



Seminar abstract

Innovating with data in Scotland; multi-sector and multi-disciplinary approaches to support social equality, wellbeing and participation

Building open, trustworthy data ecosystems to address social, environmental and economic challenges

Diana Szasz, Programme Lead at the [Open Data Institute](#)

The speech addressed the key opportunities and challenges of innovating with data for societal wellbeing.

Focus and argument

The Open Data Institute's (ODI) vision is to make data work for everyone. Diana Szasz leads a [programme of work](#) at the ODI that is aimed at building open, trustworthy data ecosystems and stimulating innovation to address social, environmental and economic goals such as those set out in the UN's 2030 Development Agenda.

Key points

We are seeing a vast amount of opportunities for creating social value from data enabled by new kinds of data being available, and being made accessible more widely, combined with new kinds of analysis techniques. At the same time, there are more and more positive examples of multi stakeholder efforts to better address some of our grand challenges such as the climate crisis, economic recovery from the pandemic or health inequalities through better sharing and using of data.

It is, however, hard to build open and trustworthy data ecosystems. There are technical difficulties on both the data provider and data user side of the ecosystem, such as how to publish data, license it, make it fit for purpose and link it to other data sets on the data provider side or how to discover and consume data on the data user side. The ODI has worked on addressing these barriers, for instance, through its work with Sport England on the [Open Active initiative](#) to tackle physical inactivity, where it used a range of techniques such as data standard development, training and skills provision, developing guidance to make the data sharing process smoother and running innovation prizes to stimulate data re-use.

There are also challenges related to how people feel about the use of data and how much they trust that data will be used responsibly, resulting in tangible benefits. These also have solutions in the form of mechanisms to protect privacy and security and strong governance models.

The challenge, however, that Diana proposed as something requiring more collaboration across the public, private and third sectors was around the barriers that relate to understanding and demonstrating the value of data sharing. There are still far too few companies who see the value of data sharing as

having two sides to it: on one hand, fulfilling a desire to contribute to solving common challenges such as public health, the climate emergency, access to education and skills, sustainable cities and communities, online misinformation, and financial inclusion; on the other hand, benefitting companies through the development of new products, services and business models.

Diana suggested that these multiple challenges call for [integrated solutions](#) that are developed from an ecosystem perspective. We need to create the underlying data infrastructure that involves data assets, data standards, organisations responsible for stewarding data and guidance around data sharing and use. We need to improve capability through training around [data literacy](#) skills. We also need to ensure that innovation is targeted towards solving actual challenges that as a society we are trying to address.

To make all of this happen, we need to build trust, engage with people who will be affected by the use of data, and do that work in an ethical way, thinking through all the potential consequences.

Conclusion and areas of future research

Diana concluded by calling on everyone to share positive examples that demonstrate the value of data sharing. This will help build the evidence base of the benefits of more and better data sharing. The ODI has collected case studies both on the opportunities of [solving societal challenges through data](#) as well as [how companies might benefit from data sharing](#) in terms of innovation, network capabilities, and brand positioning. The institute plans to build more of these compelling stories through [its ongoing work](#) to foster high impact collaboration around data.

Keywords

Data ecosystems, data infrastructure, innovation, social value creation, collaboration, trust