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What is a sustainable model for data collectives?

Abstract

Using the author's own experiences in activism around personal data protection and algorithmic transparency, the presentation examines empirical case studies in which a new open-source infrastructure for personal data, along with governance models are developed. The cases are based on 'data collectives', i.e., organized groups with a common concern, that first, recover their personal data making use of their Swiss and European rights (subject access request; portability request) and that secondly, adopt technological resources to increase in capacity vis- -vis dominant platforms like Uber, Tinder and Twitter. Based on the approach the social construction of technology (SCOT) developed by Trevor Pinch, it is aimed to put up for discussion in this workshop the new political meanings of the sociotechnical infrastructures created by data collectives to understand whether they challenge or not predominant meanings of personal data. Moreover, from an operational perspective, it is aimed to reflect with the scientific community about disruptive business models that can be developed with data collectives so they become autonomous in a sustainable way. The argument is that after alternative technological and governance models are agreed upon, the *time* factor becomes a nuisance to the innovation capacity of data collectives. It is argued that there are at least five types of temporalities: 1/of technology in general (fast speed of the state of the art), of the legal framework (slow speed, e.g., for law implementation), 2/of user practices (accelerated usage speed via affordances), 3/of the required in-depth understanding of the data ecosystem (slow speed given the opacity of current systems), 4/of knowledge dissemination (slow speed to reach the general public beyond expert communities), and 5/of workforce availability to lead a collective action (slow or fast speed: volunteer vs paid-employee). Given the misalignment of these temporalities, the process of empowerment by infrastructure is at risk for data collectives.

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