**Multi-dimensional privacy policy still in Brownian motion?**

During my working lifetime 'privacy' has gone from 'shutting but not locking the door' to a fundamental European Human right as unintelligible as the UN right (24) to annual paid holiday is to a subsistence farmer. As the hotbed of the industrial revolution, England has form in going around in circles, but the twists and turns of privacy policy can't be reduced to two dimensions, let alone one (left/right) for politicians.

A 'fear of computers getting it wrong' in GDPR over-simplifies the separate issues of lawyers not understanding what's happening and programmers making errors on systems with inadequate specification and testing. Whilst it is seldom the computer hardware at fault, the bogeyman of non-deterministic quantum computing now lurks.

Privacy has overtaken mere 'data protection' and a vociferous lobby group has been influenced by many coming from countries with very different systems of government, control, and attitudes to authorities (as well as concept of 'market'). Data Protection in Europe (including the UK) gained the high moral ground by applying equally to all, regardless of public, private, or some unholy mixture, but lost some credibility when almost everything became 'personal data'.  The cult of the individual gained ascendency; out went any sense of family, friends, community, neighbours, executors or even paid helpers, all to stop large-scale snooping yet ignoring the threat to individuals from small-scale masquerading or denial of service.

Digital initiatives continue to leave a trail of destruction, and frustrated Cassandras – the latest being the settled status for resident non-Irish EU citizens who have no physical paperwork for evidence but only an online system that has not been made available to others, absurdly giving them an advantage in employment and a disadvantage in getting accommodation, either because the landlords don't share the government's enthusiasm for online or because the system isn't working and there's nowhere to turn to get it promptly fixed. As well as systematic failures there are plenty of rare cases seriously harming a few, e.g. not being able to hire a car because the status check fails since the postcode of a home has changed since the licence was issued, and thus either the code doesn't exist or it doesn't match the record. (Telephone helpdesk shut by covid, chat times out after 30 minutes of no response.) Computer says,  "No."

An unpaid privacy advisory group, reformed as a privacy and consumer advisory group offered various privacy principles (numbered 1-9 but in fact many more as many had multiple requirements), and for a while it was asserted that systems under development did (or would eventually) comply with these principles, justified in egocentric terms not necessarily shared by all and ignoring those who wanted or needed help. Arrowe's theorem proves there's no voting system for more than two candidates that would always comply with a set of reasonable principles, and there's probably something similar at work here. (There was also no commercial model with a plausible potential return on investment for the private sector interceder – a system rejected by a 64% Swiss vote, so clearly not something everyone wants.) Is PCAG still whistling in the wind?

There have been so many U turns recently that the policy changes on Identity have gone unremarked, yet there is a sea change between 'putting the customer (sic) first and in control' (Francis Maude's *second* priority in the 2011 launch at the then DTI) and the DCMS line of "a range of digital identity service providers (IDSPs) ***businesses*** can choose from." So regulated market in, user control out.

Even the new Prince of Wales has joined the 'something must be done' bandwagon on AI reinforcing bad messages specifically to children, and thus adding to the trauma of the magical 18th birthday when you are in the deep end and the life belts are no longer available.

**Mark King: 3rd November 2022**