CivicOS: Governance & Campaigning Data Standard

Be it fair elections project in Morocco, local self-government in Ukraine or water supply organization in Africa, a lot depends upon cooperation and people's ability to see problematic issues, develop solutions, design strategies and act jointly to make sure their rights are protected and voices matter.

Since in many cases – even when thorough surveys of the potential users are done – we can only suggest what strategy and service will really work. It is essential to make iterations of new services and open data projects easier and more efficient, to increase ease of integration of governance services, interoperability of online systems and data description formats.

ZaštoNe?

"Sounds great, we have been thinking of doing some work like that here in the region."

Darko Brkan, "ZastoNe?"

More and more websites embed structured data describing for instance products, people, organizations, places, events, and procedures into their HTML pages using markup formats such as RDFa, Microdata and Microformats. As of November 2015 about 30% of HTML pages are using structured data formats such as RDFa, Microdata, Embedded JSON-LD and Microformat. This is 541 million HTML pages out of the 1.77 billion pages contained in the crawl done by WebDataCommons project.

Although initially used to improve searchability of web-pages, murkup standards can also allow easy and reliable data integration solutions, which will increase transparency of governance at the local and national levels and availability of user-oriented services. Development of the existing commercial data description standards will also help efficient reuse of the governance-related data.

Although there are lots of great initiatives to describe governance-related data, democracy-related data is still poorly structured. With development of safe authorization and other tools done by such projects as DemocracyOS, Code for America and others, civic participation will become more reliable. However, the key bottleneck of the development of information technologies for democracy will be procession of the governance data and procedures due to the lack 1) of the comprehensive democracy data markup standard describing nonviolent action and helping activists of different campaigns and countries coordinate their learning and actions across issue areas and continents; 2) interoperability of the existing and new democracy and transparency services.

Stanford

"We are excited by your project, partnership and all the possibilities that it represents."

Sadaf H. Minapara,
Center on Democracy, Development, and the Rule of Law, Freeman Spogli Institute for International Studies, Stanford University

This project proposes development of XML-based civic governance data description standard and democracy data exchange platform & civic action tool to be voluntarily and internationally used by campaigners, experts, data and service providers in order to make nonviolent actions and governance services more efficient, interoperable and accessible for people.

The proposed standard can be developed as a set of governance-related extensions of the schema.org, which is a collaborative, community activity with a mission to create, maintain, and promote schemas for structured data on the Internet, on web pages, in email messages, and beyond. Even before approved as a part of the schema.org, such extensions can be used for development and integrations of the new services.

Several Ukrainian and Serbian NGOs are partnering in the CivicOS – an effort to develop an open interoperable civic campaigning and governance data description schema to be voluntarily used in online projects and mobile applications, such as national parliaments and local councils, voter education and parallel vote tabulation projects, nonviolent actions and amending existing legal systems. Here is a brief video presentation of the idea and its possible pilot use. Feel free to join.

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