

Ubiquitous Data Collection: Rethinking Privacy Debates

Dan Breznitz, Michael Murphree and Seymour Goodman discuss what ubiquitous collection, dissemination and processing of data require. They divide the article in six parts that examine and rethink in a concise way the debate of the right to privacy.

There is a great threat regarding privacy in our society and both the USA and the European Union have enacted a series of laws to avoid other people to invade, store, process and transmit the private content of users. The problem, in fact, can be found in today's electronic communication and data storage because such personal information can result, for example, in permanent blacklisting of jobseekers or in the determination of the person's life expectancy by life insurers. However, the real risk lays in the ubiquity of data collection combined with powerful ICT tools that allow its manipulation and usage for supposedly predictive purposes.

Nowadays, there are three main issues to be examined and those are the existence of a higher concern over privacy, the matter of ubiquitous collection of data without knowledge or approval, and the transformation by the Internet of a whole scale transformation in data accessibility.

In order to analyze the questions of data collection and availability, there is a need to develop a new framework. It includes traditional privacy concerns that were proposed by the Do Not Track Me Online Act. To construct such framework, future research needs to address four major questions that are related with the extent to which individuals have no control over the amount and type of data stored in the public searchable domain, with the types of data that are currently available that should be deleted or restricted access, with what can be done to correct errors in online data and finally, with what alternatives should individuals have to prevent a loss of social capital.

After having seen the main issues and the unanswered questions that are presented in the article, the reader can realize that there is a growing need for the privacy debates to reflect the fact that the age of ubiquitous data collection is already here.

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