

Open Data and the City

City Discourse

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First, who am I?

iFEBD

Mediamatic

Yes, a developer...

FILM1





THE UNIVERSITY OF
CHICAGO

but also a political scientist

LSE

THE LONDON SCHOOL
OF ECONOMICS AND
POLITICAL SCIENCE ■

and a **citizen**

Where's My Bike?



- ✦ Didn't like the data offered in the competition, so found my own.
- ✦ An app to find your bike when it goes missing (and report it to the police).
- ✦ Since software is eating the world, even owning a bike can now involve it.
- ✦ Talked to AFAC, but they weren't helpful.

Today I will show you:

- what open data is
- why it matters
- how you can get involved

To do this I will cover the
following topics:

- I. What data is
- II. The world today
- III. The politics of open data
- IV. Open data in the Netherlands
- V. Open data and you

I. What data is

data | 'datə, 'dātə|

noun [treated as sing. or pl.]

facts and statistics collected together for reference or analysis. See also **datum**.

- Computing the quantities, characters, or symbols on which operations are performed by a computer, being stored and transmitted in the form of electrical signals and recorded on magnetic, optical, or mechanical recording media.
- Philosophy things known or assumed as facts, making the basis of reasoning or calculation.

Ok, so data means **facts**.

Facts are always nice, but
so what.

What is
urban data,
city data,
government data?

Things like:

- ✦ local voting records
- ✦ school locations
- ✦ city office opening hours
- ✦ liquor licenses
- ✦ garbage collection schedules
- ✦ traffic information
- ✦ public transit schedules

Information about
everyday life

This data doesn't necessarily need to come from governments...

but (city) governments provide
many of the services in question.

What data do you want to know
about the block you live on?

So what is **open** data?

“Open Data: het op
eenduidige wijze, publiekelijk
en elektronische beschikbaar
maken van data.”

- Hack de Overheid

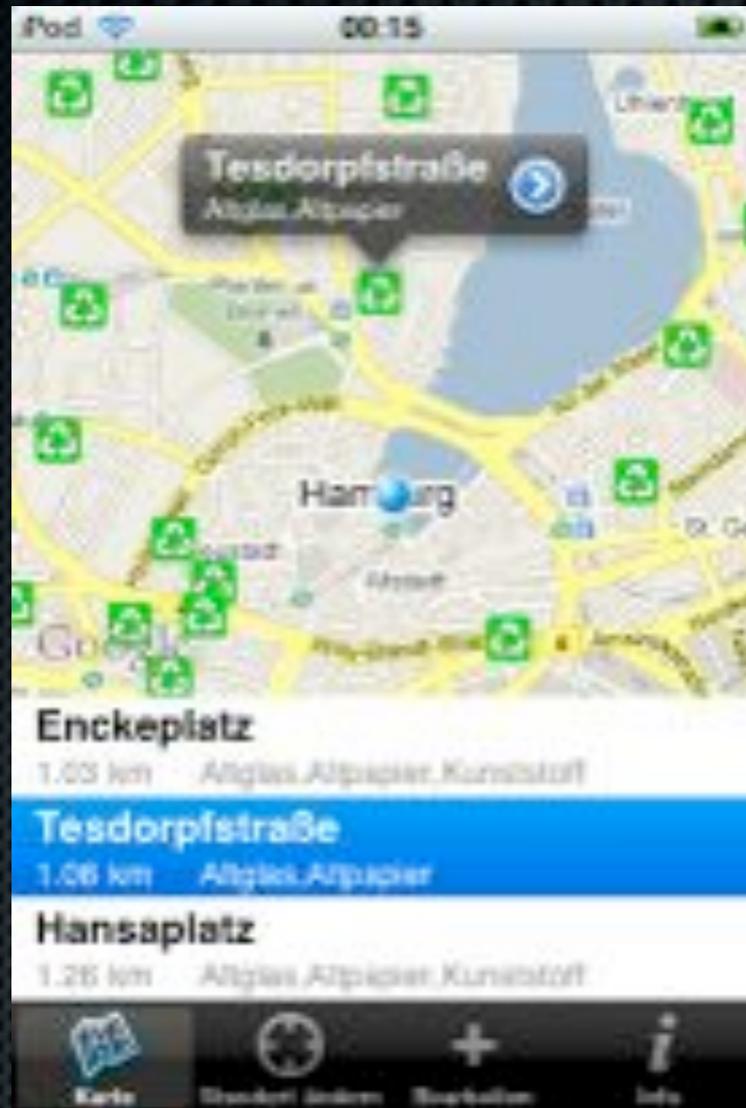
<http://www.hackdeoverheid.nl/wat-is-opendata/>

It's data that is publicly and easily available.

That's it. But that's **a lot.**

Can there be open data
without the government?

openkvvk



US and UK lead the way

- ✦ data.dc.gov
- ✦ data.sfgov.org
- ✦ data.gov
- ✦ data.gov.uk
- ✦ data.london.gov.uk



II. The world today

- ✦ Urbanization
- ✦ Distrust of institutions
- ✦ “Software eats the world”

Massive urbanization

aka everyone wants to be an an architect or urban planner now

THE ENDLESS CITY

The World Urbanization Prospects 2007 by the United Nations Department of Economic and Social Affairs, Population Division

121 **10%** **4%**

10,045 **22.7%**

14% **50%** **65%**

35.6% **56%**

19m **16m²**

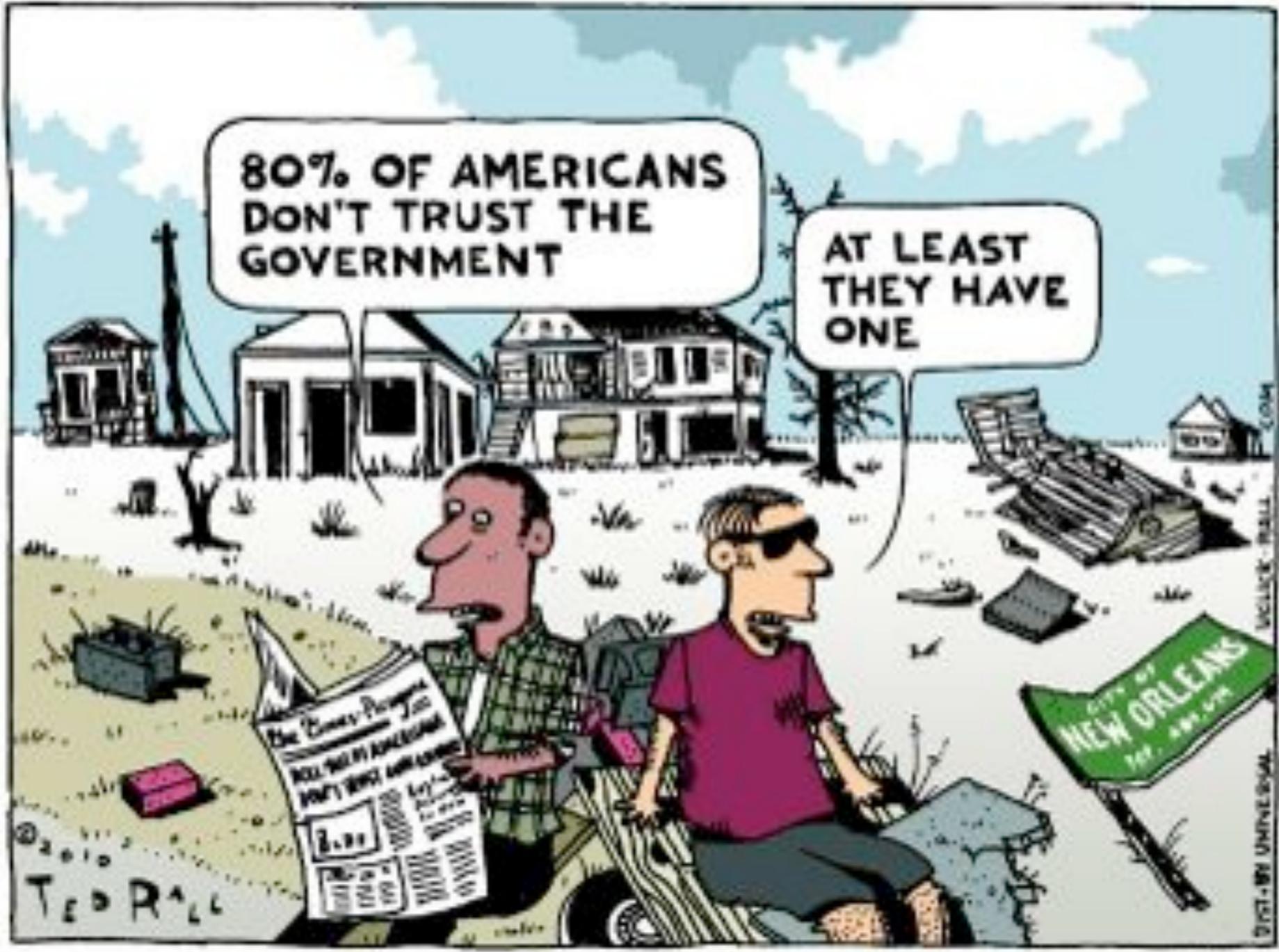
47.5x **2.5x**

24.1% **55%**

\$1.3m **25x**

PHAIDON

33% 35% 91%



80% OF AMERICANS
DON'T TRUST THE
GOVERNMENT

AT LEAST
THEY HAVE
ONE

The Census Bureau
Will Help Americans
Don't Trust Americans

CITY OF
NEW ORLEANS

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TED RALL

MICKLEBULL.COM
DUST BY UNIVERSAL

4-23-10

We increasingly expect
transparency

Heck, they even charge you
to read the law!



Open States
openstates.org

People don't care about rules or organizational structures, they care about **solutions and experiences.**

But why is this an open data
issue?

Because “software eats the world”

What does that mean?

- ✦ Basically, software is in everything and so everything is a software issue.
- ✦ Coined by Marc Andreessen (the creator of Netscape).
- ✦ Really should be talking about “the internet eats the world” now.



BITS OF FREEDOM
VERDEDIGT DIGITALE BURGERRECHTEN

If institutions get software and data wrong, people demand change.



Hack de Overheid

III. The politics of open data

Open data is **political**



VS



From different places to the
same conclusion

The new civic engagement

From letters to the editor and council meetings to hashtags and online petitions.

PROGRAM
OR BE
PROGRAMMED
TEN COMMANDS
FOR A DIGITAL AGE



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DOUGLAS RUSHKOFF

JAMES C. SCOTT

SEEING
LIKE A
STATE

*How Certain Schemes
to Improve the Human
Condition Have Failed*

Today the mastery of
information allows us to
assert our autonomy.

Software is the easiest (and perhaps most meaningful) way to make interventions in the city.

And data is the black gold
that software runs on.

The city is the level of government closest to people and has the most impact on people's daily lives.

IV. Open data in the Netherlands

Open data is happening

Significant developments

- ✦ data.overheid.nl
- ✦ appsforamsterdam.nl
- ✦ www.centrum.amsterdam.nl/opendata

But data is still hard to get

- ✦ KvK -> OpenKvK
- ✦ Postcodes -> ???
- ✦ Transit data -> ???

With open data popular in the Netherlands, why are there problems?

There is an instrumental
approach to open data.

“Wij de data, u de apps”
- DIW, Amsterdam

aka “We gave them data, why haven’t they given us good apps?”

Garbage in, garbage out.

Apps for Amsterdam

- ✦ Decent amount of data
- ✦ But most of it lame
- ✦ Basically no documentation

However

- ✦ lots of submissions (great!)
- ✦ the contest encouraged a lot of government organizations to open up data
- ✦ snowballed into future app contests (Apps for Noord Holland, Apps for the Netherlands)

V. Open data and you

Raw data needs to be translated into something the average citizen can use.

We need stories to make
sense of the city.

Become knowledgeable so
the average citizen doesn't
have to.

That's where you come in.

What should you make?

Apps and services are nice,
but even charts and
visualizations are useful.

How to start

First, find an issue that can be illuminated or solved by the application of data.

Learning to program isn't a
bad idea.

Baring that, help
programmers make well-
designed, easy to use
services.

Don't be afraid to start small

- ✦ Can you download a data file with some sort of locations and manually add them to a Google Map that you share with others?
- ✦ What about passing a feed through IFTTT or Pipes and then output the results onto a webpage?

Thank you

Any questions?

One more thing...

I will be your technical advisor in May.

I'm happy to answer any questions.

You can email me at
peter@bubblefoundry.com.