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**'Tool clinic' as a technique for interdisciplinary research and dialogue in ICT
design: the case of privacy and user control in online social networks**

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Computer scientists and engineers often tend to frame complex and messy situations as a single problem to be solved by technology. This leads to overconfidence in the envisaged solution, an overemphasis on intended consequences, and a tendency to focus narrowly on one or a few aspects of the problem. It is particularly problematic in the field of privacy and data protection, where new media and ICT are often deeply embedded in mediated communication and everyday context of people and organizations. The interdisciplinary field dealing with media and communication technologies can help in various ways towards better understanding and solving privacy and data protection issues. Techniques that aim at overcoming an overly strong focus on a single 'solution' by eliciting different viewpoints can be very helpful. In this regard different tools and perspectives have been developed to operationalise interdisciplinary and critical ICT research.

A recent addition can be found in Morton et al. (2013), where the idea of 'tool clinics' is proposed as a format for doing this. A tool clinic aims at encouraging a collaborative (re)consideration of a technological solution, research technique or other artefact under development, in order to critically assess its design, development and deployment from multiple perspectives. Another objective is to turn such solutions or artifacts into a tool for formatively exploring the problem space. Finally, a tool clinic can be used to provide those who are developing the solutions with a setting to rethink the framing and presentation of their solutions. Practically, we think of a tool clinic in terms of a structured meeting or series of meetings (not necessarily face-to-face) between an appropriately composed group of researchers and practitioners with different disciplinary, stakeholder-related, etc. backgrounds. The theoretical basis for the tool clinic approach is traced back to the Science and Technology Studies (Feenberg's critical theory of technology), software studies and management sciences (Soft Systems Methodology).

The paper illustrates how a tool clinic can be put into practice in on-going empirical research on user empowerment regarding privacy and user control in online social networks (OSN). More in particular we investigate the relevance and added value in our socio-technical research on affordances of current privacy enhancing technologies (PET) for OSN interacting with structural and social privacy strategies by users. The findings are based on the methods of expert interviews, scenarios analysis and tech cards. This research track is as part of a larger EU-funded project, called 'User Empowerment for Enhanced Online Presence Management' (USEMP). The latter aims at developing a framework that empowers citizens by enhancing their control over the personal data they distribute or interact with.

Multifaceted tools and perspectives – like the tool clinic – can change and broaden the framing of issues like privacy and user control in ICT mediated communication (like OSN) between people. This type of holistic approach takes into account the different stakeholders that are explicitly and implicitly involved in privacy- and data protection-related issues when designing and using new media and ICT. In this regard these tools and perspectives also pull together intended design (encoding) and interpreted design (decoding). It also helps in obtaining a more realistic and multidimensional picture of citizens, their (new) media usage and their communication practices. In the end - with this approach - we aim to contribute to a quasi-ecological validation on two levels: first on the level of the PETs artifacts themselves, and second also on the level of the process of researching and developing future PETs.

REFERENCES

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