# Closing the Inclusion Gap: Prerequisites for Engaging Marginalized Groups in Open Government Data

Gašper Krstulović, University of Ljubljana Faculty of Public Administration, Ljubljana, Slovenia

Sanja Vrbek, University of Ljubljana Faculty of Public Administration, Ljubljana, Slovenia

**Abstract**

The rising prominence of open government data (OGD) signals a shift in contemporary governance toward treating data as a strategic public resource. While OGD initiatives are typically justified by their potential to improve transparency and democratic engagement, evidence suggests that simply publishing datasets rarely produces meaningful societal change. Realizing true public value requires more than just technical availability. It demands that public institutions build the organizational capacity to support demand-driven data release and foster co-creative reuse. Central to this mission is the inclusion of external actors as active partners. However, while existing research explores the capacities needed for general collaboration, there is a significant gap regarding how to engage marginalized groups such as disadvantaged communities, minority populations, persons with disabilities, and individuals with limited digital literacy. This paper addresses this gap by examining how public organizations can actively involve marginalized groups in OGD-driven co-creation. Guided by the research question, *"How can public organizations actively and meaningfully include marginalized groups in opening their data and in subsequent co-creation on this basis?"*, the study adopts a qualitative approach based on a systematic review of academic literature. Through analysis of existing research, the paper identifies ways to ensure equitable inclusion of marginalized groups in data-driven innovation. The article is structured to present a theoretical framework for OGD-driven co-creation, detail the qualitative methodology used, present ways for active and meaningful inclusion of marginalized groups, and conclude with a discussion on the study's contributions, limitations, and future research opportunities. Conducted within the project Open-Ready - An Evidence-Based Model for the Assessment of Organizational Maturity for Open Government Data (J5-50166), this study advances theoretical understanding of OGD-driven co-creation by highlighting the overlooked role of marginalized groups.

**Keywords:** Open Government Data (OGD), co-creation, public value, digital inclusion, data justice