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The Tragedy of Meta Information

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Ten years after the Murrays' announcement, the sensors are indeed inexpensive and ubiquitous. Nevertheless, the vision of "electronic skin" is still a remote dream. Indeed, an operational world-wide Sensor Web is more than just a sum of its parts: all information has to be available in easily discoverable, retrievable, and understandable form.

In reality, only a few observations are readily available on the web, and even fewer provide meta-information required for its discovery, understanding and automatic processing.

The "tragedy" of meta information, as already identified by ORCHESTRA, an FP6-Integrated Project, is that the "appropriate" meta information depends on the intended use, which in turn can never be known in advance. For example, the set of meta-information required by a scientist interested in climate change may be very different from the meta-information required for automatic report generation in the context of "Clean Air For Europe" (CAFE) directive.

The recently started FP7 "TaToo" project proposes an alternative to a fruitless quest for defining and maintaining an all-encompassing meta-information model. In this talk, we will present TaToo's approach for distributed generation and maintaining of multiple, semantically linked meta-information sets based on community input, and discuss the challenges, potential benefits and advantages (e.g. long-term sustainability) of a community-driven meta information generation.