Proposing a Central AEC Ontology That Allows for Domain Specific Extensions

In the last years, several ontologies focused on structuring domain specific information within the scope of Architecture, Engineering and Construction (AEC) have emerged. Several of these individual ontologies redefine core concepts of a building already specified in the publicly available ontology version of the ISO standardised Industry Foundation Classes (IFC) schema, thereby violating the W3C best practice rule of minimum redundancy. The voluminous IFC schema with origins in a closed world assumption is likewise violating this rule by redefining concepts about time, location, units etc. already available from other sources, and it is furthermore violating the rule of keeping ontologies simple for easy maintenance. Based on all the available ontologies, we propose a simple Building Topology Ontology (BOT) only covering the core concepts of a building, and three methods for extending this with domain specific ontologies. This approach makes it (1) possible to work with a limited set of core building classes, and (2) extend those as needed towards specific domain ontologies that are in hands of business professionals or domain-specific standardisation bodies, such as the European Telecommunications Standards Institute (ETSI), buildingSMART, the Open Geospatial Consortium (OGC), and so forth.