

Pooling Data: Cooperative Barriers to Innovation

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This Article examines a collective action problem challenging innovation and social welfare in the new frontier of Big Data. The problem's outlines are starkly simple: Big Data, a new methodology of drawing valuable insights from pooled industrial and scientific datasets, holds the potential to spur technological growth, but individual data holders often lack sufficient incentives to absorb the costs and risks associated with collaboration. As this dilemma quietly plays out within and across industries, it threatens to undermine private and public investments in Big Data as a platform for innovation. Through a set of ethnographic case studies, this Article paints a detailed portrait of the data-pooling problem in just one industry—healthcare—and explores its broader implications for innovation policy and theory.