Casey Bressler

November 11, 2022

SI 206

Project 2 Questions

1. A different proposal for verifying business licenses for short term rental purposes would be to create a separate commission within the city government of San Francisco whose sole purpose is to handle the verification process, along with other potential verification requirements for different uses of a business license. This commission would serve is the bridge between individuals trying to post their listings and Airbnb themselves. Business owners who want to post a listing on Airbnb would first have to go through this new commission in order to gain the ability to post listings on Airbnb. This could be regulated through a separate online portal or some other form of access restriction by the local government. This system would take the burden away from Airbnb or third party users to find and catch the illegal listings and place it on a committee which is there purely to verify these listers. One potential argument against this proposal from Airbnb’s perspective is that this system would add another step that potential listers would have to go through before their listing goes live, so this could serve as a barrier for some people, enough of a barrier potentially to convince them not to post at all if they deem this verification system as too tedious of a process. A potential argument from the side of the SFPO would be that this system would have many costs associated with it, such as setting up and maintaining the portal or system of verification, thus hiring people to maintain it. The SFPO would likely argue that there are more cost-efficient means of solving this problem.
2. One potential research question that I could answer with this data (along with demographic data) would be if there is any correlation between demographic makeup of a state and its associated housing insecurity rates. Using that data would help me, and a potential housing activist organization, by helping show which regions, states, or even specific demographics in these regions could use more assistance from the organization.
3. I think the largest issue on the topic of the legality of web scraping is the balance between free speech and protected information. By posting anything on the internet, you are allowing anyone to see your information, and therefore giving people the right to access the information. As the EFF article discusses, a key determinant within this debate is the issue of what constitutes as free speech in a forum as large and unregulated as the internet.
4. One potential intervention could be where websites must force the authorization of publicly accessed information on websites such as Facebook or Yahoo. I acknowledge that many people do not read the Terms and Conditions, the area where many of these interventions would be included but forcing users to authorize (and furthermore giving users the decision to decline) the public use of their information. A second intervention would be to strictly regulate web scraping from the software and programming side, potentially changing the systems which the internet has relied so heavily upon over its time in existence. The internet as a whole could use many different updates and modernizations in this new era of big data.