



rijksuniversiteit
groningen

Data Autonomy

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A Road Map to Data Autonomy





I. Why this discussion?

- Data Protection / Digital Privacy concerns
- Digital Sovereignty concerns (UVA report)
- Questions about academic freedom
- Sustainability concerns
- Doubts about agency to develop teaching
 - EdTech, Microcredentialts, mono-/multi-/trans-/interdisciplinary, etc.
- Can students study in a safe environment?

II. What have we done?

- Hosted events (June 2022, March 2023, June 2023)
 - Local events (with SURF, faculties, etc.)
 - International conferences (CPDP, Public Spaces)
 - Expert workshops (Groningen, ETH Zurich, etc.)
- Project management
- Built a [website/awareness campaign](#)
 - [Contribute to our blog!](#)
- Engaged with & building stakeholder community
- Carried out research
 - Available [Here](#), [Here](#), [Here](#), [Here](#)

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Relevant questions I

- How can we make sure that students have an environment where they can learn, develop, and fail safely?

This means without data traces and measurements that profile or follow students for the rest of their lives.

- How can we keep a considerable stake in the design of teaching and research practices – driven by the curiosity and talent of independent academics – rather than by corporate interests?

Relevant questions II

- How can we foster ownership of research results and data sets, instead of promoting the interests of big publishing houses and obscure data brokers?
- How can we make sure the value of data is supporting the fruitful development of the academic community sustainably?

Relevant questions III

- How can we make sure that our data is (not) being (ab-) used to train and develop AI/Machine Learning systems which (do not) respect, protect and promote the values of the academic community?
- How can we create an environment for respectfully discussing bold and controversial ideas?



What is Data Autonomy?



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Essentially, data autonomy is based on informational self-determination, yet expands it in three dimensions: First, informational self-determination remains limited to the citizen-state relationship. The scope of data autonomy expands to private actors, in cases where those are particularly powerful. Secondly, data autonomy expands beyond individual rights and duties, including organisational autonomy as an enabler for individual autonomy. Thirdly, data autonomy addresses harmful inferences resulting from the use of systems based on machine learning or artificial intelligence. Therefore, it is not limited to risks stemming from statically labelled data (e.g. data stored in databases).

In its broadest sense, data autonomy describes the ability of individuals and organisations to make meaningful decisions about their data.

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How to protect privacy in a datafied society? A presentation of multiple legal and conceptual approaches

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Abstract

The United Nations confirmed that privacy remains a human right in the digital age, but our daily digital experiences and seemingly ever-increasing amounts of data suggest that privacy is a mundane, distributed and technologically mediated concept. This article explores privacy by mapping out different legal and conceptual approaches to privacy protection in the context of datafication. It provides an essential starting point to explore the entwinement of technological, ethical and regulatory dynamics. It clarifies why each of the presented approaches emphasises particular aspects and analyses the tensions that arise. The resulting overview provides insight into the main strengths and limitations of the different approaches arising from specific traditions. This analytic overview therefore serves as a key resource to analyse the usefulness of the approaches in the context of the increasing datafication of both private and public spheres.

Specifically, we contrast the approach focusing on data subjects whose data are being ‘protected’ with others, including Fair Information Practice Principles, the German right to ‘informational self-determination’, and the South American ‘habeas data’ doctrine. We also present and contrast emerging approaches to privacy (differential privacy, contextual integrity, group privacy) and discuss their intersection with datafication. In conclusion, we put forth that rather than aiming for one single solution that works worldwide and across all situations, it is essential to identify synergies and stumbling blocks between the various regulatory settings and newly emerging approaches.

Working definition I - May 2023

‘Data autonomy is the effective capacity of the academic community of the University of Groningen to make meaningful decisions about access to data, data flows, the uses of data and the design of the informational environment, to the degree necessary to freely and independently pursue the university's mission, to promote knowledge dissemination and to protect the rights of its students and employees. This capacity is required to protect academic freedom and the independence of the university.’

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Titus
Stahl



Working definition II – May 2023

Context: This working definition fully acknowledges the different and diverse contexts of the activities at the UG. Concepts such as ‘meaningful decisions’ have to be interpreted and applied differently, depending on the concrete circumstances. In particular, we suggest to consider the UG through different lenses which show the UG as an educational institution, a research and innovation body, and actor in the entrepreneurial landscape. Therefore, the working definition should be interpreted and applied with a view to the sensitivity of the data used.

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Working definition III – May 2023

Outlook: The working definition requires further consideration and input from the stakeholder community.

Themes that guide this discussion about the use of data at the UG include: privacy, ownership, transparency, creation, collection, accessibility, shareability, storage, protection, security, and autonomy related to the use of data and digital services.



IV. Short term vision

A) Mapping the situation

Where is data? / What is data being used for? /What do we want 'our' data to be used for? / What are the opportunities? /What are the (potential) harms?

B) Increase choices

Open Source Software & Thinking (e.g. Nextcloud) / Identify & Contribute to new developments / Pool resources (SURF, GÉANT, Public Spaces, Pubhubs, etc.)

C)How does the 'datafied' UG look like?



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V. (Potential) Long term vision

- Make Data Autonomy part of the culture of UG
 - Integrate in teaching approach.
 - Integrate it in work of research groups.
 - Have ‘beleid’ that is informed by the knowledge & skills that exist in the broader UG community.
 - Be bold & long-term strategic.



Why do we need your support?

There is no space to have this discussion.

Nobody will fix this for us, unless we do.

What can you do?

Became an ambassador.

Go to our events.

Talk to colleagues about it.





Thank
You!



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