

T13P05 / Platform Governance in Turbulent Times

Topic : T13 / SCIENCE, INTERNET AND TECHNOLOGY POLICY

Chair : Araz Taeihagh (National University of Singapore)

Second Chair : Shaleen Khanal (LKY School of Public Policy, National University of Singapore)

Third Chair : Lili Li (Auburn University)

GENERAL OBJECTIVES, RESEARCH QUESTIONS AND SCIENTIFIC RELEVANCE

Platforms significantly increase the ease of interactions and transactions in our societies. Crowdsourcing and sharing economy platforms, for instance, enable interactions between various groups ranging from casual exchanges among friends and colleagues to the provision of goods, services, and employment opportunities (Taeihagh 2017a). Platforms can also facilitate civic engagements and allow public agencies to derive insights from a critical mass of citizens (Prpi? et al. 2015; Taeihagh 2017b). More recently, governments have experimented with blockchain-enabled platforms in areas such as e-voting, digital identity and storing public records (Kshetri and Voas, 2018; Ta? & Tanr?över, 2020; Sullivan and Burger, 2019; Das et al., 2022).

How platforms are implemented and managed can introduce various risks. Platforms can diminish accountability, reduce individual job security, widen the digital divide and inequality, undermine privacy, and be manipulated (Taeihagh 2017a; Loukis et al. 2017; Hautamäki & Oksanen 2018; Ng and Taeihagh 2021). Data collected by platforms, how platforms conduct themselves, and the level of oversight they provide on the activities conducted within them by users, service providers, producers, employers, and advertisers have significant consequences ranging from privacy and ethical concerns to affecting outcomes of elections. Fake news on social media platforms has become a contentious public issue as social media platforms offer third parties various digital tools and strategies that allow them to spread disinformation to achieve self-serving economic and political interests and distort and polarise public opinion (Ng and Taeihagh 2021). The risks and threats of AI-curated and generated content, such as a Generative Pre-Trained Transformer (GPT-3) (Brown et al., 2020) and generative adversarial networks (GANs) are also on the rise (Goodfellow et al., 2014) while there are new emerging risks due to the adoption of blockchain technology such as security vulnerabilities, privacy concerns (Trump et al. 2018; Mattila & Seppälä 2018; Das et al. 2022).

The adoption of platforms was further accelerated by COVID-19, highlighting their governance challenges. The rise of misinformation and digital health technologies have created heated debates around trust and privacy on these platforms, and the term 'misinfodemic', though coined in 2018, is now used to refer to misinformation related to the pandemic (Marrelli, 2020). The US Sub-Committee on Antitrust, Commercial and Administrative Law recently released its report investigating competition in digital markets (US Antitrust Report, 2020). The report also finds that due to the absence of competition, dominant tech firms bear little financial consequence when misinformation is promoted online, and content moderation of unlawful and harmful content hosted on such platforms is an ongoing issue.

With this backdrop, countries worldwide have started looking into regulating technology platforms more seriously. This panel will present papers discussing the various dimensions of the use of digital platforms and their implications for policy-making.

CALL FOR PAPERS

This panel welcomes papers that explore the challenges of platform governance. Key research questions to be addressed are:

- Theoretical and empirical papers using various qualitative and quantitative approaches from disciplines that provide insights about the implications of the rapid adoption of these platforms and their effect on policy-making.
- The emerging theoretical, conceptual and empirical approaches to understanding new and unconventional regulatory approaches and governance strategies, as well as lessons learnt from the public and private organisations' standard-setting activities and development of guidelines for managing online platforms
- Theoretical, conceptual, or empirical studies that evaluate the effects of platforms on public service

delivery and analyse how these platform activities affect the perceived political legitimacy of governments.

- Analysis of the roles of different actors in influencing policy outcomes through participation in platforms and at different stages of policy making.
- Analysis of the role of tech companies in addressing and/or exacerbating the governance challenges of platforms.
- Examining the different types of platform governance structures (e.g., in blockchain), their risks and unintended consequences, and the organisational, administrative, and institutional changes to accommodate these platforms.
- Cross-national and cross-sectoral studies and theoretically informed case studies examining different types of platforms (e.g., social media, blockchain, sharing economy, crowdsourcing) are especially welcome.

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Session 1

Thursday, June 29th 10:20 to 12:20 (POD366)

Discussants

Lili Li (Auburn University)

Gabriel Chen (LKY School of Public Policy, National University of Singapore)

The biopolitical power of platform capitalism

isabella de Vivo (Sapienza Università di Roma)

Platforms deeply interact until they converge in the architecture of social institutions (and in the socio-political divisions in democratic capitalism). The key role they play in the neo-intermediation of the public debate, through ever more pervasive and manipulative "hybrid forms of control" over information flow (e.g. Cobbe 2020), are radically reformulating our understanding of the communicative space. The systemic opinion-power hides under the algorithmic neo-intermediation phenomena based on datafication, commodification and selection and is quite a different phenomenon to communication power. As suggested by N. Helberger (2020) it "is not only the power to influence political processes but it is political (or bio political) power in its own right". It requires a review of the current tools used to map and assess the digital information ecosystem, highlighting the political nature of such analysis.

In the study of informational capitalism, colonial or postcolonial data politics could (or should?) constitute a distinct perspective or even distinct field of analysis, with specific focus on how colonial domains and possessions are now being reconfigured as knowledge commodities.

The features of the so-called 'digital imperialism', have yet to be studied in depth. The aim of this paper, will be to try to bring them together and identify how they are part of a new logic of 'colonial' data sovereignty. An attempt will then be made to provide a preliminary outline of the ongoing transformations of power-knowledge mechanisms. We will shed light, through a diachronic perspective, on the elements of continuity and rupture with the patterns of the past, and this in order to be able to discuss their potential implications for the biopolitics of the present.

The goal of such a perspective is not to criticise the existence of platformization and dataveillance (which has already been done), but to bring out the colonialist praxis implicit in dataism (that is the gradual normalisation of datafication as a new paradigm in science and society, Van Dijck, J. 2014).

On the individual level, the objective will be to implement tools capable of making users aware of the processing of their personal data not only at the time of giving consent, but also making sure they understand the ways in which the subsequent algorithmic extraction of knowledge and value impacts on their own personal existence. This is a primary step for the protection of autonomy and cognitive self-sovereignty, an ontological precondition for any debate concerning the resilience of the autonomous public sphere. Therefore, it is necessary to assess, through perception studies, how data are incorporated into everyday practices: this includes understanding how algorithms serve as 'actants' (Latour 2002) in their co-construction of the perceptual paradigms of social reality.

Making them readable as forms of cultural and political decision-making will enable a multi-level analysis capable of contributing to the lines of development of an integrated regulatory framework at the supranational level, as well as building a new 'antihegemonic' data literacy capable of bringing to explicit consciousness how data are incorporated into everyday practices: this also includes understanding how algorithms serve as 'actants' in their co-construction of the perceptual paradigms of social reality.

Digital governance issues in Cameroon: regulation and public action of platforms in the light of the Anglophone crisis and the 2018 presidential election

KAMDOUM GERARDINE (University of Ottawa)

How should the governance of platforms be conceived in the face of the meteoric rise of misinformation and the drift that makes them digital spaces? The Anglophone crisis and the 2018 presidential election in Cameroon are indicative of the high level of activity on platforms, the use of which will lead to slippages and failures, even though these spaces should facilitate civic engagement and enable public actors to learn from a critical mass of citizens (Taeihagh, 2017b). However, if the way in which platforms are implemented and managed generally raise questions related to various risks, it should also be noted that the regulations made by public authorities precisely since the resurgence of the Anglophone crisis and during the post-electoral crisis in Cameroon have been characterised by restrictions on digital platforms that have led Internet users to use VPNs to connect. In addition, these measures are characterised by the operationalisation of a strong team and consequent devices that are part of the censorship of activities considered as deviations in the digital space in Cameroon by the public authorities.

If this reality is indicative of two facts, between drift and digital censorship, platforms as a cyber space reflect the urgency of governance, mainly in the context of political communication. The issue then is on the one hand to reduce accountability (Hautamäki & Oksanen 2018; Ng and Taeihagh, 2021) and on the other hand to conceive of governance in a practice to self-regulate fake news on platforms (Ng and Taeihagh 2021). To better structure our analysis, a toolkit based on data triangulation will be used. While the toolkit aims to capture emerging theoretical, conceptual and empirical approaches to understanding regulatory approaches, it will also identify new and unconventional governance logics and strategies, as well as lessons learned from the public and private sectors; normative activities of organisations and development of guidelines for the management of online platforms.

Keywords: *Public action, digital governance, regulation, political communication.*

Registration of Private Critical Creative Metacognitive Performances in the Publication and Copyrighting of Interpreted Personal Data

Peter Pennefather (University of Toronto)

Background. Modern transactional service systems, including healthcare, manufacturing, food distribution, media, etc..., each representing many trillions of dollars of economic activity, are driven by networked systems of standardized data objects (DOs). A confluence of turbulently evolving private data markets, related to service consumer targeting practices, with emerging laws and policies governing use of personal private data, suggests new forms of creative private metacognitive performance.

Policies emerging globally (e.g., GDPR, DSA, PATA), stipulate how custodians of DOs used within service system platforms and linked to given persons must communicate and seek consent for how those DOs are used. This emerging information ecosystem raises the possibility that persons those DOs are about could exercise personal rights, now guaranteed in law and practice, to access, interpret, own, and authorize use of data artifact products built from those DOs.

In principle and theory, there is utility in enabling all transactional actors to study and influence how system DOs, can be translated into meaningful service quality improvements. This paper explores how personal access, interpretation, possession, and ownership of authentic private data, made up of DOs used in the delivery of transactional services, can support creative construction of social identities and practices within the context of service system quality improvement.

The approach would decenter service delivery design and practice from a focus on dehumanized personas to accommodate inclusive access by real entities, persons, groups, and peoples. Rehumanization will require creation of distributed, disambiguated DOs resources over which shared and transparent custody of data is enabled and baked into data governance policy.

The approach makes a case for how existing copyright legislation can be specifically extended globally so as to protect personal creative rights associated with documented and interpreted performance of service transactions. That strategy will enable those documented and creatively interpreted performance records to be copyrighted as owned private data products whose owners can consent and assert ownership rights within fair and trusted distributed learning systems governing service delivery.

Methods. Patented and patent-pending technology [USPTO 9,465,858; 10,331,658] is described for

wrapping and registering distributed data of any type, together with other DOs representing personal data identity, registration, ownership, and permitted uses specifications. QED is a Latin initialism for "that which was to be demonstrated". The QEDX file format asserts private data confidentiality and choice over what, how, where/when, and why private data are accessed and interpreted. Implications of using QEDX files will be discussed regarding wicked service delivery issues: equitable access, acceptable bias, accountable trust, and inclusive security.

Conclusion. This paper specifies a technological disambiguation framework and strategy for registering and publishing creative narrative works concerning identities and actions framing service system generated personal data as meaningfully useful in: 1) defining service needs and 2) specifying new, original, and practical performance of being-a-service-consumer. Those works would communicate creative and innovative ways of being-a-service-consumer with demonstrable economic value. The works could then be fairly and equitably shared, categorized, synthesized, applied, and abstracted within open/citizen science infrastructure as common pool resources as well as within private innovation systems.

Establishing Platforms for Innovation: A Comparative Analysis of Data Governance in Smart Cities

Masaru Yarime (The Hong Kong University of Science and Technology)

The collection, sharing, and use of various data would create societal benefits through innovation in smart cities. Stakeholders who have different types of data, however, may not necessarily be willing to disclose or share their data with others, and the general public also has serious concerns about data security and privacy. It is critical to explore how a data platform can be developed and managed and how various types of data can effectively be connected with services to the citizens. It is also important to figure out how consent is secured from the citizens for data collection and use and how a data platform can ask public agencies as well as private companies to provide necessary data. A hypothesis is that government-led smart cities would prefer a centralized approach to data governance with more control and monitoring of the types of databases and applications in the data platform, with the extent of data sharing limited to key actors with technical expertise. Smart cities initiated by the public-private partnership would have a more open data platform involving diverse data sources and services operated in a distributed and inclusive way and would be more likely to share data with various stakeholders. Innovation in government-led smart cities would be produced in specific fields directly related to the narrowly defined objectives of technological development, while smart cities based on public-private partnerships would create innovation that addresses societal issues relevant to a broader range of stakeholders.

This paper examines the collection, sharing, and use of data in smart cities and the effects of institutional arrangements for data governance on creating innovation for sustainability in smart cities in Japan. The experience of Yokohama shows that large companies in the electric and electronics industries play an essential role in facilitating innovation with technical knowledge and expertise. A clear vision is lacking, however, about for what purposes smart cities should be established, and the lack of transparency in the process of decision-making creates an obstacle to data collection and sharing. Robust business models are also missing, which has the effect of discouraging private companies from sharing data with external organizations. Local governments and communities do not possess sufficient knowledge of or experience with technical measures. It is a serious challenge to secure the active participation of end-users in an equal and equitable manner for jointly facilitating innovation. A case of Kashiwanoha shows that a collaborative network supported by a non-profit organization has allowed close public-private collaborations among the key stakeholders. A carbon-free society is pursued by extending and improving the area energy management system with renewable energy produced locally. Public engagement has been initiated to facilitate discussions among citizens so that the views and preferences of citizens are reflected in the use of AI-enabled cameras and sensors in a public space. Significant emphasis has also been placed on the consent of local citizens in implementing societal experiments in monitoring and visualization, information provision, and initiatives to promote behavioral change for health and well-being.