Imagining Personal Data Experiences of Self-Tracking: A Speculative Design Approach

Self-tracking technologies have become increasingly popular in recent years, with people using them to track everything from their sleep patterns to their spending habits. These technologies have the potential to provide us with valuable insights into our own lives, and they could also help us to make healthier choices and improve our well-being.

Imagining Personal Data: Experiences of Self-Tracking

by Stefan Ecks

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However, there are also some potential risks associated with self-tracking. One of the biggest concerns is that these technologies could lead to us becoming overly focused on our own data, and that we could start to compare ourselves to others in unhealthy ways. There is also the potential for our data to be collected and used by third parties without our consent, which could lead to privacy violations and other ethical concerns.

In this article, we will explore the potential personal data experiences that could emerge from self-tracking technologies. We will use a speculative

design approach to imagine how these technologies might shape our relationship with our own data. We will also discuss some of the ethical considerations that need to be taken into account as these technologies continue to develop.

Speculative Design Scenarios

Speculative design is a design approach that involves imagining and prototyping possible futures. It can be used to explore the potential benefits and risks of new technologies, and to help us to make better decisions about how to use them.

In this section, we will present three speculative design scenarios that explore the potential personal data experiences of self-tracking. These scenarios are not intended to be predictions, but rather to provoke thought and discussion about the possible futures of self-tracking.

Scenario 1: The Data Mirror

In this scenario, self-tracking technologies have become so advanced that they can provide us with a real-time, 3D visualization of our own data. This data mirror could show us everything from our heart rate and blood pressure to our sleep patterns and spending habits. It could also track our emotional state and our social interactions.

The data mirror could be a powerful tool for self-reflection and self-improvement. It could help us to see patterns in our behavior that we might not be aware of, and it could motivate us to make healthier choices.
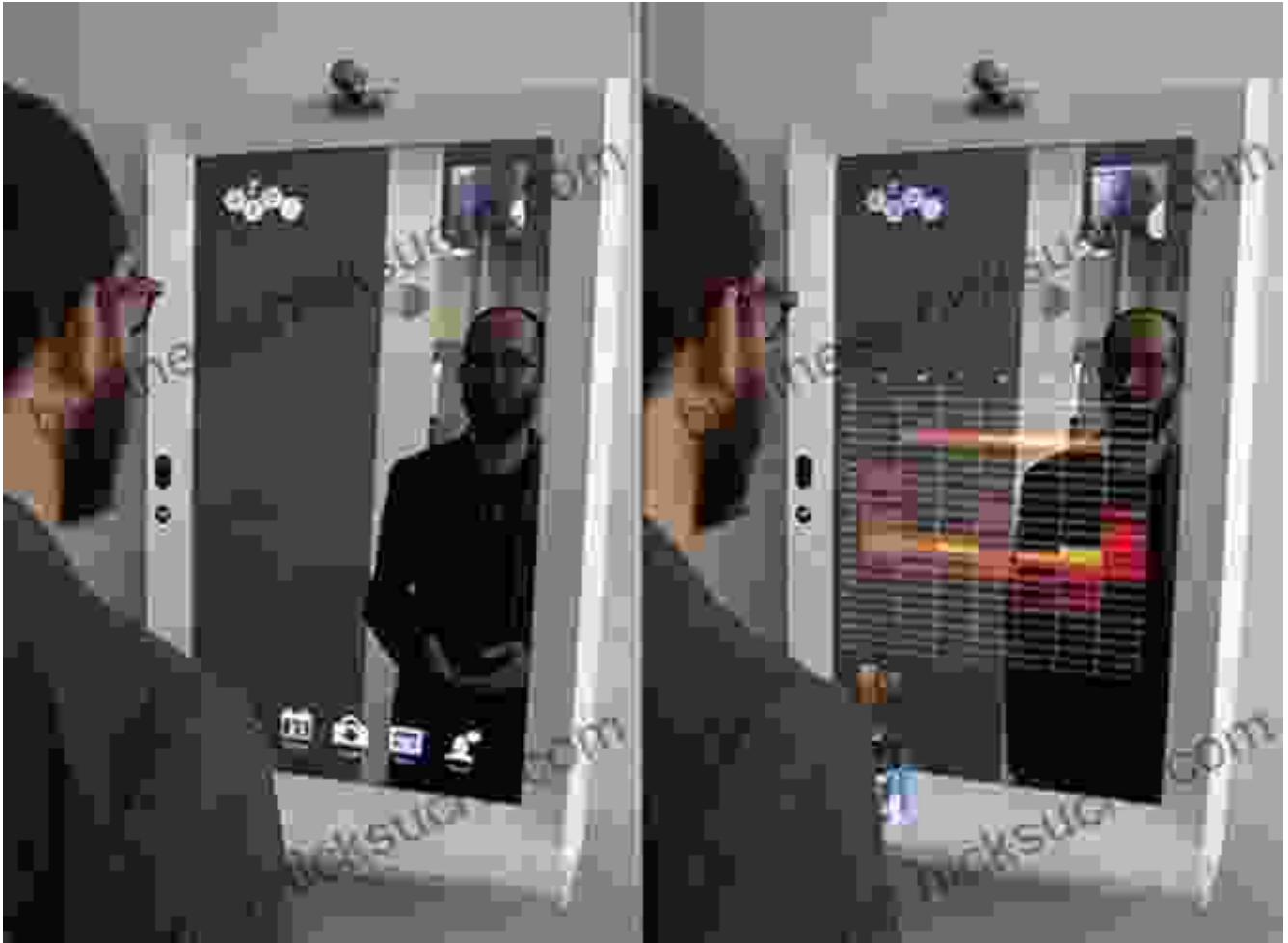
However, the data mirror could also be a source of anxiety and stress. It could lead us to become overly focused on our own data, and it could make us feel like we are constantly being judged.

Scenario 2: The Data Marketplace

In this scenario, self-tracking technologies have become so widespread that our data has become a valuable commodity. We can sell our data to companies in exchange for goods and services.

The data marketplace could create new opportunities for people to earn money and to access new products and services. However, it could also

lead to privacy violations and other ethical concerns.

For example, companies could use our data to target us with advertising or to discriminate against us. They could also sell our data to other companies without our consent.

Scenario 3: The Data Sanctuary

In this scenario, self-tracking technologies have been developed in a way that puts privacy and ethics first. We have complete control over our own data, and we can choose to share it with others only if we want to.

The data sanctuary could empower us to use self-tracking technologies to improve our lives without having to worry about privacy violations or other ethical concerns.

However, the data sanctuary could also be a challenge to implement. It would require us to develop new technologies and policies to protect our data, and it would require us to change our own attitudes towards data privacy.

Ethical Considerations

As self-tracking technologies continue to develop, it is important to consider the ethical implications of these technologies.

One of the most important ethical considerations is privacy. We need to make sure that self-tracking technologies are designed in a way that protects our data from unauthorized access and use.

Another important ethical consideration is autonomy. We need to make sure that people are in control of their own data, and that they can choose to share it with others only if they want to.

Finally, we need to consider the potential for self-tracking technologies to be used for discrimination. We need to make sure that these technologies are not used to create new forms of inequality or to target people with unfair treatment.

Self-tracking technologies have the potential to revolutionize the way we understand and manage our own health and well-being. However, it is important to be aware of the potential risks and ethical concerns associated with these technologies.

By using a speculative design approach, we can imagine possible futures for self-tracking and explore the potential benefits and risks of these technologies. This can help us to make better decisions about how to use self-tracking technologies, and to ensure that these technologies are developed in a way that respects our privacy, our autonomy, and our fundamental human rights.

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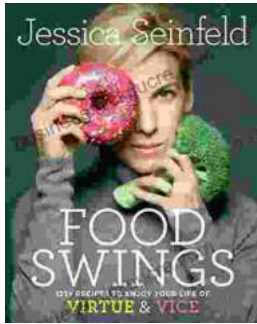|	
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