Chapter 7
Towards E–Society Policy
Interoperability for
Social Web Networks

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ABSTRACT

The move toward Policy-Oriented Web is destined to provide support for policy expression and management in the core web layers. One of the most promising areas that can drive this new technology adoption is e-Society communities. With so much user-generated content being shared by these social networks, there is the real danger that the implicit sharing rules that communities have developed over time will be lost in translation in the new digital communities. This will lead to a corresponding loss in confidence in e-Society sites. The Policy-Oriented Web attempts to turn the implicit into the explicit with a common framework for policy language interoperability and awareness. This paper reports on the policy driving factors from the Social Networks experiences using real-world use cases and scenarios. In particular, the key functions of policy-awareness—for privacy, rights, and identity—will be the driving force that enables the e-Society to appreciate new interoperable policy regimes.

1. INTRODUCTION

The e-Society has been a long term dream that the ICT community, amongst others, have moved towards with new technologies over the past decade. The engagement of citizens in e-Societies has enabled greater participation and opportunities for communities to offer “information commons” (Qui, 2008) for digital interactions. Today, we clearly have this dream realised with Social Networks. Social Networks - via the innovative use of Web 2.0 features - have also taken the ICT community by surprise with such rapid uptake and widespread content sharing.
Social Networks attempt to mimic and support normal society interactions and experiences. In many cases, these seem to be working well, such as keeping friends and family in contact and sharing status information. However, the wide-spread sharing of personal and corporate information within Social Networks (e.g., photos, documents) have an impact on policy support, such as privacy and rights management decisions. These issues have now become more relevant as Social Networks have empowered the end user to share even more private content with increasing global reach. Additionally, the providers that offer these services have an immense database of personal information at their disposal.

Generally, Social Networks “provide complex and indeterminate mechanisms to specific privacy and other policies for protecting access to personal information, and allow information to be shared that typically would not follow social and professional norms” (Iannella, 2009). There have been numerous attempts to solve this problem in the past but none have been really successful, nor applicable to the Social Networks community. A new approach is required to manage seamless policy interaction for the e-Society masses. The “Policy-Oriented Web” is an emerging idea to bring greater policy management technologies to the core web infrastructure. This will enable policies to interoperate across Social Network service providers.

In this paper we present e-Society use cases from Social Networks to highlight the driver for the adoption of new interoperable policy technologies. We then present an information model for the Policy-Oriented Web and show some example representations. Finally, we look at related works and conclude with how e-Society - via Social Networks - can lead to greater interoperability opportunities for policies across the wider Web.

2. E-SOCIETY USE CASE: SOCIAL NETWORKS

Social Networks, like FaceBook, Flickr, LinkedIn, Xing, YouTube, and MySpace, have been phenomenally successful. They have achieved this by providing simple yet user empowering features that digitally support the online social experience. In particular, the relative ease of sharing content with close colleagues and friends has driven Social Networks participation. However, this experience can have serious repercussions if the implicit arrangements under which content is shared are not known explicitly, or worse, are not respected.

Two recent examples have highlighted these negative experiences. The first was the use of photographs from Flickr in a commercial advertising program (Cohen, 2007). In this case, the image of a person was used by Virgin Mobile in billboard advertising. They had taken the image from Flickr as the photo owner (the person’s friend) had selected a Creative Commons license that allowed commercial usage. This highlighted two issues; understanding the implications of commercial usage, and publishing images of your friends on public websites. The photo owner had assumed that commercial usage may have enabled him to participate in the financial rewards (it didn’t). His friend who appeared in the photos also had no idea her image was being used, until it was too late (she was not impressed). The lack of understanding the requirement for “model release” permission in the license policy also contributed to this situation.

The second example involved photos from FaceBook being used by the mainstream media to report on the death of a defence force trooper (ABC Media Watch, 2007). The media had used his personal photos from his FaceBook profile - including photos of his family - to print in the national newspapers. At no time did they seek permission to reproduce these images. In some of the media responses to this issue, the assumption was stated that since the photos were on the Internet
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