

**Interviewee:** Dr. Ann Cavoukian (Founder & CEO at Global Privacy & Security by Design) and the former Ontario privacy commissioner

**Interviewer:** Abdelhameed Mohamed

**Interview Setting:** Online Meeting (Zoom)

**Interview Date:** 19-10-2022

**Interview Time:** 5 PM (CET)

*Abdelhameed*

First, I want to thank you for accepting my invitation. The second thing, I want to tell you that I am one of your fans. I believe that there are many fans around the world for you. I am one of them. I studied well your previous interviews and I will start from where these interview ended.

*Do you believe that when we de-identify the personal data on source that will led (definitely) to securing the data privacy?*

*Dr. Ann*

No, I believe that de-identification is the key, but you have to do it strongly, very strongly de-identify the personal data. So that it can't be re-identified. And, you know, these days, with all the technology, there are more and more measures that seem to suggest that data can't be de-identified. So now new forms of technology, like synthetic data, are being introduced, which not only de-identify the data, but it basically replaces the data and prevents any form of re-identification. So those are the measures we will have to grow into.

*Abdelhameed*

Great. Also, you mentioned in your previous interviews that in the meeting when Sidewalks said, okay, we will de-identify the data, but they didn't make it mandatory for other entities to de-identify the data on source.

*Could sidewalks technically make it obligatory for other entities to de-identify the data on source?*

*Dr. Ann*

Well, they would have been able to make the action, but they chose not to. That's the problem. I think sidewalks Labs retained me to embed privacy by design into their smart city. I was delighted, but I said it's not going to be easy. You're going to have to insist upon certain measures like strong de-identification and they said, fine. Then as the project rolled on, they pulled back and they said, well, we will encourage companies to de-identify data, but we can't make them do that. And as soon as they said that, I knew I had to leave. I had to. I handed in my

resignation and said: “You can't make this a choice. You have to insist upon data being de-identified”. Then you're free to do what you want with it. You have much greater freedom of the use of the data, but if you don't strongly de-identify the data and strip all the personal identifiers, it's not going to happen.

*Abdelhameed*

I want to tell you about your resignation, that it didn't only raise a flag to sidewalks about what's happening in the project, but I believe it raised a flag to all of us working in the smart city field that we have to take care how personal data are dealt with.

*On the other hand, while I was studying the available KPIs related to data privacy, I found some defined indicators like the city key indicators for the Philippine Union and the ITU. Those indicators don't deal with the topic of de-identifying personal data on source. It talks about how you will deal, manage and store those data. And it talks about maybe having some consent from the citizens that their personal data can be used. What is your opinion concerning these KPIs?*

*Dr. Ann*

No, that's not sufficient. And let me tell you, it may be a good intention on the part of these companies. They're going to obtain the consent of the data subjects to use their data. But the thing is, people data subjects, when they consent to this, they have no idea of the scope of what's going to happen to their information and their lives and that's the problem. So that is not sufficient. You must strongly de-identify and let me tell you, I'm working now with a group called Innovate Cities and that is exactly what they're doing. And I said to them, just like I said, you know, before, if you don't strongly strip the data of all personal identifiers, I'm out of here, I'm going to leave. And they said, No, no, that's why we're coming to you. We know what you did before with Alphabet, and we want very much to have smart cities, but they are truly privacy protected. So I'm working with Innovate Cities now, and we're just about to embark on a new project. Exactly. Doing that. So I know it's difficult at times to do, but I encourage everyone in this area. You must find ways to strip all of the personal identifiers from the data, because then it frees you to use the data in ways that you are interested in. And it also, once all personalized benefits are removed, then privacy laws no longer apply to it because there's no personally identifiable data. So it's a win-win, but you must very strongly de-identify the data.

*Abdelhameed*

Great, but to measure this, because, as you know, we always try to talk about measurable KPIs. That's why I was searching about what is the KPI that can provide me with a measurable value for the data privacy. I found few including that of the ITU.

*So do you think that we need a new KPI in those Smart City projects that can measure whether data has been de-identified on source or not?*

*Dr. Ann*

It's not a bad idea where I stand in terms of my work with Innovate Cities now what I will be doing, I will be doing. I will examine every project they engage in in terms of any data being collected, and I will ensure before putting my stamp on it that no personal identifiers are collected, nor can there be a risk of re-identification from somewhere. They find data and they put it back together. No, that cannot be possible. So stay tuned. Work with me. That is, unless you know the developments and I think we're going to be successful.

*Abdelhameed*

Great. My last question is related to what are devices that can you give for the people who are putting the strategy for a new smart city related, of course, to the data privacy?

*Dr. Ann*

What I would urge them is start from a place of no data collection in terms of personal information. You have to start there because the minute you collect the data and then you're going to strip it of personal identifiers, you still run a risk. So the best advice is right at the outset, don't collect any personally identifiable data you can. There's lots of data out there with which are not linked to personal identifiers, and you can use that data for a variety of purposes in terms of planning, etc. your smart city. But do not run the risk of subjecting yourself to privacy measures from privacy commissioners, etc. because you have personal identifiers collected that will kill your smart city. Don't do it.

*Abdelhameed*

Thank you so much for your time. Again, I'm one of your fans. Thank you so much. And please keep me connected with you to know what the updates at this field are because it's very, very important. Thank you so much.

*Dr. Ann*

Thanks Mohamed. It's my pleasure.