

The 3.network meeting

Introduction

The third Standardization Forum International Network meeting took place in Oslo November 3.-4. 2010. The following countries and people participated:

- Denmark : Adam Arndt
- Japan: Toshihiro Suzuki ,Shuichi Tashir
- Netherlands: Marijke Abrahamse, Joris Gresnigt
- Slovakia: Peter Biro
- Sweden: Anneli Hagdahl
- Norway: Kristian Bergem, Marit Grønntun, Anne Gro Hustoft, Steinar Skagemo

The main scope of the meeting was semantics and metadata. See the attachment “Welcome and Agenda third international network meeting”.

Day 1

Latest news from the different Standardizations boards

Each country presented a brief update on their standardization work:

Japan:

The Japanese board is focusing on smart grid, energy use of data centers, JTC - cloud computing and security. They want to avoid vendor locking by using cloud computing.

The Netherlands:

The Dutch board has been working on the standardization criteria, adoption of standards, the making of a procedure for government provisions and common components. They are also looking into IPv4, IPv6, PKI, SAML, open data and semantics.

Slovakia:

The mandatory standards in Slovakia had been updated in august 2010 with two new areas – a procedural standard how to initiate/run an ICT project and e-forms/e-services basic requirements.

Another significant update was revision of the accessibility standards, which now fully correlate with WCAG 2.0 standard. Smaller revisions touched several other areas.

Sweden:

The Swedish board has recently restarted their work on eGovernment. They are working on a NIF (national interoperability framework) and will soon publish it as a wiki. The main focus of the NIF is technical interoperability. The Swedish board is also making guidelines for social media, IPv6 and accessibility (mapping to WCAG 2.0). For the first time Sweden has an IT-minister, and she has just made a speech about the digital agenda.

Denmark:

The Danish board has organized Edag 3 and a Danish version of “hack the government”. They are focusing on open government data and the use of government data in general. In addition, they are defining guidelines related to the technical aspects of open data, and are looking into the legal issues. Cloud computing and security are also important working areas.

Metadata and data modeling in an interoperability context

Dutch initiative:

The Netherlands, by Marijke Abrahamse, gave a presentation of their activities on metadata and data modeling. See the attachment “Presentation NL – Oslo-meeting 2010”.

Semantic standards are generally domain-standards, they include;

- Message syntax
- Glossaries, taxonomies, ontologies.
- Modelling languages

Suitable standards are included in the “comply or complain list”, but so far they have a few semantic standards on the list.

Cross-domain interoperability: Semantics is business – not technology. When we are dealing with cross-sector issues, problems occur, e.g. because people belonging to different sectors use the same terms, but with different meanings, which of course leads to misunderstandings and communication problems.

If you need interoperability – standardize, but be aware that diversity is real and often inevitable. There are often good reasons for the differences, e.g. the term “child” may have different meaning in different areas, according to different laws and regulations. The Dutch approach to this situation, is using a variant of classical relational information modeling (with no encapsulation and no subtyping hierarchies) which improves the interoperability. The approach is referred to as: contextual specification. In addition a consortium has been established, and the Dutch board is looking forward to the results of this cooperation.

Abrahamse also gave a demo of a modelling case: “resident – designing a contextual-semantic diagram with meta pattern”, see the attachment: “resident_csd”. The model has been used to combine existing models, and it is evident that many of the “types” are reusable. The more cases they analyse, the more they see that it is the same elements/”types” you need when modelling. At present there are 13 base registers, but they don’t fit together, e.g. the element/”type” person in the drivers license register, is not the same as the element/”type” person used in the register for passports. Therefore it seems like a good idea to design a combined model of the base registers.

By using the model, one discovers the differences between elements, and the model may be very detailed. There is also a prototype for mapping from a model to a database. The benefit of these models is that elements may be defined through their relations to other elements. Norway commented that you should make sure that the model is actually tested in implementation. If not, there is a risk that it will end up merely a theoretical exercise.

Norwegian initiative

Steinar Skagemo presented “The Semantics Register for Electronic interaction” – Seres. See the attachment: “Metadata and data modeling for achieving interoperability in Norway”.

Seres is a new approach to managing the information needed to keep track of all data reported by citizens/businesses to different public bodies.

Denmark informed that they map their xml tags to the semantics of the data – making it possible to map between two standards. They do not believe in automatic mapping, unless knowledge of semantics and syntax are used in identifying the relevant relationships.

Both Denmark and The Netherlands mentioned the need to provide the legislators with semantic tools that e.g. will help them find the terms/definitions relevant to their work.

Co-ordination/harmonization of terms

Norway, by Anne Gro Hustoft, presented a Norwegian proposal for a process to coordinate terms and concepts. See the attachment: “How to organize coordination of concepts_NO”.

To ensure a problem oriented approach to the coordination process, the most commonly used terms/concepts will be prioritized. This will hopefully motivate the relevant public bodies to involve themselves in the coordination process. This working method will not give a systematic approach to the terminology work, i.e. we will not cover subject area by subject area, but focus on important single terms/concepts or related groups of terms/concepts.

The Netherlands has used the same kind of approach, and they warned that this might give rise to problems because important relations both within and between subject areas may be overlooked. Denmark agreed with that. They have been successful in their approach; identifying a subject area based on a common understanding of its importance, and then coordinating “all” terms/concepts within this area.

The present status for the work in Norway is:

- The completion of the report and the approval process has been put on hold because work with the national metadata strategy has been prioritized
- The proposal for the working process as such is more or less completed
- The process proposal will be part of the action plan for the national metadata strategy

Semic.eu – “Core Person”, Marijke Abrahamse

Marijke Abrahamse presented the “core person model”, see the attachment: “SEMIC coreperson_questions for the Oslo meeting 2010”. This is a data model for persons, and it is planned as a core element for person-related data exchanges within e-Government. The model is developed by semic.eu together with more than 100 of its users, as a shared development activity.

The lifetime of the model will be decided upon next year, but it will be valid for at least two years, and a plan for its future operations will be developed. The Netherlands remarked that they had

heard statements like “this is never going to work”, and the background for some of this criticism is that people do not recognize their own problems or solutions in the core person model. With the previously presented ‘Dutch approach’ a model is made, combining the 7 SEMIC-use cases concerning the core-person. The model shows the great variety of business-needs concerning a ‘simple’ concept like ‘person’. Denmark claims that the working methodology has failed because Semic did not include people’s real life experiences in the work. The idea as such was a good one, but Semic did not involve the relevant people. Another problematic aspect is that in reality there were two projects merged into one. The main focus has been directed towards the methodology – not the core person. They ought to have split the project in two parts.

Open data – standardization of all data for achieving interoperability

Denmark:

Adam Arndt presented Denmark’s initiative on open data. See the attachment “Open data in Denmark”.

Denmark informed that they regarded the use of data as the user’s responsibility – We provide them with the data “as is”. There will always be cases of incorrect data use – with or without public data. Contact information is published, so people may give feedback. The data made available for the initiative is limited; all person-related data and data that may influence businesses are excluded.

So far they have not run into many problems, nor are they specially concerned about doing so in the future. People who use data in an incorrect way, are themselves responsible, and there’s a legal system to handle this. If however, this turns into a more serious problem, the board will look deeper into it.

Denmark’s approach is to keep close to the developers. The preferred situation is that the developer is part of a formal organization – which makes it possible to relate to a formal partner - not an isolated developer “sitting in a corner”, but a large group.

Denmark’s experience is that you should not put too much effort into improving the open data, the important thing is to make the data available. So far, Denmark does not monitor the business case in a structured way, but they are aware that it would be useful to do so.

Example: BBR – register of buildings:

- Addressdata – can verify addresses
- Can convert from numeric addresses to street addresses

Metadata:

- Title
- Type
- Version
- Published
- Responsible contact for the data
- Description

- Tags (free text)
- System access
- Formats (free text, HTML, pdf etc)
- Owner of data
- Link
- Areas of use

Norway

Steinar Skagemo presented Norway's initiative on open data. See the attachment: "Open data in Norway".

Data.norge.no was announced at <http://data.norge.no/blogg/2010/04/data-norge-no/>

The main focus of the open data initiative is to make public data available for further use (new services) by different commercial parties. To improve working conditions for the users, e.g. make it easier to merge different data sets, there is probably a need for better (more extensive) metadata. The initiative will look into this issue. They also want to build a tool that will give the users access to the database (with the open data).

Related initiatives in Norway:

Open tax lists

- everywhere
- Apps ... <http://skattehus.carr.no/>

OEP

- 17 year as a pilot...
- backfired as someone asked for the contents of the OLD system as Open Data <http://www.oep.no/nettsted/fad>

Lovdata

- acts and regulations are free -- the "authentic texts"
- rulings and other material is pay-walled
- "making all contents free would be subsidising 2000 lawyers"
- Lovdata can be seen as a Public Sector Information Reuse success story

Geodata

- Is freely available, but not without limitations

Other comments

- "Cheap and easy" as first principle
- "Multimash"
- Give the data submitter the choice of telling what are the possible pivot-points in the datasets?

Similar initiatives in other countries?

Dutch approach: Very similar to the Danish

Phase 1:

- no/few requirements imposed on the data
- just started building a portal
- re-uses data.gov.uk
- no "data hunters"
- based solely on personal interest

Next phase:

- more requirements imposed on the data (quality and formats)

Sweden:

Working on a portal:

- pilot next week
- links to services that collect data
- categorized services
- "Basic e-Services"
- aiming towards re-use
- any format may be chosen
- e-Services open to the public
- tax-return form etc

Slovakia:

No activities yet, just the freedom of information act

Japan:

There is a scepticism to open data:

- Very difficult, needs careful consideration about which data to open
- Schools don't disclose the list of class-members to the members of the class

Making a national strategy for metadata – why do it and what should be included?

Norway, by Steinar Skagemo, introduced the session, see the attachment “if the public sector knew what the public sector knows_NO”.

Steinar presented a Google translated version of the current working document.

Sweden:

- PDF/Paper aimed at decision makers
- Wiki for architects
- e-Delegation has been invited to talk for two hours on a meeting with leaders
- will base it on a "Fairytale"
- "individuals" vs "citizens"
- citizens exclude immigrants, tourists ...
- short term: Do what you want
- long term: requirement imposed on formats
- recommendations

Netherlands:

Denmark:

- Strict formats?
- people will not open their data, unless they see the benefits for themselves
- the forms-tool might be an incentive
- what will be the value of open data if it is not done on a large scale

The next network meeting

- Denmark offered to host the next network meeting, and
- Sweden the meeting after that
- Norway is considering hosting an additional international meeting with the scope of discussing the idea of a "public office", but this will not be restricted to current members of these network meetings.