

INVITED LECTURE

Dr. Mark Coté

King's College - London

AULA 21 Marzo - PALAZZO PEDAGAGGI
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Super SDKs: A Taxonomy for Personal Data and Monopolisation in the Mobile Ecosystem

The mobile application (app) market was worth \$420.73 billion in 2022, an increase of 95% since 2018, and projected to grow to an astonishing £542.89 billion by 2026. This lecture will present an innovative socio-technical method to study Software Development Kits (SDKs), seemingly obscure technical objects that are at the centre of the capture, circulation, and processing of our personal data, the primary resource for this extraordinary monetisation. SDKs offer a range of services that are both indispensable for developers when building an app, and to its monetisation, particularly regarding advertising. Invisible to users and largely ignored by regulators, SDKs are the primary site of data exchange between an app and third parties, thus presenting considerable risk to user privacy. They are also the most important technical object for the expansion of giants like Google and Facebook, and for platform monopolisation. I will present a taxonomy (Pybus and Coté 2023) which identifies key areas of personal data capture, for services like ProgrammaticAdTech, which includes intensive user tracking and profile building; App Development, including integrating advanced AI capacities like voice or text recognition, and thus accessing user data for training; and, App Enhancement, including data-hungry third-party authentication. I will conclude outlining workshop and explainability approaches offering attestation for more robust privacy regulations around mobile SDK governance.