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Engaging the challenges, enhancing the relevance

Staying relevant and addressing challenges effectively,
the responsibilities of National Agencies

Honoured guests, dear ladies and gentlemen,

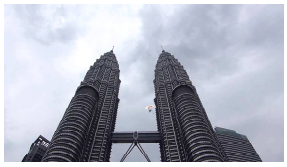
Let me start with a question. Do you know this man? ..... .

If I change perspective (and although you don't see his face) it becomes maybe easier to recognise him.

This is Felix Baumgartner, an Austrian BASE-jumper who was determined to take jumping to the next level. Starting to jump from Buildings and other objects on Earth, he became world news in October 2012. By jumping from a balloon in space at a dazzling height of 39 km. He made it, back to earth. Safe and sound.

This was the next step for Felix. Moving further. To pursue dreams and go literally beyond horizons. Being passionate about flying, he pushed his limits continuously. On the 10th of October 2012, the pinnacle in his jumping career (so far) was achieved: Making history by the highest skydive ever while breaking the speed of sound.

Several years earlier, in 1999, he was here in Kuala Lumpur. As a BASE jumper, he climbed out a window of one of the Petronas towers at 450 metres up in the air. Only equiped with a tiny parachute and a camera he jumps off. Crazy, illegal and dangerous. But also well prepared, confident and concentrated.



In order to be visible in the world of extreme sports, boundaries need to be crossed and limits need to be pushed. To stay relevant. In doing so preparations are key. Physical and mental condition need to be topnotch, but the main condition to address the upcoming challenge effectively is trust.

It is a strange comparison, I agree. But dare to look further. There are a lot of similarities between our national agencies and mr Baumgartner, hence extreme sports. Let's engage the challenge!

Technology moves

By tapping 'Felix Baumgartner Petronas towers' on my Ipad, I get a lot a hits: Articles, videos, photos, just pick. Instantly, technology enables me to get what I am searching for. To get what I want. It is technology that has become an important driver in the development of what is now being called the information society. And it goes fast.

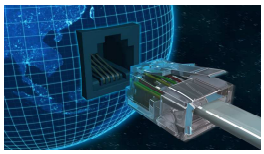
Now we are heading towards the Web 3.0. where systems generate content. It’s the Semantic Web, where 'meaning' is derived from relations between objects. Linking the right and relevant objects from different sources will be key. These sources are for example governmental regulations, scientific research and policies of our own agencies.

By combining these sources, relevant and integrated information is delivered instantly. Promise is that what you need is usually what you get. I can image that especially in the land administration domain, where relationships between subjects, objects, rights and responsibilities are key, this concept of linked data can be promising.

It is technology that delivers us the tools to act quicker, work cheaper and deliver faster. As agencies we have to take our responsibility to participate in these developments. Simply because if we don't, others do.

As Felix Baumgartners' career in basejumping progressed and his challenges became bigger, he didn't skip steps. The same approach applies for us, national agencies. The move from Web 1.0 to Web 3.0 at once is too big. We are exploring, tipping our toes in the Web 3.0 pool, but have to deal with the fact that Web 2.0-technology is currently reigning. Let’s talk about its challenges and opportunities.

Technology connects



In the first place we are connected. Technology enables us to stay in touch 24/7 with everyone, everywhere with everything. The number of connected devices is growing instantly and has since long surpassed its equivalent of the world population. Of impact is not only the fact that most of these devices are spatially enabled, but also that rapidly more imagery and real time location based sensor data will be available.

More data will lead to more data, hence more information. Challenge will be to overcome an overload of information rather than availability of data and information. Knowing what that data means as well as its potential, is key.

Looking at the expertise of our agencies, we like to provide solutions. To society at large, to customers and to users. That requires cooperation *with* these users. Technology enables us to be connected with them. It is interaction that learns us what users expect. It has to fit, it has to meet their objectives. So, we move on from *guessing* what is best *for* the user to *knowing what is best* by working *with* the user.

Connection is one thing; implicitly, I already mentioned a second element of the Web 2.0: its about sharing. Sharing data, information, knowledge, you name it. It is in fact the sharing economy that rewires the way we interact with each other.

Over the past years the sharing economy has matured, moving from a fringe movement into an economic force. New entrepreneurs arise and even ownership is placed in a different context.

Technology shares

Do you know that I share a parentship with my daughter regarding our family-dog? A little lightning bolt, going by name ‘’Blitz’’. He is a very cute dog that sometimes acts like an overcharged battery. He needs action, preferably outdoors, and ok, lets face it, walking the dog requires time, rather difficult when you (or my daughter) are everywhere except where Blitz is. Holidays are worse because he cannot always join us.

Technology enables us to use Apps like ‘’Dogvacay’’ or ‘’Swifto’’. Different to other dogwalking services, Dogvacay and Swifto combine GPS location based information with a mobile app. That allows us to actually track the routes and virtually see where Blitz went. Unfortunately it doesn’t work yet in my hometown, but in case you live in San Francisco or New York, you can follow your dog right from the venue here in Kuala Lumpur. Besides dogwalking, apps for ‘’lending your car’’ or ‘’house-renting’’ are available and used. New entrepreneurs are born and new opportunities arise.

The landscape in which we operate evolves. ‘’Apps’’ and ‘’the crowd’’ have become a part of our daily lives. Also in our professional scope of interest geospatial examples like ‘’Open Street Map’’ and ‘’Google Mapmaker’’ are in place. The crowd is involved. In the domain of Land Administration the value of crowd sourcing is seen as well.

I like to give you an example where we as Kadaster involve the crowd actively, especially hikers and nature-lovers.

We released an App called ‘Border poles’ (Grenspalen). This App refers to locating the exact position of border poles on the border between Belgium and the Netherlands. By making the positions of these poles freely available to the public, it becomes possible for them to follow hiking routes along national borders. In return, their direct feedback on position and condition of the poles, helps us a lot.

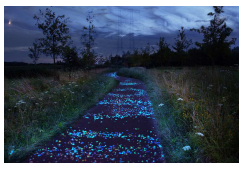
We don’t need to inspect the border poles on a regular basis. That saves costs but also delivers us information at once. Just by a snapshot taken with your smartphone.

I think that the input from the crowd will become a standard element in the working processes of our agencies. And, besides the private citizen, also (semi-)professional users and their communities will be involved in these processes. Moreover, our generated information will be an element in the processes of others.

Technology inspires

Technology enables us to connect and share. It promotes participation and offers opportunities to us. But technology inspires us as well, pushes our creativity and encourages innovation. Sometimes others are inspired; in sharing their sheer enthousiasm, we can be affected as well. We have to explore these sometimes ‘’crazy’’ ideas from entrepreneurs and innovators with an open mind.

An interesting example is Mr Daan Roosegaarde, a Dutch artist and inventor. We invited him during this years’ New Years Conference as our special guest. Not only because he has good ideas that can be applied directly or are beneficial to Kadaster. No, especially because his drive and imagination break through existing patterns. Here is why:



Inspired by Vincent Van Goghs painting "Starry Nights", mr Roosegaarde used a similar approach in illuminating a biking-track in the vicinity of Nuenen, a place in the Netherlands where Van Gogh used to live.

The track is illuminated by numerous tiny stones, that are placed in (a part of) the track itself. These stones, like stars in a nightsky, glow in the dark and are recharged during the day. So, it becomes a *useful* piece of art.

On a larger scale Roosegaarde applies the same principle of technology to a highway.

The lighting is called "glowing lines". No more streetlamps, no more lighting from above. Instead, the ground is the source of light.

A strong idea, combined with the executing skills of a contractor (Heijmans), thinking in possibilities, comes together and has been transformed into an innovation. And ladies and gentlemen, the smart highway has become a reality. Thanks to inspiration, an open mind and the will to work together.

The smart highway used to focus on lighting from above or the cars, not the road itself! We need smart thinkers who put things in motion by using their imagination.

Hovering above all these elements is the key word: *Trust*. We, the people, you and me, need to be sure that we can rely on data and information, that fit the purpose for which it is needed.

Technology shifts: Combining formal and informal data

Cadastre and mapping agencies are generally a source of trustworthy, authoritative data, sometimes already for decades.The use of these data is often defined in laws, rules and regulations as well as in eGovernment infrastructures. And it is this kind of data that serves society independently.

It is technology as driver, generating a new perspective and approach to data and information. ‘’Connect’’, ‘’share’’, ‘’participate’’ and ‘’inspire’’ are all verbs that bring authoritative data and informal data closer to each other. Data provided by private companies and crowdsourced data are increasingly becoming sources for decision making. This type of data can be more up to date and deliver the desired solution from the *users* perspective. Furthermore it can be cheaper or even free of charge.

In the future, formal and informal data will co-exist and will be used in combination. As agencies we need to accommodate this use by discovering arrangements that fit.

Most likely there will be a distinction between fundamental, hence authorative, data which is defined and which is based on certified working processes, and, other data. Authoritative data should be a linking pin between spatial and land administration datasets, collected by the public sector, the crowd and professional communities.

The challenge for national agencies will be to open up and participate in a dialogue with all stakeholders involved in its network. This is not a static exercise, but requires continuous participation.

The information society is based on networks and networking. As already mentioned, the dynamic nature of relationships and expectations, requires a different approach.

Centralisation and decentralisation are coming together

Another element of networks is the apparently dissolving line between centralisation and decentralisation. At first glance both concepts are quite opposite to each other, but in practice we see that the networking society brings them together.

The once rigid lines between centralisation and decentralisation are vanishing. The rules change. A balance between autonomy, standards and regulations, needs to be found. Too much harmonisation will be experienced as a straight jacket, no standardisation will lead to anarchy. The challenge will be to combine elements from both sides of the scale and achieve a balance. A dynamic one.

I believe that there is a place for cadastres and mapping agencies in a networking society. There is a need for a common and sound basis, leaving at the same time space for other stakeholders who operate in the same network. Besides, cadastral and mapping agencies, provide continuity, are able to maintain standards *and* are involved in spatial data infrastructures.

What is unchanged is the fact that cadastres and mapping agencies add value to society. What is changed is the fact that an ongoing dialogue with stakeholders is part of the (societal) process to keep this added value guaranteed.

Technology pushes: identification and privacy

As I mentioned earlier apps can make our lives more convenient. Thanks to apps like ‘’Dogvacay’’ and ‘’Swifto’’, I can be assured during holidays that my dog Blitz got his daily exercise. Simply by tracking the GPS-coordinates I can virtually follow him on his walks and see at what place he stops just a bit longer. I am aware that the guy letting my dog out, is doing his job. Or not. It is the sensored information combined with location that determines if I will pay the fee for the dog service or not.

As I can follow Blitz by technology, the same applies to us, human individuals. Spatial information has entered the domain of personal information and identification.

It is the aspect of privacy that has become an issue for many. Seldom is a single spatial dataset privacy related but when combined it causes uneasiness. A recent debate on data protection rules concerning Google Street View in Germany is an example.

Also at the (european) political level privacy has become an issue. According to the European Commission ‘’personal’’ data is any information relating to an individual, whether it relates to his or her private, professional or public life. In the discussions it has become apparent that also spatial data possibly can be related to a person. This could lead to a situation where spatial information at large is considered as privacy sensitive and that its use is restricted. Currently the implementation has been postponed by the European Council but localisation and identification are certainly on the European Agenda.

If spatial data can be related to an individual, it is important for us agencies and the industry to be involved in these discussions on personal data protection. In the domain of land administration personal data have always been a point of consideration. We can learn from each other in dealing with this issue on data protection.

Conclusion

So we have seen that technology changed, still changes as well as will change the landscape in which we national agencies operate. Staying relevant requires from us national agencies to be actively involved with society. We have to push our limits, be visible in what value we can add and stay in shape.

The value that we can add, is not any longer determined by us. It is society at large and relevant stakeholders that determine the playing field and judge us on our added value. In order to meet expectations we have to talk and be in dialogue. But we also need to listen. To each other, to our users, our customers. What do *they* want, where can we help, how can we support their needs? It is about meeting their expectations and needs.

But staying in shape is our responsibility.

I started today with Felix Baumgartner, remember? Transforming himself from daredevil to aeronautic pioneer. Well equiped, using technology as an enabler to put him up in space. Connected with his groundbase 39 km below, in constant dialogue to make a safe trip back home (to earth). Sharing his experiences with many, involving them in his flight. Inspired by others, being a source of inspiration to others. Visible. With trust in himself and in others to deliver. Staying in shape, to stay relevant.

Staying relevant is important for us here today. It requires from us to stay in shape and deliver what is asked by the user and society at large. Be visible, in constant dialogue (with users and society), innovative and inspiring. Based on *our* knowledge and competences.

We need to be daring as well, although we don't need to go up in space (to stay relevant). Contrary to Baumgartner, our basis lies here…. on earth. Thank you.