The role of shared data in achieving common goals

Digital Sovereignty

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The Geneva Data Community

Unlocking the Power of Data Initiative

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Digital Sovereignty
A term we need?

Sovereignty is a well established term.

The "Digital" actually *can* impact the standing of a state.

Against this impact, nations want to regain **control**.

"Digital Sovereignty" seems to be a natural term.
And it is a powerful term.

But – do we need it?

Digital Sovereignty
A term we need?

Digital has many layers, and one implies data.

If there is sovereignty …

- in aero space

- on the oceans

- on territories

… why not sovereignty in the digital realm, too?
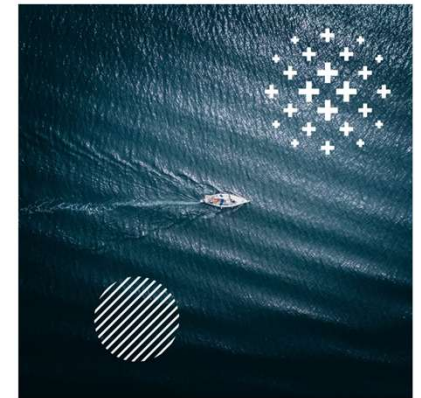
Beware of **soveranything!**

Digital Sovereignty
How about Data Sovereignty?

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Digital acts on "layers" impacting how we act and think.
→ relevant for the term Digital Sovereignty.

Data is relevant on deeper "layers", i.e. data layers.
→ relevant for the term Data Sovereignty.

Datensouveränität (Definitionspapier)

Data Sovereignty is a sub-aspect of Digital Sovereignty.
Data sovereignty implies a focus on data.

Further work needed:
What does the term «data» mean?

https://www.swissdataalliance.ch/publikationen

Digital Sovereignty
Position of the Swiss Data Alliance

1. **States**
   Sovereignty is a term used to describe what a State is / does. ✅

2. **Individuals?**
   To have control over one's own data is not something
   digital sovereignty can address / help with. ❌

3. **IT infrastructures?**
   „Sovereign IT infrastructure" is a marketing term. ❌

https://www.netzwoche.ch/news/2023-12-08/warum-digitale-souveraenitaet-aufgabe-des-staates-ist

Digital Sovereignty
3-prong test

Digital sovereignty comes into play when digital events have an impact on a state's territory and that state is affected *as an institution* (as a state).

What is this about? Two core concepts impact the scope:

Roles / Competencies and Control:

Who is in charge to control which sphere of influence?

3 simple questions:
1. Nexus to Digital?
2. Nexus to Territory?
3. Nexus to Statehood?

https://www.swissdataalliance.ch/publikationen/whitepaper-digitale-souveraenitaet

Digital Sovereignty
let's have a closer look ...

1. An infrastructure for **e-Voting** is under attack.
   This distorts the result of the vote.

2. A referendum is about to be held. Bots flood social media with targeted **disinformation**. **Deep fakes** are used, in an attempt to undermine trust in information from the authorities.

3. Systematic **cyber-attacks** occur. Large parts of the energy supply or communication infrastructure in our country is unusable. The state cannot function properly. The state is paralyzed.

4. The national **E-ID** has positive effects on crucial processes within our country. The E-ID becomes an infrastructure of systemic relevance.

5. A state's **land register** stores the operational data abroad in order to better protect the data against data tampering. Where to store the data?

1. Digital Sovereignty related?

   3 simple questions:
   1. Nexus to Digital?
   2. Nexus to Territory?
   3. Nexus to Statehood?

2. Digital Sovereignty affected / reduced?

   1-prong test
   Can the state act where it should?

3. Adequate measures?

   1-prong test
   purpose / measure adequacy

Digital Sovereignty
in particular: Fake News / Deep Fakes
Can Statistical Offices play a role? (yes!)

The state can provide data bases and ensure
(a) confirmed authenticity
(b) recognized data standards
(c) methods of contextualization by integrating third-party sources.

A state's statistics services can "contribute to digital sovereignty".
They should be made part of the state's implementation catalogue
in this area.

However, this does not mean that the day-to-day data governance to be carried out
by the state's statistical office also falls within the scope of digital sovereignty. **The
office simply must follow the rules of the law.**

We need a deep-dive to better understand this.

1. Digital Sovereignty related?

   3 simple questions:
   1. Nexus to Digital?
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2. Digital Sovereignty affected / reduced?

   1-prong test
   Can the state act where it should?

3. Measure adequate?

   1-prong test
   purpose / measure adequacy

Digital Sovereignty
three playing fields should be distinguished (deep dive)

1. Inter-state Dimension

2. Intra-State Dimension

3. Organizational Dimension?
(day-to-day data governance?)
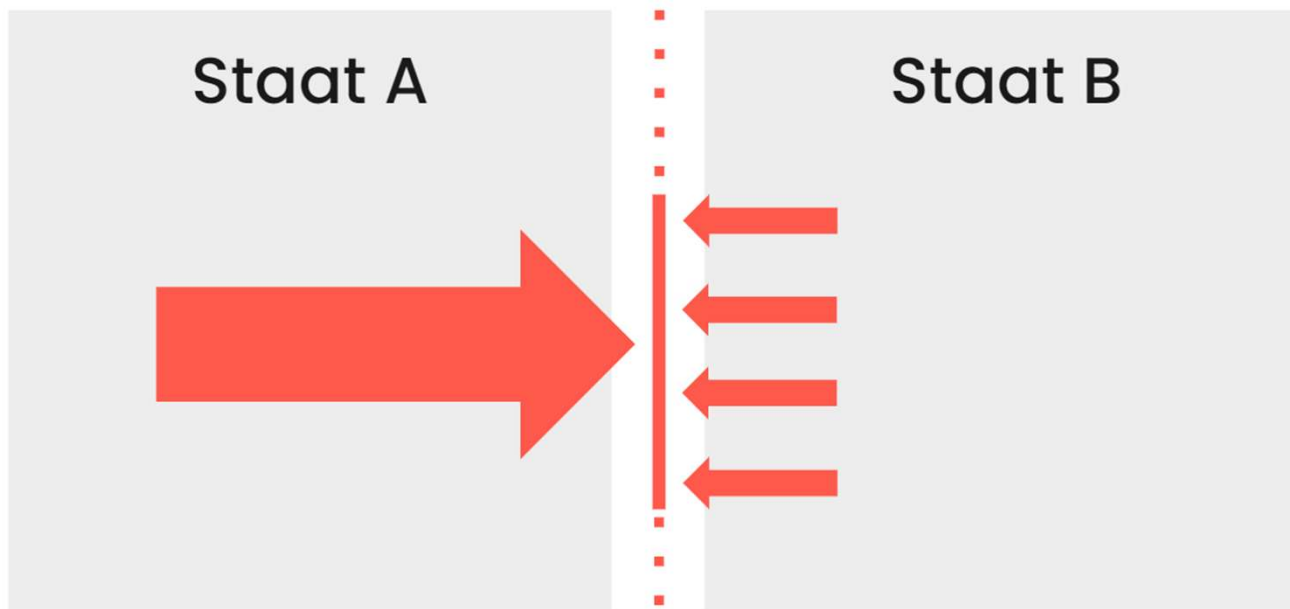→ for companies
→ administrative bodies
→ authorities

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1. Digital Sovereignty related?

   3 simple questions:
   1. Nexus to Digital?
   2. Nexus to Territory?
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Digital Sovereignty
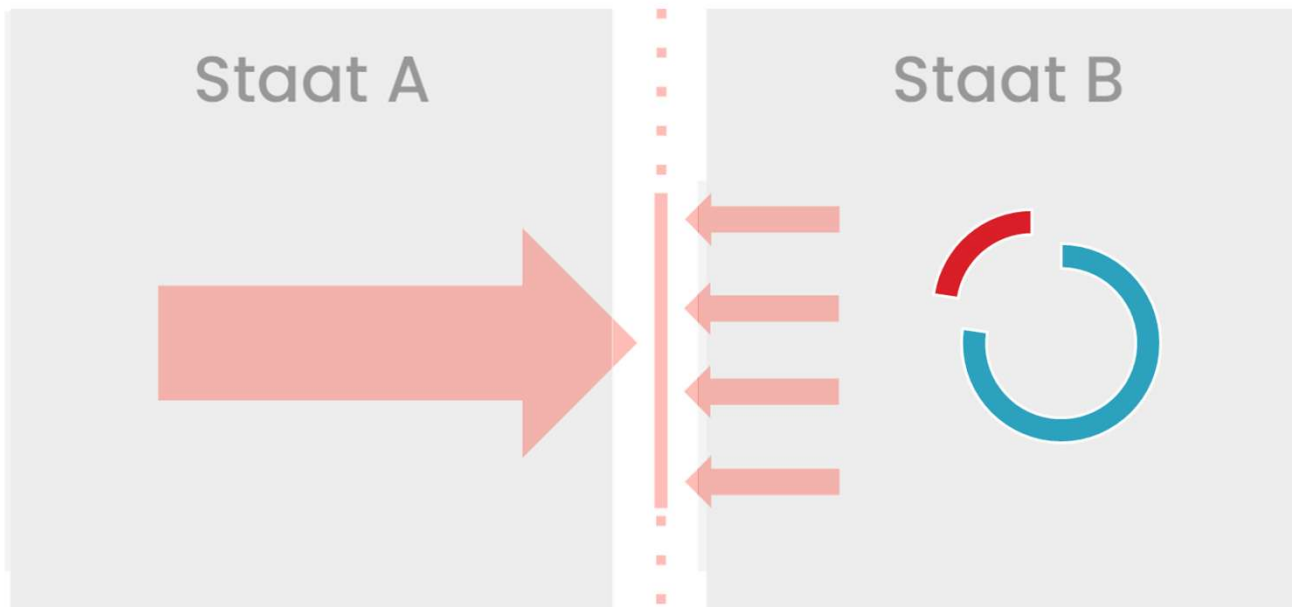## (1) *inter-state* dimension …

3 simple questions:
1. Nexus to Digital?
2. Nexus to Territory?
3. Nexus to Statehood?

https://www.swissdataalliance.ch/publikationen/whitepaper-digitale-souveraenitaet

Digital Sovereignty
(2) *intra-state* dimension

3 simple questions:
1. Nexus to Digital?
2. Nexus to Territory?
3. Nexus to Statehood?

https://www.swissdataalliance.ch/publikationen/whitepaper-digitale-souveraenitaet

Day-to-Day Governance
(3) Third dimension: How to deal with this in practice

Sovereignty	Day-to-Day Governance

The state must play its role («Guaranteeing role»)

Examples / Scenarios:
- Task is too big, but someone should tackle it
- Task can be effective only if executed on an institutional level
- Task is declared to be "institutional"

Independence of the National Statistics Office's work from the government is something that should be ensured.

Such independence "pays in" to ensure sovereignty of a state (provided the state is based on objective information).

In Principle: Governance is the result of concrete measures …
- Companies
- Individuals
- Authorities
- Administrations

What a National Statistics Office needs to do:
It must control its systems and make them robust so to ensure:
(1) reliability of its work and methdology
(2) Confidentiality
(3) Independent operation of its systems (IT services continuity etc.) (as a simple operational task)

Exception: Against issues affecting the state as an institution, day-to-day management might not be not enough.

Day-to-Day Governance
(3) Third dimension: Dependencies
(take measures to reduce dependencies)

Every organization should control its own „sphere"
Operations must work:
- Business Continuity? (BCM)
- IT Services Continuity? (ITSCM)

Regardless:

1. It makes sense to manage dependencies.
2. Dependencies that jeopardize BCM or ITSCM can be (and should be) taken into account in public tender proceedings.
3. Too much dependency can be a defect in software (and this can be made a criterion for granting the award in the tender proceedings).

Note: BCM and ITSCM most frequently are topics of day-to-day governance.

When you are an authority:
1. Digital Sovereignty related?

    3 simple questions:
    1. Nexus to Digital?
    2. Nexus to Territory?
    3. Nexus to Statehood?

➡ Has the tech stack used by an NSO an institutional effect on the state? → hardly ever.

➡ Is dependence of one single administration from one technology provider a threat to Digital Sovereignty? → hardly ever

Day-to-Day Governance
(3) Third dimension: Dependencies
(take measures to reduce dependencies)

Independence from the own government

- is useful to contribute to the stability and reliability of decisions

- such independence "pays in" to ensure sovereignty of a state (provided that state is based on/wants to rely on objective information)

Independence from the technology provider

- independence from a technology provider is not a very helpful concept in a conversation about sovereignty

- but it is a good management goal during day-to-day governance efforts of the own technology stack in use

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