The last stand: Will data protection become antisocial?

The world after the GDPR: What moral claim to data protection will we have when AIs need our data to cure terminally ill patients? Is data protection really the most common cause of death in some countries? Will we see data protection as antisocial in the future? In today's trend analysis, I would like to share why we are probably experiencing the last stand of data protection in its classical 1960s orientation. I would like to speak with you about intelligence, the troublesome legacy of the late 60s, and the ethical question. Follow me as we explore a different perspective on one of the most important questions of our time.

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Let's start by leaving the lamentable mess of GDPR debates behind us: Let's look to the future! We futurists consider the current debate to be the final stand of classical data protection anyway.

We do so because we are confident from the example of history that it has always been the availability of data that has caused humanity's greatest leaps forward. So those who want to see us humans keep up with the growing intelligence of technology will not use the next law to protect data, but to give people control of how their data is shared.

I would like to dialogue with you about intelligence, the troublesome legacy of '68, and the ethical question. I want to share why we are probably experiencing the last stand of data protection in its classical 60s mold.

The world will be more intelligent

Let's start with a global status check. For the great mass of humanity, things have never been better than today: Fewer people are going hungry, many illnesses are finally curable, and the number of people living in more or less democratic conditions is ultimately rising. At the same time, we are also seeing a demonstrable reduction in violence, and humanity has never lived as peacefully together as today – all of which are factors that are not undone by some of the headlines that trouble us today.

The transition from a society of hunter-gatherers to the first advanced agricultural civilizations 5,000 years ago alone was responsible for an 80% reduction in

violent fatalities. Between the Late Middle Ages and the 20th century, European countries experienced a further drop in murder rates of 1000-5000%. In the 17th and 18th centuries there appeared the first organized efforts to abolish the rule of violence in its manifestations like slavery, dueling, torture, superstitious killings, and sadistic punishments.

After the Second World War, a never-before-seen development occurred: The great powers stopped warring with each other. And, following the end of the Cold War, the number of organized conflicts sank drastically once more.

There are various reasons for this, both economical and technological ones. Above all, however, we see that humanity is undergoing a continuous maturing process. People have become more intelligent, more moral. If you don't agree: Most of us can test this easily be a quick comparison to the mindset of our grandparents' generation.

What causes intelligence leaps?

As we get ready to explore this concept of rising intelligence, let's take a moment to briefly look at how intelligence emerges.

At this point we have to admit that humanity has not yet managed to understand what intelligence really is and how it actually works.

It is possible, however, to humbly describe the parameters within which leaps in intelligence development occur. Because here simply two things are necessary: First, a large number of all kinds of

data, and second the formulas that can put this data into context and connection.

Allow yourself a look back at times when history's greatest developmental leaps occurred in developed societies:

Think of the Villa Medici, where pioneer minds from various backgrounds gathered to share their knowledge (data) and their worldviews (formulas). As they did so, they started the Renaissance era, which meant a giant leap into the world of progress – at least for society's élite.

Think back on the introduction of the school system and Humboldt's educational ideal, which gave the majority of our predecessors knowledge (data) and the formulas they needed to apply it.

Think about the beginning of the Information Age as the first computers appeared, the amount of data that could be processed rose phenomenally, and new algorithms (formulas) lead to previously unimaginable benefits.

And think about today, where sensors and computers are by now capable of autonomously gathering and analyzing vast amounts of data and using new algorithms to create unheard-of intelligence.

In short: It doesn't take a lot of imagination to arrive at the thesis that the most essential leaps in human development rested on the foundation of free access to data and formulas.

We are on the verge of an intelligence explosion

Now let's look into the future! If world progress is essentially linked to the increase of human intelligence, then this development is far from over. According to all predictions by the UN and company, we are currently on the verge of a massive flood of education that has already begun in Asia.

These prognoses reveal the following picture: In the year 2000, 850 million people in the world had absolutely no formal education, and roughly 1.1 billion enjoyed only an elementary school education. This accounted for roughly 50% of the adult world population at the time.

For the year 2100, the UN's most likely scenario predicts a world where only 82 million people are uneducated, 550 million have only elementary schooling, and 7.08 billion enjoy levels higher than this. These figures represent 8.6% of the global population below the elementary school level and 91.4% above.

Or to put it another way: In 2100, more than 3 billion people across the world will complete university studies. This number is higher than the total population of the industrial world today.

And added, of course, to these large numbers of intelligent people will naturally come the AIs that, sometime between 2040 and 2050, may very well become more intelligent than the average human.

The result is not difficult to predict: Our world will rapidly become more intelligent. And this will mean progress. Never before has humanity had so realistic a

chance at permanently solving some of the greatest challenges we face.

This is a chance that technology will give us over the next 30 years.

It will give us the chance to produce enough artificial food – climate-neutral and independent of season – to give every person on earth enough to eat. It will give us the opportunity to produce enough potable water in desalination plants across the world that everyone will have enough to drink. And it will give us the possibility to produce so much energy using solar collectors in our deserts that every person on earth will have enough electricity.

But these are chances we will only get if we allow technology to overcome the limitations of our human bodies in terms of intelligence, strength, and morality. Technology has the potential to eliminate most of the existential risks humanity faces today, be it asteroid impact, volcanic eruptions, pandemics, be it war or disease. It can take us closer to the greatest human dreams, to immortality and beyond our planet.

Probably it will also give us the chance to protect ourselves from the new technological risks that will come our way thanks to nanotechnologies, bioscience, neuropsychological manipulation, and body enhancement.

The growing intelligence in the world will give us humans the possibility to live to be at least 120, to better realize our potential, to save the environment, eliminate hunger and thirst in the world, and to make free energy available in surplus everywhere in the world at all times.

Sven Gábor Jánszky: In the future, data protection will be replaced by the new privacy by design

Data protection: antisocial?

In other words: Humanity's progress depends significantly on whether or not we are able to increase the amount of available intelligence in the world. It depends significantly on whether or not we are able to give today's intelligences free access to the data and formulas we've been discussing.

Before you agree too quickly at this point, please consider that this will also mean changes to things that are very dear and important to us. Because tomorrow's data-driven intelligences will also transform our understanding of rich and poor, of justice and solidarity.

My future institute the 2b AHEAD ThinkTank has conducted some interesting projects on the question of solidarity in the coming age of artificial intelligence

together with a major public healthcare provider.

The conclusion: Historically solidarity has been identified with the collective provision of help for individuals who have been hit by an unexpected tragedy. But what will it look like in the future, when the key task of artificial intelligences will be utilizing shared data to make sure that no damages occur in the first place? Is solidarity then still solidarity?

Most likely, solidarity will mean something different, because the logic will then be: Every person is obliged to share their data so that the AIs can take the mass of data and recognize those patterns that lead to harm for the individual.

It seems clear that technology will come to this point, but what will this do to our concept of solidarity? Will someone who

protects their data be anti-solidarity in the future? Or even antisocial?

Who will benefit from this new intelligence?

At this point in the debate, critics will usually bring the counterargument that it won't be beneficial to everyday people if Google and company keep getting more intelligent.

This is the same argumentation that we know from the past. One popular example of this are the cashiers who were inflicted with the insinuation that the use of calculators and check-out systems would make them less intelligent than they would be if they stuck to mental arithmetic. This is obviously not only unfair, but entirely wrong. Because as we all know from our own private lives: Cashiers can work much more competently with their check-out systems than they could before.

The same goes for every Google user out there. Technological progress has made access to data progressively cheaper. The competence gain that comes through smartphones and Google is significantly higher in poorly educated social strata than in the high-income end of the scale. Technology makes the gap between the rich and the poor in the economy of opportunities smaller rather than larger.

In case my thesis is correct that it is free access to data and algorithms that promotes progress, then there are two ways to achieve an equality of opportunity between Google and the everyday person:

1. The progress-inhibiting way is to forbid Google to use data.

2. In contrast, the only progress promoting way is to expand algorithmic competency on the side of the normal person.

This means that the decisive question for intelligently choosing the right answer is: Do you want progress?

Let's avoid generalized postulating about progress here. In my opinion the key question is much simpler: There are those among us who consider life today, today's human in today's environment for the ideal state – so to speak the summit and end point of evolution. Those who feel this way will naturally reject every change and any kind of progress, because once you're at the top, you can only go down from there.

Others – and I count myself among them – consider this supposed evolutionary end point to be highly improbable. I believe that we are at an intermediate stage of evolution. And I find today's human being in need of improvement. Our bodies live for too short a time, are ill too often and lose their youthful form much too quickly. Our senses could definitely use an update: We should be able to see better, to hear and feel better. And our human consciousness and morals show need of improvement, too.

If we advance our evolution here, then our children will live healthier, longer, more peacefully, and with more freedom and self-determination. People who take this mindset look forward to change because they feel themselves at the base of the mountain rather than the peak: where every step uphill means improvement.

To achieve these improvements, we obviously need access to data. By now all of us know examples of this from our private lives.

Data sharing leads to the extension of our lives, because artificial intelligences can now identify tumors two years earlier and 50% more accurately than human doctors. Data access leads to the improvement of competencies in education, just like it leads to improved performance in professional and popular sports. And, last but not least, data access leads to increasing workplace performance and thus to increasing value creation and rising incomes.

To get there, we don't need a law that makes it easier for the everyday citizen to keep his data secret. We need a law that gives citizens the chance to share their data and to use all those automated data-analyzing intelligences – while still remaining in control of their data!

But what we have is not a law for data sharing, but for data protection. Why is that actually the case?

Several times over the last few weeks I've been struck by the feeling that our data protection debate is more something of a relic from a long-gone era.

It is based on the mindset of the 70s and 80s in the last century, the age of the late 60s, the Cold War, the omnipresence of good and evil, of constant anxiety about the "superpowers" of the East and the West. In these times, we know that many people viewed the state and large corporations as oppressors and enemies. Probably for good reason.

Many protests about things that seem banal to us today were not unfounded at the time.

I have the suspicion that the 60s generation with its data-protection advocates have taken anxieties that were justified at the time with them as they crossed into our age. With the GDPR, they have definitively proven they were right. Back then.

But the world has changed. The high water mark of 1968 is now exactly 50 years behind us. The Wall has now been down for longer than it ever stood. Sometimes when I look at this generation in their march through institutions as today's politicians, it seems to me they have forgotten that they are the ones who changed society in the first place.

Today's population lives in a whole other world. Would it be presumptuous to demand that the politicians realize how outdated their 30-year-old conceptions of data protection actually are?

What's your future picture?

Over the last few weeks, I've often thought about why this realization isn't gaining any ground in politics. Or whether the politicians in our world possibly have good reasons to interpret things differently than we futurists? Now, after countless conversations, I have a hypothesis.

Perhaps it depends on the **FUTURE PICTURE** of the individual, their idea of what life will look like in ten years' time.

I have seen with many people I have spoken with that this picture hasn't changed in the last few decades. They are living the same lives they were living in the 80s. Their hopes and fears are 80s hopes and fears.

I was shocked to realize this, but if it's true, then it's obvious that the recipes for data protection will obviously also be those of the 80s.

Allow me to give a quick example of how I came to this suspicion:

The unfortunate debate surrounding the German health card and data protection in the healthcare system.

If your future picture happens to be that, with the new health card, all diseases and therapies will remain exactly the same, only that the insurance companies know more about you and can therefore charge you more, then naturally you'll be against the health card. But what kind of petty, outdated, and fear-driven future picture is that?

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A modern future picture looks different: People who share their body data won't get sick anymore. They will miss the perennial "lifestyle diseases" because they will notice days in advance that their bodies are getting sick and act preventively. And they will live longer, because genetic illnesses can be identified earlier and treated more effectively – and because they will have access to replacement parts for sick organs in the final third of their lives.

The result: They will live to be 120 – in good health.

The difference between these two future pictures adds up to 40 years of life (half of the previous life expectancy), and that with good mobility. Isn't it time to change future pictures?

Ethics – The leading cause of death: data protection!

At the beginning of this trend analysis we mentioned humanity's moral growth. This statement is both right and true. But it is also the reason why the "poets and philosophers" unconsciously consider our moral criteria to be infallible. However, the notion is ignorant and misleading. Time and again I am struck by the ignorance of the philosophical crowd when I discuss ethics with technologists.

Let me show the difference between these two moral viewpoints on the example of data protection. According to the humanistic interpretation of the "poets and philosophers," stringent data

protection is one of the most important achievements of human civilization. And yet one of the highest-earning physicians in Germany had nothing good to say about data protection as an expert in a future study on medicine by the 2b AHEAD ThinkTank. According to him, "The most common cause of death in Germany is most likely data protection." How can this be?

It has something to do with the different criteria we use to measure ethics. Our humanistic ethical catalogue knows them very, very well. It goes: **Is that normal? Is it natural? Is it humane?**

Data protection fulfills this catalogue perfectly. It is normal, natural, and humane. A triple positive!

But the doctor and the technologist know another catalogue. This one goes: **Will that bring benefits? Will it cause harm? Will it have side effects?**

Data protection is totally unsatisfactory in fulfilling this second catalogue. It leads to early deaths for many people. This makes it not beneficial, but harmful. And it certainly has side effects in a terrible bureaucratic healthcare system where the same tasks regularly end up being performed two or three times: A triple negative!

It's not my goal to make you anxious here. You are free to hold to your own catalogue of ethical values. But you do need to know: Your ethical criteria are not the only ones in the world.

The future of data protection: The new privacy by design

It seems very likely to professional futurists that we are seeing the final stand of the vintage data protection logic of the last century. In the future there obviously will be regulations for the handling of data, possibly even more than today. But they will be different.

I believe that we can already predict the result of future social debates. They will lead to a basic consensus shaped by the notion that we citizens will want to share our data – while maintaning sovereignty over it. We will want the promises of the new technological landscape without losing our control and self-determination. The level of privacy that we will want to see guaranteed in the process will be different for each of us. And this is a good thing!

Let's take the opportunity to finally put the thought behind us that there could be an objectively valid data-protection norm that would suit every individual. The idea is absurd. It is only useful to the data guardians who can use it to extend their sovereignty of interpretation over this topic just a little bit longer. Privacy by design means that the use of data will be adapted to the privacy needs of every individual customer.

For the companies this means some rethinking is needed here. The future will no longer be a matter of producing standardized products and then afterwards considering how a mandated level of data protection can be piled on top of this. The emerging concept of customer data handling has more to it than this ON/OFF binary.

In the future the focus will much rather be on orienting products in line with a range of diverse privacy requirements even in the concept phase – right in the initial outlines. This means: Products will be designed with various privacy levels and configurations in mind.

We consider it likely that the politicians will grasp their responsibility when it comes to bringing their constituents along when the next intelligence boost hits the world. Artificial intelligence will rely on automated data collection and analysis. Politicians will ultimately understand that they don't have to prevent data sharing, but they do have to create the opportunity for their constituents to allow their data to be autonomously evaluated while still remaining in control of the how, who, when, and why.

Doing so could may even be easier than it sounds, because the data protection of the future means that citizens can view, change, and erase the data that has been saved about them – with a single click. And they will also be able to view, save, or erase the conclusions that AIs have formed about them and their behavior. Obviously, no one will do all this work manually: This is why a business will emerge similar to the market for antivirus software.

This is why we can't afford to predict the future of data protection with the fears and frustrations of the present time. In the world of future studies, opinions and misgivings don't count: Probabilities do. And looking rationally at the situation, we can confidently say the probability that the next law will be a data *sharing* law will be even higher in the post-GDPR world.

SUMMARY:

Data protection in 2025

In the increasingly digitalized world, intelligent assistance systems will be the only way for people to find their way through the chaos of constant and ever-present advertising.

Intelligent assistance systems base their work on real-time analyses and predictive forecasts on individual needs and emotions, on targeting, twinsumer, and recommendation solutions. Information, offers, and services will thus constantly be inserted into consumers' everyday lives.

Data protection is undergoing a permanent paradigm shift. The assumption that citizens don't want to share their data is 80s thinking. Today's population lives in a totally different world. We don't want to keep our data secret: We want to share it!

The data protection of the future means that citizens can view, change, and erase the data that has been saved about them with a single click. The next privacy law won't be a data protection law, but a data sharing law.