Follow the Stars

Pieter Colpaert
iRail vzw
9000 Ghent, Belgium
pieter@iRail.be

Miel Vander Sande
Ghent University - IBBT
ELIS - Multimedia Lab
9050 Ghent, Belgium
miel.vandersande@ugent.be

Erik Mannens
Ghent University - IBBT
ELIS - Multimedia Lab
9050 Ghent, Belgium
erik.mannens@ugent.be

Rik Van de Walle
Ghent University - IBBT
ELIS - Multimedia Lab
9050 Ghent, Belgium
rik.vandewalle@ugent.be

ABSTRACT

In an ideal world governments open their data using open standards and link them to other datasets online. Today we are not even close to the ideal world. Local governments inform citizens by distributing leaflets or adding information on their website. Although it is hardly machine readable, the first star has been reached.

Is there a way to make life easier for civil servants to follow the next stars[1] of open data? How about the decisions policy makers have to make, can we provide them with an easy solution? And last but not least, what do the app developers need?

Categories and Subject Descriptors

H.4.m [**Information Systems Applications**]: Miscellaneous; H.3.3 [**Information Storage and Retrieval**]: Information Search and Retrieval—*clustering, information filtering, open data*

General Terms

Open Governmental Data, API, Apps for X

1. A BELGIAN VIEW ON OPEN GOVERNMENT DATA

Belgium is slowly moving towards a more transparent and more open knowledge policy. Leaving our complicated political situation aside, it is interesting to see that policy makers are moving forward and are taking decisions towards open government data.

---

[1]Tim Berners-Lee has defined 5 stars which define the quality of your open dataset

Our federal government, for instance, released an open data portal `http://data.gov.be`. It consists of a Drupal website which adds some links towards already existing first-star data sets.

Another example is the local government for the city of Ghent. On their website, `http://gent.be/open`, they added some .xls files to be downloaded.

In both examples the government loses; they have no control on their data whatsoever, they cannot push errata easily, they have lost any kind of feedback possibilities and they cannot gather statistics on usage of the data.

Together with the university of Ghent (MMLab) we have started a project called The DataTank[2] which might fasten the transition towards the semantic web. In meantime it can also be used as a data proxy for application developers who want to gather statistics on their own instance. In short, it tries to be the answer to the difficulties we have noticed with the three groups of people.

2. APPS FOR X

In order to get a broader view on these "difficulties", "questions" or "problems" one might have with opening or using data, we organise events. The events are inspired by Apps For Amsterdam and are named accordingly. At these events both data owners and data users are invited to work on the open data idea. We organised the first event in May of this year: Apps For Ghent. In 2012 we are organising Apps For Leuven and more Apps For X events are coming up. We would like to share our vision on how to push this at your local government.

3. ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

---

[2]`http://thedatatank.com` - an open-source project which can be forked on github