



Global Civil Society
ifs standpoint

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What is Digital Fairness?
Seven Theses from the Standpoint of Car Customers

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1. Respect for Informational Self Determination

Basic idea: The basic idea is the property right for one's own data. The person who generates data ought to have the right to get access to them and to use them.

Conflict potential: What remains controversial, is the access to further processed data. An example: I have a claim to my own movement profile. This claim, however, does not extend to the movement profile of all people in my hometown, even though my personal data is included in such a data pool.

A further conflict might be the processing of data. Who is the owner of reprocessed data? Are there at least priority access rights for those who generate the original raw data? Are there secondary access rights for involved actors such as subcontractors or programme suppliers? Finally, we have to distinguish between rights of users and rights of owners, e.g. in the case of rental cars, their users and the owners of such cars.

Here, a huge group of actors is involved as a potential stakeholder. In the end, this also includes also car insurance companies and State itself. Hence, in such a "broad case", it would be difficult to rely exclusively on the principal of individual, competitive solutions. If we like it or not, it seems close to inevitable that the practical configuration of the extent of the right to informational self-determination could become a task of state legislation. On the other hand, this does not minimize the advantage which can be achieved whenever individual stakeholders and companies start to prepare their own point of view concerning digital fairness.

Business opportunity: Processed data normally can be seen as company internal data; they might remain a secret to the outside world. A given user, however, might be willing to pay for his or her own movement profile ("during the last four weeks" for example). He or she might be interested in paying for the cluster of all people of his or her hometown. Forms of payment might be either the agreement to reprocess one's own data or in the classical monetary way paying money to the company.

2. Digital Reciprocity

Basic idea: The digital world's reciprocity relies on the basic principle of give and take. This does not refer to a one-to-one-relation but rather to a behavioural mode or attitude. A relation of reciprocity and self-determination could be: "If the user voluntarily gives access to certain additional data, he or she gains access to certain aggregated analyses, a monetary advantage or a discount on certain digital services."

Conflict Potential: Differences of expectations in estimating the extent of rewards seem to be natural. Here, the critical issue is respect and consideration. A company should make sure that the minimum reward granted is not below the level of ridiculousness. Vice versa, the digital world offers good opportunities for screening the levels of satisfaction in relation to services and return services. In practice, this is a chance for the social and emotional impact of participating and belonging, e.g. via the access to defined user groups in the realm of product development etc.

The reciprocal chances of participation are diverse and include movement, user or vehicle profiles. Movement profiles ought to be at the disposal primarily of users and secondarily of owners. They include places, routes, duration of travel, arrival and departure times, stops, acceleration and speed profiles. Also user profiles should be in the hand of the user. In this case, we talk of the extent of used features and functions as well as of visits to points of interest such as service stations, hotels, restaurants, museums, gyms and so on. Conflicts might arise, if an owner or producer of a vehicle also wants to use the data. The same applies to car profiles including range, oil level, driven routes, battery levels in the case of e-cars and the like.

Business opportunity: Kind and quality of digital rewards offer numerous business opportunities. Already today, there is an extremely rich range of supplies. Rewards might take the form of "points" (granted for the purchase of supplies or services), of "fairness services" (such as free access to aggregated data for closed user groups or access with a discount rate). Another reward could be the privileged access to "participation services". The emotional chances of such business opportunities are not to be underestimated.

3. Transparency

Basic thought: In this case, we should look for a specific performance promise concerning “digital fairness”, namely the accountability on collected data. If a user gets the chance to know his or her own data, this strengthens emotional bonding in the sense of a non-material performance promise.

Conflict potential: Conflicts might arise with the interests of public authorities. Look at the idea of a 100% State control on personal movement profiles. However, such conflicts can be made public (as in the case of Apple).

Further, conflicts are possible concerning the price of access and of data delivery. Nobody is obliged to provide “for free” certain data extraction services following individual demands for transparency. Rendering paid services, however, could meet with the resistance of some users or user groups.

Business opportunity: The effort for the extraction of individual data, on the other hand, goes along with the chance of a differentiated price system. For example, users could be divided into A-, B-, and C-users, regarding the typology (e.g. seller or buyer) or their digital level of activities (e.g. giving access to additional data). The prices for the different categories could then differentiate.

4. Traceability

Basic thought: Tracking and tracing mirror the technical possibility and the interest in the traceability of special data. However, traceability must be considered in relation to the respective property and access rights. There ought to be rules for assigning and verifying legitimate interest to tracing data.

Conflict potential: Expenditures for and access to traced data might provoke conflicts. Asking for the movement profile of my neighbour clearly means crossing a boundary. An employer controlling the private trips of his or her field representatives can also provoke conflicts. Moreover, there will be different interests regarding the pricing of the expenditures for tracing services.

Business opportunity: The expenditures for tracing data can be included in a price system. In this context, also clear-cut categories and types of services are possible, such as e.g. the "average driving time from Hamburg to Munich, starting at 5:30 pm, on the basis of the last 100 users". Similarly, traceability can offer typical forecasts such as cost estimates for "Replacement parts for this type of vehicle considering similar movement profiles for the last three years including average replacement costs".

5. Regulated Expiration Date

Basic Thought: Digital fairness includes a time aspect which regulates the expiration date for using generated data. In this respect, fairness could mean leaving the decision to the user of how long his or her data can be stored and processed. Example: "I wish my data to be deleted after twelve months". An alternative to deleting actually might be anonymizing the data. The important point here is an agreement between user and producer or processor for the duration of usage.

Conflict potential: It is obvious that the duration of data usage might become controversial. Another conflict could arise with respect to access concerning past data which are already deleted. User might be oblivious and ask for their user profile of their predecessor vehicle even though their relevant data had been deleted. For producers, however, it can then be advantageous to prefer "anonymizing" instead of "deleting" data. In this case, anonymized and "typical" profiles can be provided even if individual data are already gone.

Business opportunity: If there is a fair chance for an agreement concerning "self-determination" on the use of data at the beginning of a commercial relationship, such a "fairness agreement" could lower the threshold to providing user data. Moreover, a range of parameters could be offered where the user decides on the extent of reprocessing his or her data. This, however, means time and effort for the user. In any case, the idea of a "digital expiration stamp" creates credibility and trust. This is true even more once audit or control procedures are in place.

Obviously, also reverse cases are possible: a company offering data storage for more than a year against a certain fee, for example. This could be interesting in the case of bank statements given the usual practice of deleting such bank data after 12 months.

6. Regulated Escalation

Basic thought: Digital services have a value and a price. Emerging markets (“Blue Ocean”) have higher than normal potential for conflicts concerning value and pricing, at least compared to established markets with well-functioning competition. In this context, digital fairness encompasses the idea of a reciprocal conflict regulation, not guided by a “price dictate” on the side of the seller or producer.

Conflict potential: The kind of conflict regulation and regulated escalation is conflict-laden in itself. But the digital world provides opportunities for making conflicts transparent and using collective intelligence for solving them. A user forum for “fair pricing” might be conceivable. For the producer, it is important to gather, mirror and credibly process such communication processes in a regulated procedure. Such credibility is part of digital fairness on their side.

Business opportunity: Rules for escalation are relevant for the business plan of a producer, insofar the idea of a fair cost-benefit ratio could allow for hints to a differentiated pricing strategy. Testing and processing levels of willingness to pay, however, does not lead directly to good price strategies. The path may be rather different and lead indirectly to an optimization of different business models of a corporation. This may be the case e.g. with “auction solutions” known from the internet. These might be useful tools for incrementally finding out different levels of the willingness to pay and of the willingness to cooperate on the customer side. As a matter of fact, it will be wise to include “playful” elements. This, once again, would be part of influencing the “**emotional ecosystem**” in the digital world.

7. Digital Credibility

Basic thought: In the end, digital fairness increases corporate credibility. Credibility correlates with the trust in a brand, not at least with the willingness to buy and pay. Hence, **investing in trust and credibility** is an ethical target, an important communication tool as well as a directly business-relevant field of action. Some companies, however, tend to ignore this.

Conflict potential: Credibility emerges in people's heads. However, relevant conflict lines might be considered in a clear way by observing relevant user platforms. Conflicts regularly arise due to time, amount and content of critical information. Has the information been handed out in time? Is it considerably exhaustive? Has critical information been hidden or published?

These are examples for the lines of conflict in credibility communication. And there will be always an individual assessment process along these lines simply because diverging interests never can be ignored, neither in the digital world nor elsewhere.

Business opportunity: Digital credibility can be seen as the decisive factor of a producer's digital future. Credibility has a series of facets: the quality of a provided product, of provided services as well as the attention to the emotional ecosystem of users, buyers and other interested social stakeholders. Thus the primary utility of digital credibility directly affects sales and revenue, reputation and company future of relevant corporations.

Respective business opportunities include the **monitoring of digital credibility**, e.g. via a monthly surveyed "credibility index". On the basis of huge amounts of data which might be collected, such a credibility monitoring might be marketed as a digital service for third parties. Digital credibility monitoring at this point will become a big data business. The value of digital credibility is extremely high: It affects the reputation, the future and the mere existence of all parties involved.

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