

Corporate data can help drive sustainable city initiatives

Summary: *Private sector organizations can help accelerate development of solutions to existing urban city woes by opening up non-personal information for public use, but policies need to be in place to prevent abuse of data, observer notes.*

By Liao Yun Qing | June 5, 2012 -- 09:41 GMT (17:41 SGT)

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SINGAPORE--Private sector organizations can help drive sustainable city projects by making their non-personal data open for public use in addition to those provided by government bodies. However, there needs to be policies set to protect customers' privacy.

Jason Aspes, founding partner of sustainability and innovations company Newton Circus, said non-personal, open data is a "good thing". "It can improve our cities, provide innovative uses and potential economic opportunities for both our cities and the citizens who [get to] have access to the data," he added.

For such data, he called for a system to recognize the value of the information and make it available to third-party developers and service providers to help improve cities to become "more efficient and sustainable places to call as home".

Aspes did point out key issues with using data provided by private sector organizations will be in [data and privacy protection \(http://www.zdnetasia.com/spore-sets-data-protection-law-for-2012-62206733.htm\)](http://www.zdnetasia.com/spore-sets-data-protection-law-for-2012-62206733.htm) . Thus, there needs to be policies to safeguard the use of such information, he urged.

Hacking for good

Newton Circus is organizing a series of events, called UP Singapore to encourage citizens to come together and solve urban issues. One such activity is the Urban Prototyping hackathon where participants will make use of public and previously unavailable government and corporate data to develop solutions to improve the city-state's urban environment, Aspes revealed during the briefing held here on Tuesday.

Among the organizations opening up their data repositories for the hackathon are [local telco Singapore Telecommunications \(http://www.zdnetasia.com/singtel-expands-4g-service-lowers-data-cap-62305009.htm\)](http://www.zdnetasia.com/singtel-expands-4g-service-lowers-data-cap-62305009.htm) (SingTel), contactless payment service provider [EZ-Link \(http://www.zdnetasia.com/ez-link-to-debut-online-top-up-service-39404032.htm\)](http://www.zdnetasia.com/ez-link-to-debut-online-top-up-service-39404032.htm) , public transport operator SMRT, and public sector agencies such as Ministry of Health and the [Land Transport Authority \(http://www.zdnetasia.com/intelligentsingapore/gps-road-pricing-mobile-apps-to-drive-lta-vision-62302838.htm\)](http://www.zdnetasia.com/intelligentsingapore/gps-road-pricing-mobile-apps-to-drive-lta-vision-62302838.htm) , he added.

Wong Yu Hsiang, chief operating officer at SingTel Digital Media, explained that the data provided by the operator will be "anonymized" and is not personally identifiable. He added that hackers can make use of its mobile devices data to see how crowds move around.

The hackathon will be held on Jun. 23 and Jun. 24, and shortlisted participants will then go on to showcase their creation at the 2012 World Cities Summit to be held here from Jul. 1 to Jul. 4. The winning entry will stand to receive up to S\$250,000 (US\$193,841) in funding to turn the prototype into reality.

Asked why the company chose to hold the event here, Aspes said Singapore is highly wired up and "collects more data than other cities".



About Liau Yun Qing

The only journalist in the team without a Western name, Yun Qing hails from the mountainous Malaysian state, Sabah. She currently covers the hardware and networking beats, as well as everything else that falls into her lap, at ZDNet Asia.

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