IASC Europe & CIS
Colloquium Series on Commons and Policy

Towards critical openness and relational data commons: Proposals for governance of open data

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Abstract

Open data developed as a movement in the context of open government, where data held by public bodies was sought to be made publicly and freely accessible to ensure transparency. But an increasing amount of data that bears public interest, such as mobility data, is being generated from a multiplicity of discrete devices and sensors. Further, the ability to harvest relational insights from this vast amount of data is enclosed in the hands of a few private companies. Regulatory frameworks in the EU seek to 'open up' these data to ensure its circulation and reuse in pursuit of a political economy of European technological sovereignty. Questions on openness and 'opening up' of data, inclusivity, value generation and redistribution, and sustainability have been (and continue to be) discussed in the context of digital commons. Digital commons present a 'third way' of organizing society and the digital economy (different from state-based and market-driven approaches), where data, information, and knowledge are shared in ways that avoids their capture by a few actors and expands digital rights (Dulong de Rosnay and Stalder, 2020). Inspired by this, I argue for governance of open data as part of relational data commons. Here, data in itself is not the shared resource in focus. Rather, data's relationality and the ways in which this relationality is important for information and knowledge production is the focus. This allows us to think more critically about legal strategies for open data – to move beyond technical or legal access to data, and account for the 'opening up' of power, equity and infrastructural control in relation to generation, use and sharing of data.

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About the Colloquium Series: IASC Europe & CIS is organizing this colloquium series to support the communication among the IASC members in the region and beyond to facilitate content-based exchange and cross-disciplinary networking on bringing together the commons scholarship and practice with policy.

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