The Development of National Atlas – Malaysia’s Experience

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Why National Atlas?

- A national atlas is a collection of cartographic systematic thematic maps that shows entirely as possible the summary of the spatial relevant data about a nation that generally are not accessible to the public, in a way comparison is possible by the local and international viewer.
The 1st Malaysia’s National Atlas, published 1977
Background

M’sia 1st National Atlas

1977

Approved for latest edition

1994

Started National Atlas Information System (NAIS)

- Approved by JPDSN
- Basis according to Robert, 1986

 Fundamental dataset for Atlas & electronic maps

1999

Limited themed maps
By region (KL& Putrajaya)

2001

The introduction of eMAP

2002

The introduction of WebMAP

By region (KL& Putrajaya)

Enabler: Internet and Web Map Services

Limited themes but interactive multimedia cartographic form maps

Did not include East Malaysia
Difficult to manage
- Specific time intervals
- Limited finance
- Extensive labour resource
National Atlas Technical Committee

- Formed in 2010
- Under the purview of JPDSN spearheaded by JUPEM
- 5 working groups
- 5 structured divisions
- To coordinate, monitor and ease data sharing for new atlas publication
- To ease data gathering

A coherent but a variety of themed maps are desired to produce a national atlas to enable partial or total synthesis

Establishing NATC
National Atlas

- 10 themes
- 49 sub themes
- Suit to national requirement (Block & Versloot, 1993)
- complemented with map, descriptive information, statistical graphics & infographics
Process Flow

- Development of National Atlas Database
- National Atlas Design
- Publishing
A sample of the National Heritage Sites Sub-Theme under the History Theme of the National Atlas.
A sample of the Rivers Sub-theme under the Physical Theme of the National Atlas
A sample of the Petroleum and Natural Gas Sub-Theme under the Natural Resources Theme of the National Atlas.
A sample of the Youth Population Sub-theme under the Socioeconomic Theme within the National Atlas.
Issues

- Various source of data
- Physical Separation of West and East Malaysia
- Time constraint for design
- No formal research group

Recommendation

- Metadata
  - Consider appropriate map scale and map purpose
  - Optimum time: 3 years but must be current (including validation)
  - Establish research group
**Issues**

- Heterogeneous Data Quality
- Lack of cooperation
- Language
- Unavoidable outdated information

**Recommendation**

- Pilot Study by expert
- Instil dedication and commitment
- Bilingual publication
- Fast changing info not to be included in atlas
Future Works & Conclusion

- Digital national atlas is available but not interactive
- Familiarity and simplicity are key (Aditya & Kraak, 2006; Fowler, 2005)
- Consideration for novice to specialist user
- Advantage: outdated maps / info can be replaced

- National atlas is cultural ambassador
- Spoken by most of the world population as 1st, 2nd and 3rd language
- Dissemination of popularised but authoritative scientific information about the geography of Malaysia from a national perspective can be achieved to international audience