

Data privacy is a burning issue

Explosion in data and data analytics has led to increased concerns about data privacy. Common people mostly rely on mobile data, maps and various applications. But then there are uses of geospatial data that are not visible to people. As geospatial data becomes more and more embedded in applications, the real policy question that comes up is when does the rights of the consumer to privacy and to controlling information about themselves are infringed. Insurance companies certainly want more data about you, healthcare companies want more data about you. The balance lies in what you control about yourself and what they know about you.

US vs Europe

In the US, we don't regulate the data and the information. One of the things that has happened is a realization that the regulatory structures that we have are the ones that were created in the early 1990s for technologies and architectures, worked in the early days, but the changes

in technological and market landscape mean that those are increasingly under stress. Europeans have taken a more cautious and conservative approach to protecting individual privacy. And it is not an industry to industry question; but really about whom does the consumer trust. Do they trust the companies to protect and manage the data or do they trust and rely upon governments to do that? Or do they trust neither and seek to encrypt more of that data?

Innovation in private space

Roughly 85 cents of every dollar that NASA had went out to the industry. So it's not like a lot of it was kept inside. The industry has always been the primary performer of these activities. But what we would always do is making sure that there was in-house intellectual capacity so that government could oversee a good contract manager. And the way to do that is not by reading papers

and reports; you had to have people who knew how to build satellites. The scientific community within NASA, for example, always made sure there is at least one or maybe two missions that were being built in-house. So there was a balance between what the governments can do, what their capacities are and where are the sources of innovation, which are normally in the private sector.

A classic example of this is that we have weather satellite systems and there have been debates on whether they should be privatized. In general, the

White House and Congress is the opinion that those satellites are so important for public safety that we do not really privatize them. However, we do see that they are new sources of private data for occultation measurements, and can provide accuracy to weather predictions. There are private firms that are now ready to step out with small satellites to provide this kind of data on a commercial basis so that the government doesn't have to outlay that funding on its own. 🌐

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