

The next internet revolution brings data to the market

April 3 2014, by Irene Ng



You want to see what's in my trolley? What's in it for me? Credit: Alan, CC BY-NC-SA

Every day, our lives are being captured digitally in the data that is generated by our transactions, interactions and movements. And as we become more connected through the internet of things, even more data is being generated. But we are beginning to feel like that data is no longer

our property and as we move into the next phase of the internet, we should make sure we benefit from it.

Some of the most detailed data about us actually belongs to those who collect it. It's the supermarket that pulls information about your shopping from your loyalty card and the energy company that monitors your electricity use. Even though it's all information about us, we can't really use this data because we don't own or have access to it.

And even if our own data is returned to us, we wouldn't really know how to use it to make our lives better, because the data is presented in a way to help the institution that collected it, not us.

This lack of control, coupled with mounting concern about our privacy online could prompt some to withdraw from being digitally visible. But that could mean you miss out on useful services, particularly as the internet of things grows around us. In the future, the idea is that the objects in your life will talk to each other to provide useful information such as the amount of energy you use and whether you need to restock the fridge. Your data becomes even more useful but even more personal.

An alternative to walking away from digital life might be to take back control of our data and make it work for us, which is part of the thinking behind the [Hub of All Things \(HAT\) project](#). The HAT is building a database which will be owned by individuals who produce data in the first place. The idea is that each of us will own a HAT containing all the data we need to help make our lives better.

That includes social media data, energy use data and [internet](#) of things data from our homes, such as the goods you use or the medicines you take.

After all, we're the ones who know best how to contextualise our data to

get the best from it. The supermarket might know that you bought a certain type of ice cream on a certain day, but it doesn't know why you chose one flavour over another or who ended up eating it in your family.

Users must be involved in deciding how their data is organised so that something usable comes out at the other end. You can have data about the temperature of your home, the temperature in your car and the temperature in your office as well as [weather data](#) from an external source. It's all interesting information on its own but when grouped together, it can tell you the lowest temperature you will encounter on a given day as you go about your business and can then decide what to wear.

Once you've got data that is meaningful to you, it can actually be worth something to you. You could sell it on, according to your own rules.

As well as storing data, the idea is users will be able to exchange their data for services that make life better. You might decide to share information about your diet in exchange for personalised grocery bundles or you might decide to share [information](#) about the clothes you own in exchange for recommendations that match your existing wardrobe.

This is a more democratic approach to owning and accessing, which makes individuals happy, and it helps businesses and other [data](#) hungry organisations offer better services in return in a humancentric way.

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