

Open Data NEXT: a strategy for social & economic value from Open Data

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Please note: this is a summary of a paper currently available in Dutch only. If needed a full paper in English can be provided.

Focus on social value and business cases for reuse by governments

Introduction

The Dutch ministry of internal affairs is committed to the Open Government initiative. During 2011 and the first half of 2012 the focus of the Dutch open data team was to stimulate national and local government organisations to open their data. To track progress, an open data registry based on CKAN has been set up with references to open data sets from Dutch government organisations. Although more than 600 open datasets were already published in the registry by various governments in this period, it became clear that we needed other strategies to make data sets available that would provide actual social and economical value.

In the second half of 2012 we launched two new initiatives. The first was to initiate a Dutch knowledge network to share stories, cases and models that show how to get value from open data. The second initiative, called Open Data NEXT, was to focus on the actual problems in Dutch society that could benefit from open data.

Open Data NEXT: two social areas that benefit from open data

The focus of Open Data NEXT is on two present-day problems in the Netherlands. First is depopulation in the province of Groningen, which leads to all kinds of social issues. Second is disadvantaged neighborhoods where all kinds social issues are rising for citizens. Open Data NEXT helps local governments in the Groningen region, and in 4 cities to make use of open data as part of their strategy to handle the social issues they are facing. We work together with teams in Groningen and the 4 cities to solve actual problems. Following this strategy, Open Data NEXT gets insight into the need for open data sets and can bring governments and organisations involved together. Thus making more open data sets available that have actual social and economical value.

Collecting social issues

We will collect social issues through organising citizen talks, thus we collect issues directly from society. These issues are presented on our Open Data portal data.overheid.nl together with the

most relevant data. This combination of issue + data will be an inspiration for developers to work on the best solutions for urgent problems.

Focus on short term benefits from open data

We realised that we need to make the value of open data manifest to more governments in the Netherlands than the organisations involved in the Open Data NEXT social themes. To tackle social issues there is most likely a need for data from all co-operating chains of different government organisations.

We assume that for most of the organisations that need to provide data, the social issues that Open data NEXT wants to address, are distant from their daily business. To get governments to open their most relevant data for social issues, we need to make clear that there is not only a social value to gain. We need to make clear that there is also a short term economical value for each individual government to gain.

To achieve this, we developed a strategy in Open Data Next project that focuses on the business cases for government-to-government re-use of open data. If we convince individual governments of the short term profit that can be gained by opening their data for their own use or for use of other governments, we can at the same time profit from a continuous and long term use of their open data. A short term continuing gain for organisation from providing better organised open data for public use, will also provide a long term advantage.

Use of Linked Data to achieve gain from open data for governments

One of projects that generates direct gain for individual governments based on open data, is the Dutch “Linked Data” project. The project is focussed on making information reusable that governments create and publish themselves. Research showed that this publically available information is currently poorly used by governments themselves, while lots of energy and effort is put in collecting and buying information by each individual government to support their goals and processes.

The Linked Data project makes use of a typical reference that is relevant for all government organisations: the Dutch national legislation. The project gratefully uses national standards that are already available to identify and reference information items from legislation and case law. These standards were established in a co-operation between governments and non-governmental organisations like commercial publishers.

The project strategy is to generate linked data based on manual linking to legislation by skilled employees and authors within government organisations. The project develops tools and services that make it easy for an author to “link” a piece of information to a specific piece of legislation while writing or editing. The tools we develop also help users to point to an exact version of legislation considering both validity and view date of the relevant legal item to provide as much “semantic value” as possible. To make this kind of “referencing on a timeline” possible we developed an extensive RDF based model of the Dutch legislation. Another service provided is a “link mirror” service. The link mirror shows which pieces of information are linked to a

certain item on a certain time of Dutch legislation. The mirror can be turned like a “magic ruby cube” to provide other “views” on the links and items that are available. Special care has been taken to store the *provenance* of the acquired link relations to provide as much information on the source of the links that are made available to the user. The Linked Data project leads to publication of more open data sets by governments. These open data sets are rich and better reusable because they are linked to other open data sets.

During the “Open Data on the Web 2013” workshop, we will provide in depth information about this project and about the way it provides value to the open data and open government initiatives. We could provide more technical details about the referencing and identifier standards used, we can demonstrate the tools and services that we are developing for governments or give more information about the project strategy.

URI strategy

The value that Linked Data may bring to open data, also presents another problem. Most of the data that governments publish or may want to publish, do not have a usable “reference” to point or link to. That’s why we support an initiative to establish a Dutch “uri strategy” that can be adapted by governments to make identifiers for their specific information items in open data sets. **More information about the Dutch URI strategy will be available in a separate paper for the workshop.**

Continuation of data.overheid.nl

Meanwhile we continue to manage and develop the register for open data sets. Recently a synchronization of the central register with other local or theme-based open data registers was implemented. This not only leads to more open data sets in the register, but also provides an answer to handle the various specific needs of local or domain specific collections of data sets. In the central register all available data sets are presented, in the synchronized registers more and specific metadata and references can be found for the specific use. The Dutch Geo data register was the first register to be synchronized. The central register on <http://data.overheid.nl> now holds over 5.000 datasets.

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