DEMOS

Project Proposal

FYI: A People's Inquiry into identity technologies

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This project is about bringing the public voice to the debate about personal information and identity technologies. It will be based on a 'People's Inquiry' – an innovative process of deliberative public engagement.

This Inquiry will inform a collaborative, broad-based expert stakeholder group, which will turn the insights into practical lessons for industry, policy-makers and others.

Introduction

From Facebook to our mobile phones, we have the tools to manipulate how other people see and understand us like never before. Technology has got personal, giving us a new level of control over our identities.

But just as technology is empowering in some respects, in others it risks disempowering the public. Organisations can draw on an and share an unprecedented amount of information about the people they deal with, which raises serious public concerns. Last year, Demos published *FYI – The new politics of personal information*, in which we argued that, as personal information becomes more and more important to governments and businesses, the public have less and less control over what organisations know about them. [1]

The spread of personal information has huge benefits, but it also creates a tension that remains unacknowledged.

Until now, the personal information debate has tended to take place in the language of technical possibilities and legal frameworks. Public attitudes to personal information technologies are often invoked, but rarely explored. We now need to put back the missing voice in this debate and open up the politics of personal information to the public.

Identity technologies

At the heart of the new politics of information sits identity technology, which will play a vital role in the negotiation of individual empowerment, self-definition, and organisational control. Technology influences how other people and organisations see and understand us, as individuals and groups.

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[1] See *FYI: the new politics of personal information,* Demos 2007.
http://www.demos.co.uk/publications/fyi

With identity technologies, we know what some of the benefits are and we know some of the risks.[2] We have the statistics that suggest that people care about how their information is used.[3] But there are wider opportunities and uncertainties that need to be explored, in public, by the public.

More than any other technological area, we need to ensure that policy with identity technology is socially-robust. It needs to reflect both changing public values and new technological possibilities. Building on Demos's experience of public dialogue on science and technology, we propose a focussed public dialogue to investigate these opportunities and uncertainties in more depth.

This project

The focus of the project will be to place a public voice at the heart of these innovations and debates. With a highly practical focus, it will focus on the new questions that these technologies, and the use of personal information they facilitate, pose for people's democratic involvement in decisions that directly affect them.

At the heart of the challenges of personal information and identity is an intersection of interests, domains of work and professional knowledge. This project will also, on the basis of the 'People's Inquiry' serve as a collaborative experiment in bringing these diverse viewpoints and this range of expertise together, guided by the voices and ideas emerging from the People's Inquiry.

Methodology

The project will comprise three main components comprising the research project, followed by a Wilton Park conference.

First, a steering group comprised of policy makers, academics, legal experts and technologists.

Second, a People's Inquiry, focused on three organisations (tbc), and run with expert witnesses drawn from the working group. The sessions will be highly

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[2] See for example The Laws of Identity, Kim Cameron, http://www.identityblog.com/stories/2004/12/09/thelaws.html
[3] See for example the Information Commissioner's Office Annual Track, http://www.ico.gov.uk/about_us/research/annual_track.aspx; and Press Complaints Commission polling on privacy and social networking sites, http://www.pcc.org.uk/news/index.html?article=NTEzMg==

practical, developing and testing ideas about the implications of identity technologies.

The **People's Inquiry** is a method developed as part of Demos's Nanodialogues project, which engaged members of the public in dialogue about emerging nanotechnologies.[4] It builds on a Citizens' Jury model, bringing together experts and the public for sustained deliberation over three days. It allows members of the public to learn about new issues, ask new questions and develop a set of recommendations for industry and policymakers.

This phase will also involve opinion **polling,** with questions informed by the People's Inquiry, on international attitudes to personal information use and technology across sectors.

Third, a series of stakeholder horizon scanning sessions, to develop the ideas from the public engagement into a range of technological, legal and policy options. The purpose will be to reflect on the findings of the People's Inquiry, and switch the model – bringing in representatives from the People's Inquiry group to prompt and feed the discussion.

Following these phases of work, Demos will produce a thought-leading pamphlet and a set of new media materials to communicate the findings and ideas.

Fourth, a Wilton Park conference in 2009 on technology and identity, based on the project findings, will broaden the debate with a strong international focus on lessons for organisations across sectors. The event will be a 3 day / 2 night conference.

Background to Wilton Park
Wilton Park in Sussex, England is considered one of the world's leading institutions for in-depth discussion of international policy issues and challenges. It is a non-profit-making, academically independent, Executive Agency of the Foreign and Commonwealth Office.

Wilton Park runs up to 50 high level conferences a year on a range of internationally topical subjects, which bring together senior policy practitioners, politicians, business people, academics, NGO representatives, journalists and other

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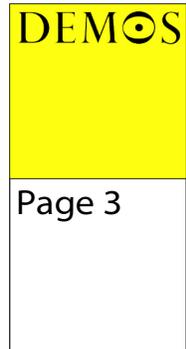
[4] See "A people's Inquiry on nanotechnology and the environment," Environment Agency Science Report, 2006, http://publications.environment-agency.gov.uk/pdf/SCHO0607BMUJ-e-e.pdf; J Stilgoe, Nanodialogues, Experiments in public engagement with science, London, Demos, 2007

opinion formers, from a range of countries for informal, off-the-record discussions in English.

The conferences, which take place in a discreet residential setting, are limited to 65 people to ensure a highly participative framework, with a round table format which maximises opportunities for frank, qualitative debate and informal networking. Further information can be found at www.wiltonpark.org.uk

Participation
Proposed participation would include senior policy makers, scientists, industry, think-tanks, selected media and other experts from Europe and North America who have an interest in the inter-face between identity technologies and the use of personal information.

Timeline and budget

The project will run from July 2008 for one year through to July 2009.

Phase one: July – September 2008.
    a. Steering group formation
    b. Initial steering group meetings
    c. Set-up / framing of People's Inquiry
Phase two: September 2008 – January 2009.
    a. Running People's Inquiry
    b. Capturing information and data from inquiry
    c. Polling
Phase three: January - February 2009.
    a. Framing horizon scanning sessions
    b. Running horizon scanning stakeholder groups
Phase four: February – June 2009.
    a. Final steering group meetings
    b. Analysis and writing
    c. Pamphlet publication
    d. Launch event

Wilton Park conference – June 2009.

Budget

We estimate the budget to be £100,000 for the research project. The Wilton Park conference will cost an additional £80,000.

These are estimated costs. A more detailed budget will be finalised upon confirmation of timelines, scope and partnership options. We are interested in pursuing a collaborative partnership model with varying options, from partnering with a sole organisation to a consortium model.

Wilton Park conference

The conference costs of £80k covers the registration fees for key participants, and speakers including all meals and accommodation for 3 days / 2 nights. This also covers the Wilton Park staff costs in the planning development and administration up to and during the event.

Why Demos?

Demos is the think-tank for 'everyday democracy'. Our partners include policy-makers, companies, public service providers and social entrepreneurs. Demos is not linked to any party but we work with politicians across political divides. Our international network - which extends across eastern Europe, Scandinavia, Australia, Brazil, India and China - provides a global perspective.

We have recently led a range of projects mapping the terrain of personal information use, identity and public engagement in science and technology. Those include:

- *FYI: the new politics of personal information*: Personal information is often talked about in terms of data protection or more efficient information sharing. But we are missing its wider significance: how its use changes the way organisations come to make decisions about us, and changes our influence over those decisions. *FYI* sets out this new framework for a mature understanding of the value and importance of personal information, and the long-term consequences of our increasing reliance on it.

- *The Nanodialogues:* Depending who you ask, nanotechnology might be the Next Big Thing, the Next Asbestos or the Next GM. But before its impacts have been felt, nanotechnology has become a test case for a new sort of governance. This pamphlet presents the findings of the Nanodialogues – a series of experiments in upstream public engagement with different partners in different contexts. Over two years, with the Environment Agency, two Research Councils, Practical Action and Unilever, we asked members of the public to join scientists in discussions on regulation, research funding, development and corporate innovation.

- *UK Confidential*: Privacy is not just an individual right. It is a *social* value, embodying people's attitudes to their relationships with other people, and the institutions and organisations around them. This collection asks how we currently value our privacy in an age of ubiquitous information, technological innovation and cultural change. It features essays from a range of leading authors including Peter Bazalgette, Perri 6, Gareth Crossman and Jeff Rosen.

Further information on all of these projects is available from our website.

People

Peter Bradwell is a researcher at Demos. His main research interests lie in the ways that information is shared between people, and between people and government. Recently his research has focused on the value and importance of personal information, and recently co-authored *FYI: the new politics of personal information.*

Dr Jack Stilgoe is a Senior Researcher. He came to Demos in January 2005. He works on science and technology projects and specialises in issues of science, expertise and public engagement. He Previously, he was a research fellow in the Science and Technology Studies department at University College, London, where he looked at debates between scientists and the public about the possible health risks of mobile phones.

Next Steps

If you would like to discuss this proposal in more detail please contact Peter Bradwell (peter.bradwell@demos.co.uk).