RESEARCH DATA FOR HUMANİTİES

SWİSS HİSTORİANS AND THEİR USER STORİES

JASMİN HÜGİ, RENÉ SCHNEİDER

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OVERVİEW

- Introduction
  - The story behind
  - An inconvient truth
  - Research data and humanities
- Case study: historians, data and research infrastructures
- User stories
- Conclusions

THE STORY BEHİND

- SPHERE (Semantic Publishing for E-science and Research)
- A common research project run by the Haute Ecole de Gestion Geneva (University of Applied Sciences) and infoclio, the Swiss Portal for Historical Sciences.

- The project itself was prepared by a scientific study: «Digital research infrastructures for Humanities and Historical Sciences».

AN İNCONVENİENT TRUTH

- Historians are considered to be those scientists that are most sceptical towards sources from the web.
  - Scientific method of work in archives
  - Scepticism as general mindset or conditio sine qua non for historical sciences

AN INCONVENİENT TRUTH (CONTİNUED)

- Could this be an obstacle for the creation of research infrastructures and research data management?

- Historians "ignore the future of digital data at their own peril" if they do not "ensure the future of their own scholarship" which involves new prospects such as "linking directly from footnotes to electronic texts"

Rosenzweig, Roy. 2003: “Scarcity or abundance? Preserving the Past in a Digital Era.”

American Historical Review 108, no.3, (June): 735-762, paragraph 64.

RESEARCH DATA AND HUMANİTİES

- A difficult matter.
- Humanities traditionally have a multi-perspective approach and principally do not allow the creation of a generic research process.
- Historical sciences have (had) a tendency to isolated solutions which is difficult to overcome.

RESEARCH DATA AND HUMANİTİES

- Digitization is often seen as a surrogate for data.
- The line between data and analysis is very thin, since analyzed data (interpretations) may quickly become new data for further scientists (recursive process).

Burrows, Toby. "Sharing humanities data for e-research: conceptual and technical issues." (2011).

SİTUATİON İN SWİTZERLAND

- Federal law for the promotion of research and innovation
  - Respectation of rules for good scientific practice

- Swiss Academy of Science
  - Storage of data and materials for a period that is considered as adequate for the discipline that created it

CASE STUDY

- How far are historical sciences concerned by the problems of research data and research infrastructures?
- What are research data in historical sciences?
  - Do they exist?
  - If yes, which form do they have?
- What are the attitudes, expectations and needs of historians in Switzerland concerning digital research infrastructures?

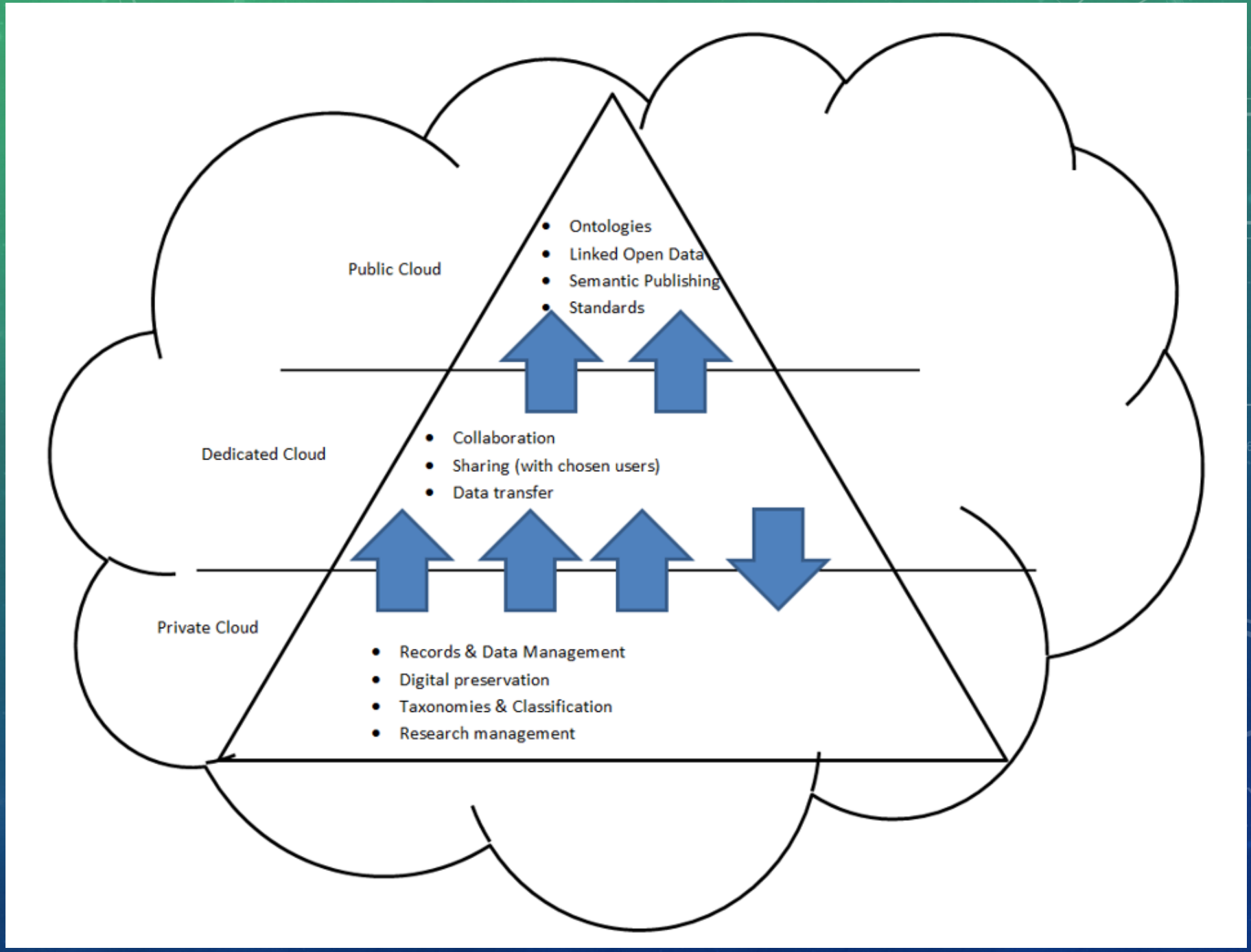
METHOD

- Qualitative study
- Guided interviews
- 8 participants from all parts of Switzerland (mainly Zurich, Basel, Bern, Lausanne and Geneva) plus 2 historians working for infoclio.ch

QUESTİONS ASKED

- Questions concerning
  - Research activity and methods used
  - Research data
  - Digital Infrastructures

STİMULUS


Public Cloud
Ontologies
Linked Open Data
Semantic Publishing
Standards
Dedicated Cloud
Collaboration
Sharing (with chosen users)
Data transfer
Private Cloud
Records & Data Management
Digital preservation
Taxonomies & Classification
Research management

REACTİONS: PRİVATE CLOUD

- «Why?»
- «Highest priority»
- «All activities and tools mentioned for the private cloud should become part of studies and training.»

REACTİONS: DEDİCATED CLOUD

- «That’s what I already do with DropBox, GoogleDocs and Litlink»
- «That’s what we need in Humanities!»

REACTİONS: PUBLİC CLOUD

- Too abstract.
- Almost surreal!
- «No need for such a thing, if publications are not open access at the same time!»

OVERALL REACTİON

4/10: «No need for one single infrastructure who does it all!»

RESULTS

- Everything that historical sciences produces can be declared as research data.
- Historical sciences do not produce nor have such thing as research data.

- A wide range of different expectations towards a digital research infrastructure.

USER STORİES

- Every interview was subsumed in a user story.

- Every user story has the same syntactic structure:
- As «role» I «needs» in order to «benefit».

USER STORY 1

Role	Need	Benefit
As (male) historian	I would like to have *one single interface* for all repositories that exist in Switzerland,	in order to find relevant documents faster and to avoid learning several interfaces.

USER STORY 2

Role	Need	Benefit
As (male) historian	I would like to have a free choice of *auxiliary means* for the organization of documents, ressources and knowledge,	in order to do efficient research.

USER STORY 3

Role	Need	Benefit
As (female) historian	I want to have access to a ranked and rated list of *relevant tools,*	in order to choose the appropriate tool.

USER STORY 4

Role	Need	Benefit
As (male) historian	I want to have access to *more literature and sources,*	in order to improve the quality of my research.

USER STORY 5

Role	Need	Benefit
As (female) historian	I want to hand over *data bases* to an infrastructure,	in order to assure a sustainable storage of those data bases.

USER STORY 6

Role	Need	Benefit
As (male) historian	I want to be able to use *software* over an infrastructure or to download it from this infrastructure,	so that all my project partners have the same working environment and are able to exchange data with ease.

USER STORY 7

Role	Need	Benefit
As (female) historian	I don’t want to have any *restrictions* of my research process caused by an infrastructure ,	so that I may always use the method that suits best to my research question.

USER STORY 8

Role	Need	Benefit
As (female) historian	I want to have exact information about the *quality* of the data provided,	to make the right decision concerning its re-use.

USER STORY 9

Role	Need	Benefit
As (male) historian	I need *support and assistance* for collaboration and structured collaboration ,	that promotes collaborative research projects.

CONCLUSİONS – RİSK ANALYSİS

- The provision of an infrastructure is not considered as necessary.
- Infrastructure is not user-friendly and therefore rejected.
- Data Management means more work – where is the added value?

CONCLUSİONS – USER STORİES

- User stories collected in this study may be useful for
  - the development of research infrastructures, resp. their functionalities,
  - the evaluation of those infrastructures.

QUESTİONS?

RENE.SCHNEİDER@HESGE.CH