playing with data and its consequences

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datafication = process through which social reality and social life are transformed/translated into data points
datafication alters the ways in which people enact their citizenship in their everyday practices of participation e.g. open data, data visualization for advocacy, data for good, encryption...
but how do data & engagement with data change activists themselves? e.g. tactics, attitudes, visions
data as socially-constructed technology

cf. technê (τεχνη) making, craftsmanship (Braman 2004)
or “human ability to make and perform” (Shiner 2001, 19)
data activism
= social mobilizations taking a critical stance towards datafication
= sociotechnical practices interrogating the fundamental paradigm shift of datafication
• making sense of data as a way of knowing the world & turning it into a point of intervention
• nesting data countercultures and new, alternative epistemologies
• producer of counter-expertise
data activism takes (at least) two forms:

re-active
pro-active
enabled and constrained by software emerges from pre-existing movements such as open source and hacker subcultures... but seeks to reach new publics.
in-depth interviews with 40 data activists

sampling criteria:
i) data infrastructure; ii) self-definition; iii) tactics; iv) social change goals
<table>
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<tr>
<th>Change Type</th>
<th>Biographical</th>
<th>Action repertoires</th>
<th>Empowerment</th>
<th>Epistemologies</th>
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<td>Career</td>
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<td>new challenges</td>
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#1 change in **biographical circumstances** personal and career path conversions (often towards advocacy)

“I realized the kind of projects I was doing were just projects, without any other extra incentive. So... we started a different company, focused on civic engagement, data visualization and transparency”
#2 evolution of action repertoires beyond tools and methodologies towards hybridization. collaboration, new languages
<table>
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<th>Before</th>
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<tr>
<td>Journalism</td>
<td>development of secretive sources and leaks; application of freedom of information laws; conventional non-fiction writing; fact-based story telling</td>
<td>development of sources WikiLeaks-style (millions of documents); hybridization (multimedia, transmedia, cartoons, data, graphic novel, activism); employment of new languages for impact (i.e. maps, infographics); use of data to tell stories through patterns and correlations; use of data analysis to find stories; collaboration and alliances to tackle bigness and complexity</td>
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<td>Activism</td>
<td>conventional message-developing, protesting, denunciation and campaigning</td>
<td>hybridization (research, journalism, transmedia, data visualizations); adoption of data infrastructure for transparency, advocacy and communication</td>
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<td>Research</td>
<td>traditional report writing (executive summaries for policy makers, report design)</td>
<td>work in alliances to tackle complexity; tools that tackle breadth, width and depth; hybridization (activism, data visualizations, animation videos with data visualizations, story-telling and narrative techniques); new languages (i.e. infographics, maps); intensive data mining; increasing reliance on crowdsourced data; more focus on impact</td>
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<tr>
<td>Architecture</td>
<td>top down conventional architecture</td>
<td>participative methodologies; incorporation of the IoT; advocacy slant</td>
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<td>Epidemiology</td>
<td>conventional statistics; antibiotics and vaccines</td>
<td>participative methodologies; social slant; the return to the clinical experience and the real world; a focus on the patient; hybridization (anthropology, sociology, economics); use of data-based maps in early warning and crises</td>
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#3 self-empowerment and the empowerment of others

“statistics are no longer the realm of a few gurus”
data shed light on dark corners: “data are powerful weapons that serve to render visible social issues based on facts, rather than conjecture”
“we promote a culture of data (...) for example: every time the unemployment rate is updated, you get headlines on some newspapers saying that it has fallen, but on some other papers that it has increased. This is crazy! We want people to have easy tools to allow them to access real information and form their own opinions”

“the challenge is to combine these new insights with action; that is, fusing scientific knowledge with the human factor”
#4 new epistemologies

data activism as bearer of alternative visions and knowledge

“new” activism
“new” paradigms
“new” viewpoints
increased complexity
how “amazing” it is “to be able to report and improve accountability processes with patients and populations about data that has been gathered clinically or by the same populations, and then being able to use the analysis either to simply inform people… or to act upon a situation. (...) this changes the previous paradigm, because what you get is an active, well-informed, participative population. It is putting epidemiology in the hands of people. By doing that, population medicine goes back to its own roots in individual health, and it does so via the analysis of the accumulation of individual data, for the benefit of both the whole population and the individuals. It is a perfect circle”
muchas gracias
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