and information: http://opendefinition.org/od/2.1/en
2 More detailed information about alternative licensing models can be found here: www.irights.info/artikel/im-lizenzbaumarkt-creative-commons-as-alternative-model/6866

Where Can I Find Open Data?

Local, state, and federal administrations provide open data on online portals: for example, the city of Hamburg (transparenzportal Hamburg, www.transparenz.hamburg.de) the federal state North Rhine-Westphalia (www.open.nrw) or at the national level, GovData.de. Open data regarding EU member states can be found at Europeandataportal.eu. Data regarding EU institutions can be accessed on the EU Open Data Portal (www.data.europa.eu).

OPEN DATA IN LOCAL POLITICAL DECISION-MAKING

Municipalities are important places for decision-making processes and for participation. Open data on issues such as rental prices, noise pollution or criminal offences reveals local developments and allows them to be analysed, whilst also providing a foundation for public discussion and transparency in local political decisions.

Municipal authorities usually have extensive records, including legal reports, development plans and statistical surveys in urban areas. These datasets may have been compiled through their own initiative or because it was requested by a higher authority.

Critics of the use of open data point to a lack of control in defining the interpretation of statistics and emphasise the danger of data being exploited in political debate.

The city of Moers in North Rhine-Westphalia is one of many municipalities that consciously chooses to extensively publicise local data. The aim is to achieve more transparency and greater citizen involvement in topics, which impact their everyday lives. Only the availability of information makes it possible to critique governmental figures in a sound and factual manner. Public discussions and controversies regarding the interpretation of statistics and the resulting political consequences are expressly wanted by the city. These controversies form the foundation for an evidence-based debate and ultimately allow people to identify more with local political decisions. From this perspective it is advantageous for such debates to be founded on freely accessible data, as factual arguments gain more weight.

Recommendations

– Open data promotes the informed participation of civil society in political decision-making processes.

– Transparent discussions and the availability of data on how decisions are made, strengthen the identification and recognition of local political decisions.

– Like any other information, open data and statistics must also be checked and reflected upon, since value-neutrality cannot automatically be assumed.

Open Data City of Moers (www.moers.de/de/rathaus/offene-daten-moers)

In May 2017, the city of Moers was named as a model municipality of Open Government. The city has a tradition of public participation and a transparent approach to local data. Furthermore, the city involves itself in various educational projects where local statistics are used, for example, hack days with young people. The datasets, which are documented on the website offenesdatenportal.de, range from information on e-bike charging stations and library lending statistics to data regarding the noise pollution of individual streets. The information plays an important role in local political discussions and serves as a transparent basis for political decisions. The impetus to use open data stemmed from the city administration and was seen as a means of enabling greater involvement of citizens.

OPEN DATA IN ANTI-DISCRIMINATION WORK

The central roles of anti-discrimination work are: to make discrimination visible and to create a public sphere. This involves presenting individual cases of discrimination or assault anonymously, but in particular, revealing the structural discrimination behind the individual experience.

Importantly: Personal details are fundamentally not open data!

Information on incidents of discrimination provides the groundwork needed to evaluate political principles – such as accessibility, gender equality, intercultural opening – and their implementation in societal practice. For social and political organisations that oppose different forms of discrimination, making discrimination public is an important means of identifying social grievances and formulating political demands. Data makes it easier to visualise discrimination and its structural background.

More Than an Isolated Case

Joschua Legewie published a quantitative study in the American Journal of Sociology 2016, which evaluated the results of 3.9 million police controls. He determined that the number of violent police checks on the Black community substantially rose after violent incidents between African-Americans and police (by 16% and 13% respectively in the two days following the occurrences). A similar rise in police violence was not recorded following violent incidents between white people and police. This correlation could only be proven after evaluation of a larger number of cases.

The campaign, "Frag das Jobcenter" ("Ask the job centre"), was launched to counter discrimination against job seekers by job centres. Through the platform FragdenStaat, online inquiries can be submitted to authorities in accordance with the Freedom of Information Act (IfG). The campaign requested the internal directives of respective job centres nationwide, as protocol differs between municipalities. These directives are rarely publicised, yet contain important information for job seekers. When a jobseeker goes to an interview, the cost of this journey may be reimbursed depending on the method of transport used. The internal instructions include these details or, for example, information about when sanctions can be enforced. When these documents are not made available to the public it makes it harder for a job seeker to exercise their rights. The internal directives were released because of requests from members of the public so that they could, in turn, better demand their rights. Another example of the use of open data in anti-discrimination work is Wheelmap Wheelmap.org. Here, open data on wheelchair accessible places is collected in order to make discrimination more visible and show where change is needed.

The collection and documentation of discrimination can often be combined with practical advice and support for those affected. Counselling centres offer affected persons the opportunity to anonymously document their experiences of discrimination and make the wider public aware of the problem. At the same time, the centres can also identify support structures and suggest individual ways of dealing with these issues.

Both quantitative and qualitative documentations of open data could be useful in anti-discrimination work. Yet specially compiled civil society collections of open data do not necessarily claim to be representative and complete. Rather, the focus here is much more on raising awareness and empowering those affected. This often also includes the conscious decision to document subjective depictions that are not necessarily validated by other sources. In this way, reporting discrimination in itself becomes an act of self-empowerment by exposing the experience and making it visible.

For the development of political demands, a combination of both qualitative case reports and quantitative documentation could prove useful in order to demonstrate just how often these 'individual cases' that are described occur.

The direct involvement of affected persons in the collection and documentation of cases of discrimination facilitates a more detailed description and evaluation of the problem. For example, even discussions around the question of what exactly constitutes a case, or the contextual information required, are important implications that can feed into policy demands and the development of options for action.

Against this backdrop, the Berlin Chronicles are deliberately run by civil society organisations that record the reports in personal encounters. The organisations are characterised by direct access to those potentially affected. This connection to an organisation can also safeguard against reprisals if discriminatory people or institutions are named in the report.

Das Register zur Erfassung rechtsextremer und diskriminierender Vorfälle in Berlin / Berlin Chronicles Against Racism and Right-Wing Extremism) (www.berliner-register.de)

The Berlin Chronicles offers those affected by discriminatory incidents the possibility to report their experiences and document them on a website. The aim is to demonstrate the prevalence of similar experiences and to show the need for action. The Chronicles' publications also provide a basis of data to underpin resulting political demands. Reporting the incident takes place exclusively in person in the Advice Centres operated by independent organisations, which participate in the register. As independent organisations, counselling centres are easily accessible making it less challenging for those affected to take advantage of the offer. The talk can also be combined with personal counselling, where concrete legal and practical assistance can be provided.

Advice Centre of the Anti-Discrimination Office Saxony (www.adb-sachsen.de)

The Advice Centre of the Anti-Discrimination Office Saxony offers advice to people who have suffered discrimination on the basis of their appearance, ethnicity, religion or belief, gender, sexual identity, age or disability, or any combination of forms of discrimination (multiple discrimination). As an independent institution, the office is expressly on the side of those concerned and advises them on how to assert their rights. They aim to raise awareness of various forms of discrimination at school, work or in the housing market, in addition to strengthening a "culture of non-discrimination in everyday life, through recognition and knowledge." With this goal, the Anti-Discrimination Office Saxony offers the possibility of reporting discrimination anonymously. The cases are documented and serve as a foundation to demonstrate the everyday nature of discrimination.

OPEN DATA
IN EDUCATION

People's experiences within their own environment play a central role in civic education. They facilitate discussions about politics and society and offer scope for concrete courses of action in everyday life. Open data regarding development and structures in one's local environment provide numerous starting points for educational work and can be utilised in a diverse range of subjects. Using and engaging with open data encourages participation and engagement and strengthens identity and representation at the local level.

At the same time, further skills are needed so that young people and adults can navigate digital space in a responsible way and be able to actively use data. The keyword *data-literacy* refers to the ability to handle data in a self-determined manner and to use it in a targeted way for specific purposes. This includes the ability to effectively research data online, analyse it and to visualise data in an informative way and embed it into larger contexts.

Statistics may also raise important questions in terms of data collection, which could be used to develop skills for dealing critically with sources – comparable to those needed when dealing with historical or political texts.

Data and information can never be truly neutral, which can be illustrated by controversies surrounding school statistics. One example concerns publicly available school statistics about "Tur-

kish students" in North Rhine-Westphalia. Whether the students have Turkish migration backgrounds or Turkish citizenship is not clear. Such a statistic also raises the question as to why data on "Turkish" students is compiled and not, for example, French or Polish students. In order to critically use sources of information, interests, definitions, and the categorisation of people in relation to particular data collections must all be questioned. Who determines which information is selected and collected? According to which criteria is this carried out? What is the goal? Which effects could these criteria have?

Information regarding discrimination and structural inequality, as listed for instance in the report of the Federal Anti-Discrimination Agency, opens up further opportunities in the classroom. This information gives students the chance to reflect on their own everyday experiences and to develop courses of action to deal with such matters. In this way, anonymous and aggregated information (such as the datasets of the Chronicles or hoaxmap. org website, which documents rumours about refugees and plots their geographical distribution) make it possible to see the significance of discrimination in everyday life and also raise questions as to causes and backgrounds of this discrimination.

Ideally this is combined with students' independent research into datasets provided by authorities or civil society organisations. In lessons it could also be considered which further statistics would be required to research certain phenomena in one's own environment. As well as class discussions regarding the freedom of information, questions for the city's administration or anti-discrimination office could be formulated. The topic-sheet Freedom of Information in Class produced by the Federal Agency for Civic Education illustrates concrete training formats for teaching. [3]

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School of Data Germany (www.datenschule.de)

The School of Data Germany is a data and technology education programme targeted at non-profit organisations. It encourages activists, those politically involved, and project teams to discover the opportunities of digitalisation themselves, and to shape public debate with evidence-based arguments through digital projects. Workshops and training programmes convey the necessary skills to use data in a targeted manner for social concerns.

[3] Themenblätter im Unterricht/Nr.117: Informationsfreiheit: www.bpb.de/system/.../5598_tb117_informationsfreiheit_171113_online.pdf

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Demokratielabore (www.demokratielabore.de)

The Demokratielabore is a nationwide project aimed at enhancing youth self-efficacy through the use of technology. The projects wants to harness the basic idea of the award-winning programme "Jugend hackt" – where young people are empowered to use their technical skills for democracy – and open it up to a wider audience.

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"News From the Rumour Mill" HOAXmap (HOAXmap.org)

HOAXmap is an initiative aimed at documenting and exposing rumours concerning refugees. On the website, the hearsay is pinpointed on a map and briefly summarised. The map also contains information counteracting the falsehoods. Over the past two years, almost 500 rumours have been documented and refuted. This documentation gives insight into key issues of racism and right-wing populism and raises awareness of the effect of rumours on social media and their function in ideologies of inequality.

5. Further reading

Resources

Beigang, S./Fetz, K./Kalkum, D./Otto, M. (2017): *Diskriminierungserfahrungen in Deutschland. Ergebnisse einer Repräsentativ- und einer Betroffenen-befragung.* Berlin: Antidiskriminierungsstelle des Bundes.
www.antidiskriminierungsstelle.de

Bundeszentrale für politische Bildung, Themenblätter im Unterricht/Nr.117: *Informationsfreiheit.* Bonn.
www.bpb.de/system/.../5598_tb117_informationsfreiheit_171113_online.pdf

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Herzog D. (2015): *Data Literacy a User's Guide.* Sage Publishing. London.

I-Päd (2015): *Intersektionale Pädagogik. Handreichung für Sozialarbeiter_innen, Erzieher_innen, Lehrkräfte und die, dies noch werden wollen.* Berlin.
www.i-paed-berlin.de/de/Downloads/#broschre

Semsrott, A. (2016). *Informationsfreiheit – Mehr Transparenz für mehr Demokratie.* Arbeitspapier 23 der Otto Brenner Stiftung. Frankfurt am Main.
www.otto-brenner-shop.de/uploads/tx_mplightshop/AP23_iFG_Semsrott.pdf

The Engine Room (2016). *Handbook of the modern development specialist.*
www.responsibledata.io/resources/handbook/assets/pdf/responsible-data-handbook.pdf

The Sunlight Foundation:
Open Data Policy Guidelines.
www.sunlightfoundation.com/opendataguidelines

Projects

Antidiskriminierungs-Büro Sachsen
www.adb-sachsen.de

Berliner Register
www.berliner-register.de

BildungsBausteine – Materialien für die rassismuskritische Bildungsarbeit
www.bildungsbausteine.org

Broken lifts org
www.brokenlifts.org

Datenschule
www.datenschule.de

FragdenStaat – Portal für Informationsfreiheit und Transparenz
www.fragdenstaat.de

Gladt e.V.
www.gladt.de

Hoaxmap.org
www.hoaxmap.org

I-Päd
www.i-paed-berlin.de

Luftdaten.info –
Luftdaten selber messen
www.luftdaten.info

Lobbyfacts.eu – Daten zum Lobbyismus in EU Institutionen
www.lobbyfacts.eu

München-Chronik. Auflistung rechter und diskriminierender Vorfälle und Aktivitäten
www.muenchen-chronik.de

OffenerHaushalt
www.offenerhaushalt.de

OffenesParlament.de
www.offenesparlament.de

Reach Out Berlin
www.reachoutberlin.de

Wo unsere Kinder lernen
www.schulsanierung.tursics.de

Wheelmap.org –
Rollstuhlgerechte Orte finden
https://wheelmap.org