

## Alexis Roussel's presentation on making the case for Digital Integrity

Ning, Tien-Tso, 14-10-19

Alexis opens his presentation with a mention of an interesting time near the beginning of his timeline: the time when he remembers working to prepare an event for the U.N. during the emergence of the internet, causing countries from all around the world to make a mad dash for control and power. This, Alexis reminds us, will be the start to the future of a digital society. Included in this digital society, seems to be a universal occurrence of a data black-hole centered around governmental terms such as “national security” and “terrorism,” which trigger an immediate justification for obtaining and collecting any and all forms of digital data. Alexis suggests that the notion of the “right to be forgotten” is an impossible task when it comes to issue of data. Nobody in our age can live in the world (be an active participant of it) and not leave a digital footprint, or have some sort of digital footprint left of them. Thus, the context of data and its implications becomes another topic that warrants discussion when talking about the status-quo. Alexis has a law background, and mentions that in the Swiss Constitution, Article 13 mentions that citizens have the right against abuse of data that concerns them. However, as this is the law we are talking about, vague terms like “abuse” and “data that concerns them” are ever-difficult to prove, and the burden falls on those without the backing nor know-how to fight them. In this current situation, companies have free-reign over digital data of anyone of any kind, since all current laws are built upon this vague article. For instance, Alexis brings the example of MoneyHouse, a company that collects data from spending, and assigns a credit-score based on the data it collects to individuals that it collects the data on. This credit-profile is then bought by companies providing services in order to determine whether or not services should be provided for the individuals in question. Alexis' goal is to make this type of action and business forbidden in the future. He makes the argument that the law is too old and outdated to understand the nuances of the digital society that is already being established and has been establishing itself for the past decades. Alexis argues further that in the Swiss Constitution, there is a mention in Article 10 about the right to life, of both physical and mental integrity. Alexis suggests that the terminology can be expanded to fit the idea of a “digital integrity.” That there are accepted and unaccepted impacts of affecting integrity (physical and mental) and that there should be laws that talk about digital data and digital integrity in the same vein. The notion is about achieving proper consent regarding data, in a world that is ever increasingly becoming about technology and data. Alexis suggests that the emergence of bitcoin proves that transactions can become secure, and the old notions of privacy can be rewritten out and adaptations can be made regarding how services are carried out and provided. The goal is to establish a grammar to discuss the ways in which data has become an integral part of life, and that the ways in which it can be exploited needs to be addressed in the same way if we want to have any chance of achieving a functioning society.

For the most part, I agree with Alexis. Being of a younger generation, I grew up bathing in the wifi-soup so to speak. While others might remember a time before technology was an integral part of life, or struggle with the transition, or perhaps are confused by the entire ordeal, I feel as if I don't remember a time before the current situation. For me, technology, data, and the implications of all of it come naturally as a native-language. While others struggle with the grammar of data, I do not. For me, where I understand Alexis the most is this notion of relating the concept of data to aspects of life itself. For me, I struggle to find the ways to explain why data is so integral the same way that most people struggle to explain why life is so integral. “Why live?” is a question that is difficult to answer because it makes so many assumptions and is so fundamental that there exist little ways to talk about it in a warranted

manner. So, for me, it is very much the same when it comes to data. Since I am of the world of data, I hardly understand how to talk about it in the same manner that it is hard to talk about life – it is something that we take for granted.