

# Finding the right needle in the standards haystack

Peter Parslow



# What is a 'standard'; what are 'standards'?

“A level of quality or attainment”

- ‘their restaurant offers a high standard of service’

~~Conformance to specification~~

“Something used as a measure”

- ‘the wages are low by today’s standards’

“A tune or song of established popularity”

“A military or ceremonial flag”

“A tree or shrub that grows on an erect stem of full height”

“An upright water or gas pipe”

(all from <http://www.oxforddictionaries.com>)

# Whose specification?

Customer's specification:

food cooked to order / bespoke software

Supplier's specification:

a la carte / COTS 'commercial off the shelf'

if enough people buy the same, can become 'industry standard'

Community specification:

If the community is 'open',

then the (open) specification is an 'open standard'

# What are 'open' standards?

## Process

- Collaborative, consensus based
- Open transparent
- Feedback and ratification

“Fair access - the standard is published, thoroughly documented and publicly available at zero or low cost”

## Market support (or innovative)

“Rights essential to implementation ... are licensed on a royalty free basis”

# What benefits?

## Interoperability

- Reduced development costs
  - Modularisation, due to agreed interfaces
  - Reuse of existing software
- Lower costs to join an existing 'system of systems'
- Lower costs to leave a contract i.e. switch suppliers - "reduced lock in"

Encourage collaborative partnerships

Improve access to information



Through this *Standards policy*, we are seeking to achieve seven policy objectives. To:

- Enable our customers to avoid vendor lock-in, by providing data and services that conform to open standards.
- Be seen to be a thought-leader in the geospatial industry in the UK and internationally and hence provide a strong platform to allow influence in other relevant areas.
- Reduce risk to Ordnance Survey from development of inappropriate standards that we may then have to adopt, or of adopting standards that are then not widely adopted by others.
- Reduce cost by adopting existing standards rather than develop our own standards.
- Increase efficiency by increasing consistency across the business.
- Add to value of Ordnance Survey data and services by providing interoperability with those of other providers.
- Comply with legal obligations and the government's Open Standards Principles<sup>16</sup>.

## Ordnance Survey Geospatial Standards Policy

# UK Government Open Standards Principles

1. We place the needs of our users at the heart of our standards choices
2. Our selected open standards will enable suppliers to compete on a level playing field
3. Our standards choices support flexibility and change
4. We adopt open standards that support sustainable cost
5. Our decisions on standards selection are well informed
6. We select open standards using fair and transparent processes
7. We are fair and transparent in the specification and implementation of open standards



# When not to use open standards

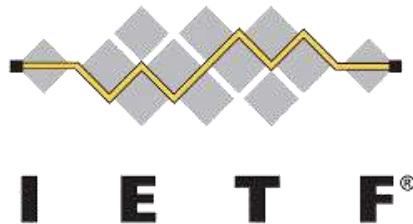
1. If you already have all the software

... that will ever be used

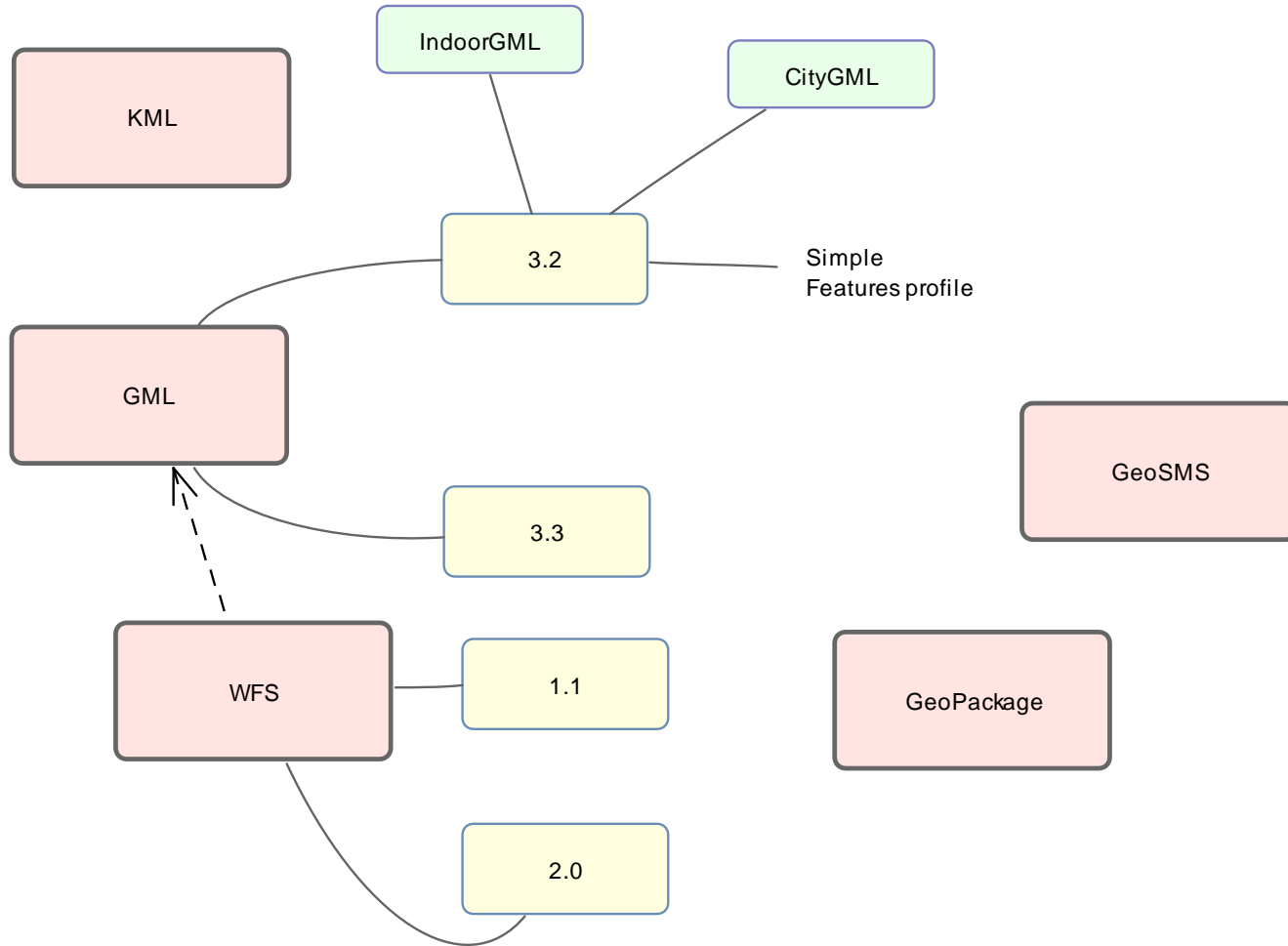
2. If your problem is unique

... not even similar to anyone else's

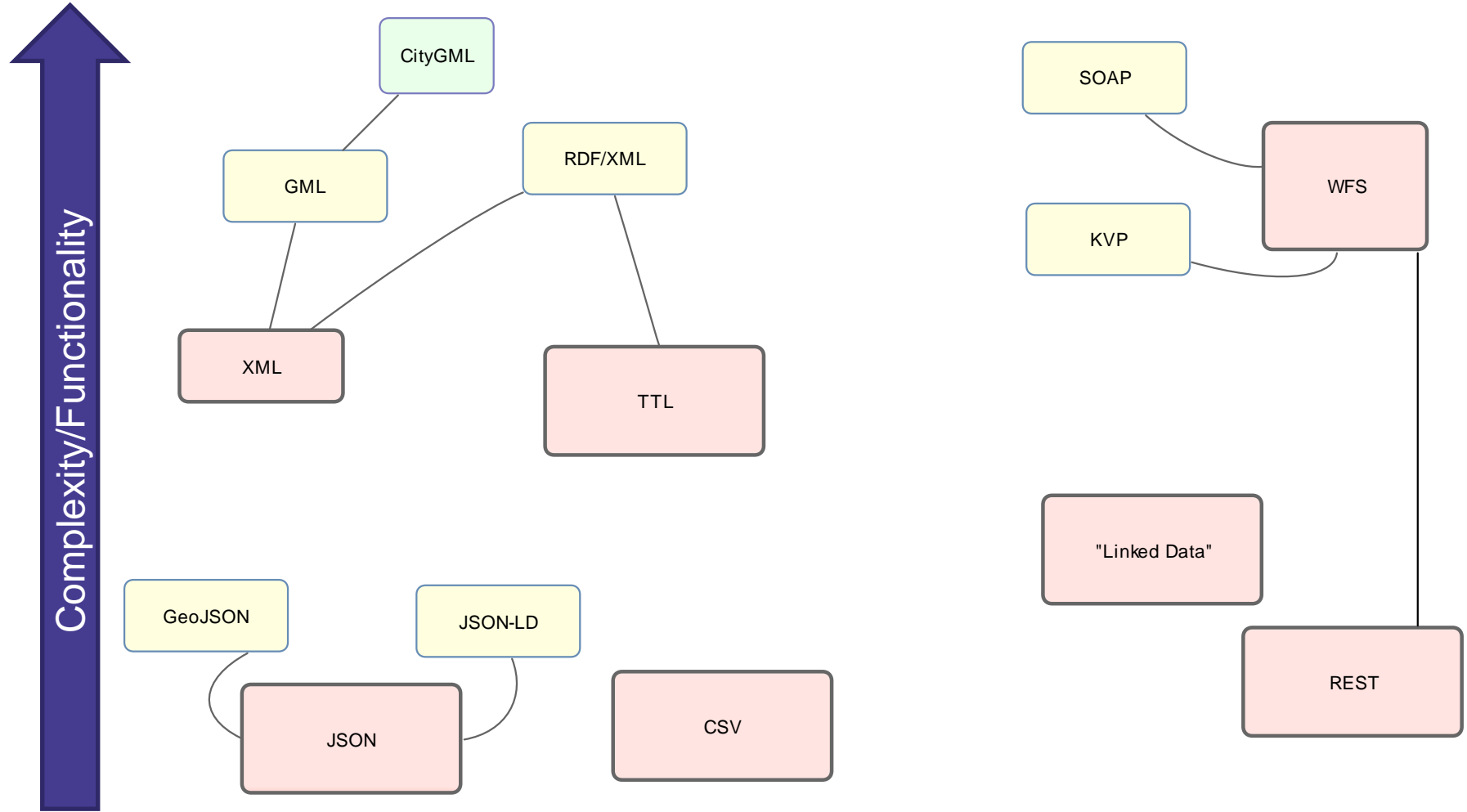
But there are so many open standards!



# Sometimes even from the same standards body



# Light weight vs 'heavy weight'



# So, how to choose?

Talk together

- With your users
- In your domain
  - INSPIRE
  - OGC Domain working groups
  - IHO S-100 work
  - ....

Find out what has worked for others

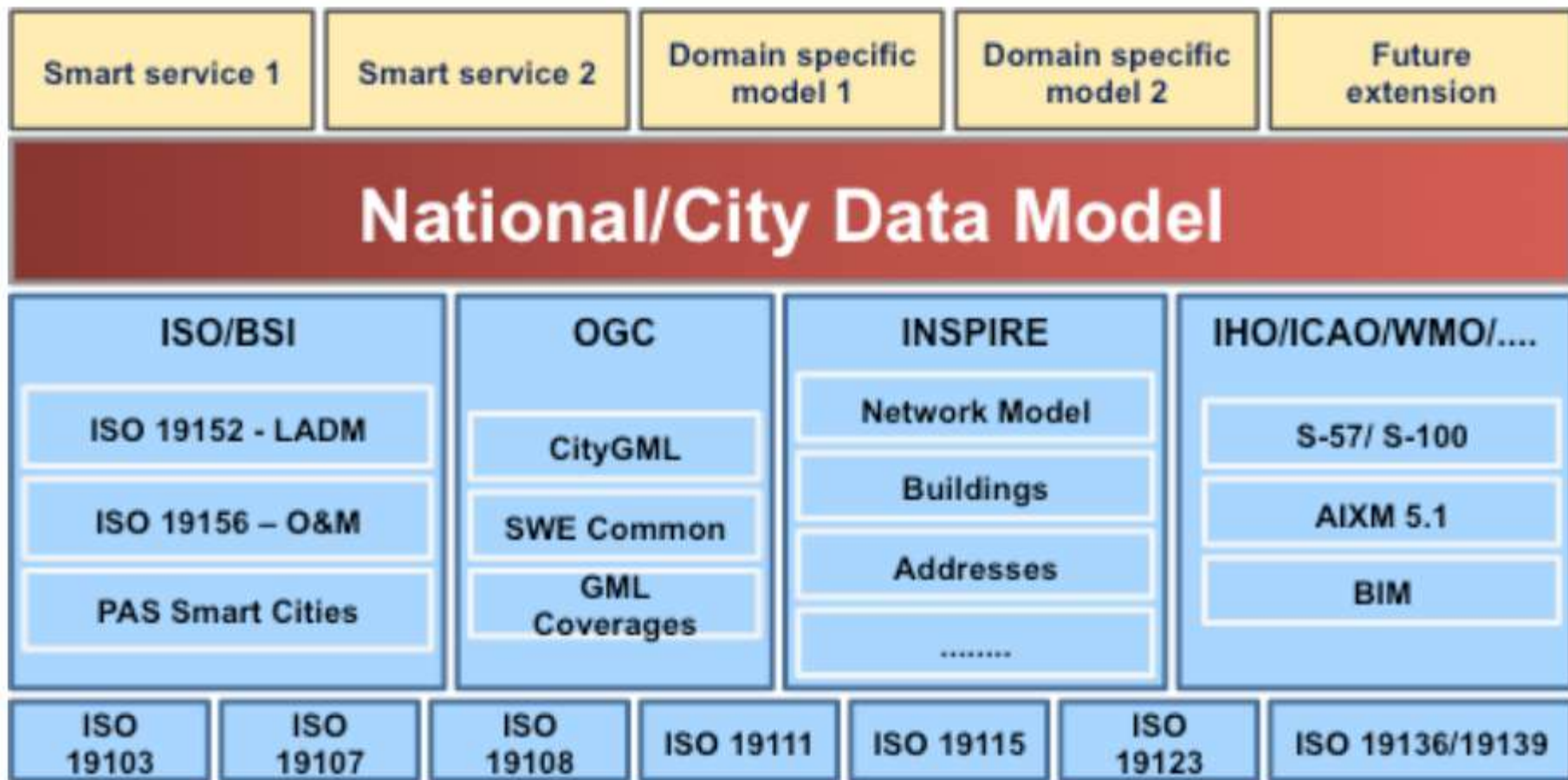
# IHO/OGC/ISO TC211 REPORT TO UN GGIM

“A Guide to the Role of Standards in Geospatial Information Management”

Tiers:

- 1: Share maps over the web
- 2: Geospatial information sharing partnerships
- 3: Spatially enabling the nation
- 4: Spatially enabled IT infrastructure

“Companion Document on Standards Recommendations by Tier”



*Figure 5 Elements of a set of coordinated spatial information data standards and technology standards for use by Smart City information system architects (Source Carsten Rönnsdorf)*

# So what does OS do?

Here's what **we** are trying:

- Internal 'standards steering group'
- Internal 'standards community'
- Joining: / leading
  - OGC ~~Principal~~ Strategic Member
  - W3C
  - National standards committees
    - GI - and the will to travel to / host ISO TC211
    - BIM
    - Smart Cities
- Talking & **Listening**
  - AGI, 'UK open geo standards forum', partners, GeoVation

Do we get it right?



# An example of our new approach

W3C

Engage with:

Data on the Web Best Practices Working Group

Geolocation working group

Linked Data Platform working group

**Spatial Data on the Web Working Group**

Integrating Geospatial Data on the Web proposal

Watch:

SVG

*still trying to find the right people to 'watch' others!*

# References

OS Geospatial Standards Policy: <http://www.ordnancesurvey.co.uk/about/governance/policies/geospatial-standards.html>

HM Government “Open Standards Principles”, see <http://standards.data.gov.uk>

UN GGIM: <http://ggim.un.org>

Guide: [http://ggim.un.org/docs/meetings/GGIM4/E-C20-2014-8\\_Essential%20Standards%20Guide%20for%20UNGGIM.pdf](http://ggim.un.org/docs/meetings/GGIM4/E-C20-2014-8_Essential%20Standards%20Guide%20for%20UNGGIM.pdf)

Companion: [http://ggim.un.org/docs/meetings/GGIM4/E-C20-2014-8\\_Companion%20Document%20UNGGIM%20Essential%20Standards%20Guide.pdf](http://ggim.un.org/docs/meetings/GGIM4/E-C20-2014-8_Companion%20Document%20UNGGIM%20Essential%20Standards%20Guide.pdf)

OGC: <http://www.opengeospatial.org>

White papers: see <http://www.opengeospatial.org/pressroom/papers>

## Other links

- W3C / OGC Spatial Data on the Web Working Group: <http://www.w3.org/2015/spatial/charter>
- UN Group of Experts on Geographic Information Management (UN GGIM): <http://ggim.un.org>

Peter Parslow  
Peter.Parslow@os.uk  
+44 7796 610020

OS is Britain's mapping agency. To find out more about us, go to [os.uk](http://os.uk). If you'd like to talk to us, call +44 (0)3456 050505. For the hard of hearing, use Textphone +44 (0)2380 056146.  
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