TRACK YOURSELF AND SHARE WITH US.
DIGITAL SELF-TRACKING AS A SOCIAL PRACTICE.

Bernadette Kneidinger-Müller
University of Bamberg, Germany

Introduction

Mobile and wearable digital devices connected to the Internet are not only communication and information tools but become more and more important for the self-monitoring of individual life habits. Self-Tracking, also referred to as life-logging, quantified self or personal informatics, describes "the practice of systematically recording information about one's diet, health, or activities, typically by means of a smartphone, so as to discover behavioral patterns that may be adjusted to help improve one's physical or mental well-being" (Oxford Dictionary). The presentation intends to show why self-tracking can be seen as an expression of how the "rules" of the Internet can change the way how personal data is handled.

Self-tracking from a sociological perspective
The self-tracking "hype" does not appear from nowhere; in fact it can be seen as a reflection of technological and social changes. Self-tracking confirms the cultural expectations of the importance of self-awareness, reflection and responsibility and gives the users tools for managing themselves and improving their lives (Lupton 2014a: 12). Therefore, many sociologists use Foucauldian perspectives (Foucault 1988) to analyze self-tracking practices as an expression of a contemporary selfhood (cf. Selke 2014: 191f, Elliott 2013). Self-tracking can help people feel more control of their lives (Li et al. 2010; Choe et al. 2014; Nafus & Sherman, 2014; Ruckenstein 2014) and reduce latent fears (Selke 2014: 184), especially in a world in which traditional social structures disappear (Lupton 2014b: 4). Elliott resumes that the new individualism of late modern societies goes along with a reinvention of the self and the body (Elliott 2013).

The social dimension of self-tracking
Monitoring features of one´s life and using the data for self-reflection is nothing new. Long ago people like to store memories and life data in journals or diaries or record body related data (Swan 2013: 85). Some people are still using pen-and-paper recordings but today these methods are amplified by a growing range of digital self-tracking tools (Fox & Duggan 2013). Especially the digitalization of self-observation data amplifies the ways of sharing such individual life data using various forms of computer-mediated communications and online platforms (Nafus & Sherman 2014). Therefore, self-tracking may not be analyzed as an individual practice but have to be seen as a

profound social and communicative practice (Lupton 2014b: 1f, Selke 2014: 185, Lomborg & Frandsen 2015).

Despite a body of literature is beginning to emerge that addresses the social, cultural and political dimensions of self-tracking (Lupton 2013,2014a,b, Nafus & Sherman, 2014; Ruckenstein, 2014), only a few studies analyze motivational factors for self-tracking systematically. According some of these rare studies, important reasons for using self-tracking tools are the wish to become aware of one's own behavior, make better decisions and change behaviors to optimize one's life (Li et al. 2010, Choe et al. 2014). Furthermore, the sharing of self-tracking data in the context of social online or offline interactions has hardly been explored.

The research questions
This paper will attempt to close the mentioned research gap and give a more detailed insight in motivational and social factors of self-tracking practices. Answers should be given to the following research questions:
RQ1: What are the motivations for different forms of digital self-tracking?
RQ2: What are people doing with their self-tracking data?
RQ3: How do self-tracking data become part of social interactions?

The empirical project
These questions will be answered using the findings of a two-step qualitative study of 28 German self-tracking users. In a first step, a diary study, all participants documented for one week all forms of self-tracking practices including details about sharing, location, motivation, used application etc. of every self-tracking activity. In a second step, the participants are asked in guided interviews about their experiences of and motives for using self-tracking practices including their sharing behavior of the data. For the further analysis, the diary and the interview data are combined and their implications for a better understanding of the life-tracking practices are discussed. The findings indicate that more than half of the interviewees share at least some of their self-observation data with others. The main motivations for sharing self-tracking data are self-presentation and getting support, social validation and advices from others. Furthermore data sharing is experienced as a way of archiving personal data. Less important appear the motivation of social comparison or a habitual sharing behavior. Nevertheless people who share self-tracking data appreciate getting social reactions to their individual data that become part of the self-evaluation process. On contrary, those users that use self-tracking data strictly in private, show less competitive motives for self-tracking activities and in general less personal interest in the collected data than the sharers. Additionally, the perception of privacy strongly depends on the monitored aspect. Areas that are experienced generally as something quite intimate or sensitive such as financial, sleep or diet data are less frequently shared that data about athletic performances, media usage, social interactions or visited locations.

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