Paper Number: 5597

Towards geospatial information partnerships within the Southern African Customs Union

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Geospatial technologies change every day and developing countries continue to strive in adapting them in their geospatial data collection, processing, analysis, regeneration, visualisation, sharing and exchange. These technological advancements have increased the ways in which these processes are executed, for example, GPS enabled smart phones make it possible for anyone to collect spatial data, which in turn increases the pool of those who could be involved in spatial data collection. However, such advancements also bring problems of different data collection methods, data quality issues and unreliability of data. As such, there is a need for a common understanding, streamlining, and adoption of standards in view of accommodating all stakeholders.

The management and use of geospatial data can be anchored on partnerships as building blocks for all its various processes stated above. The defining question is; do developing countries have policies to encourage collection, processing, sharing and collaboration on geospatial data and information services? In an attempt to answer it, this paper aims to suggest that a functional partnership framework on which spatial data can be handled need to be developed and sustained for that purpose by developing countries.

This framework is envisaged to be able to guide issues of adaptability analysis, modelling and design in order to meet a developing country's spatial data requirements. The framework should be able to analyse geospatial data adaptability through partnerships in respect of three major tenets being; underlying institutional behaviour, technical issues, and information policy issues. The paper will then further employ comparative analysis between evident geospatial data partnerships in any of the Southern African Customs Union countries. The emphasis of this paper is handling and coordination of geospatial data and information through functional partnerships.

Key Words: Partnership, geospatial technologies, change, geospatial data, data collection, processing, analysis, visualisation, regeneration, sharing and exchange