



Institute for Business Ethics

University of St.Gallen

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The tech company dilemma

How do companies react to government requests for user data?

B&HR interdisciplinary workshop, 24 November 2019





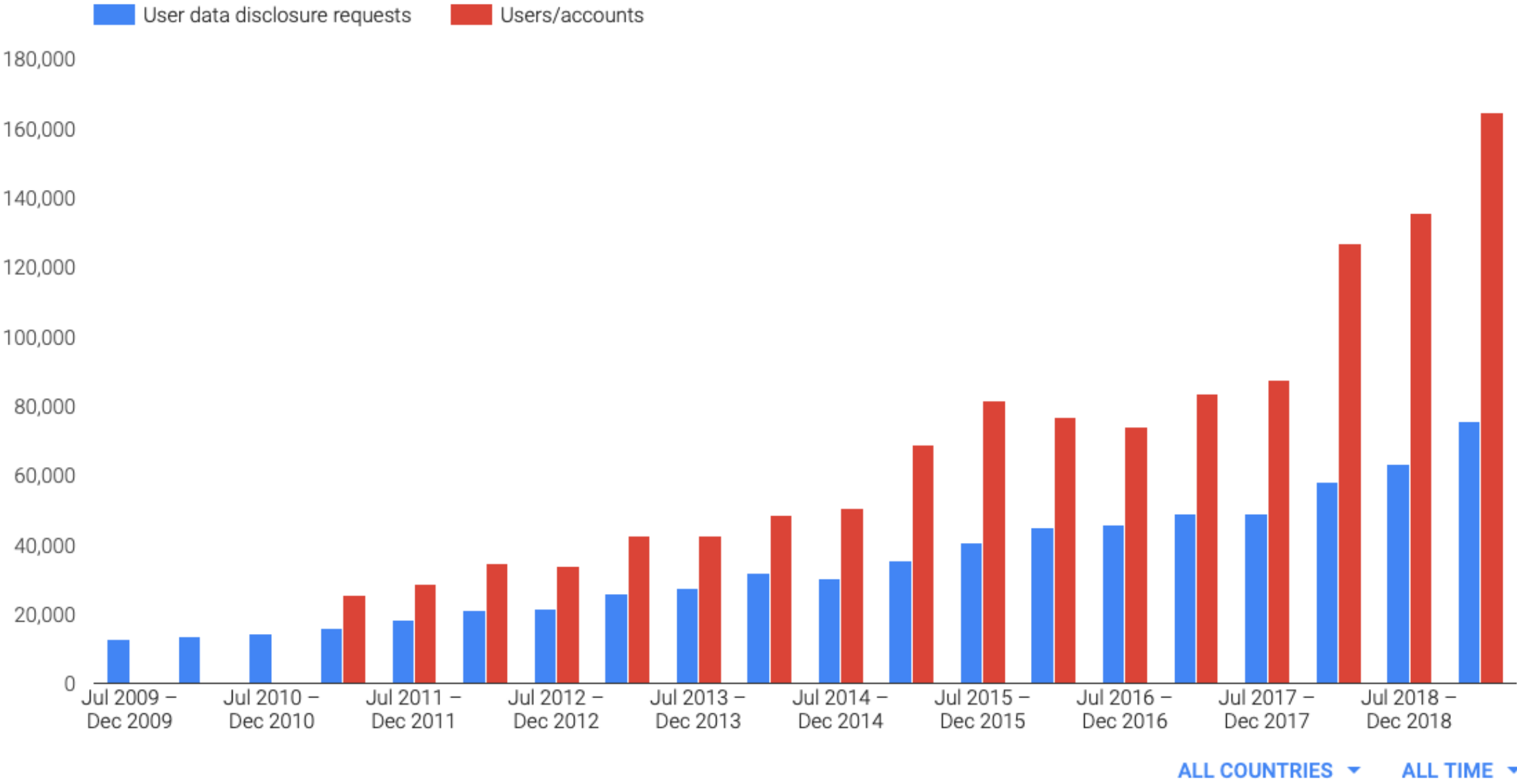
Who will
ensure her
privacy is
protected?





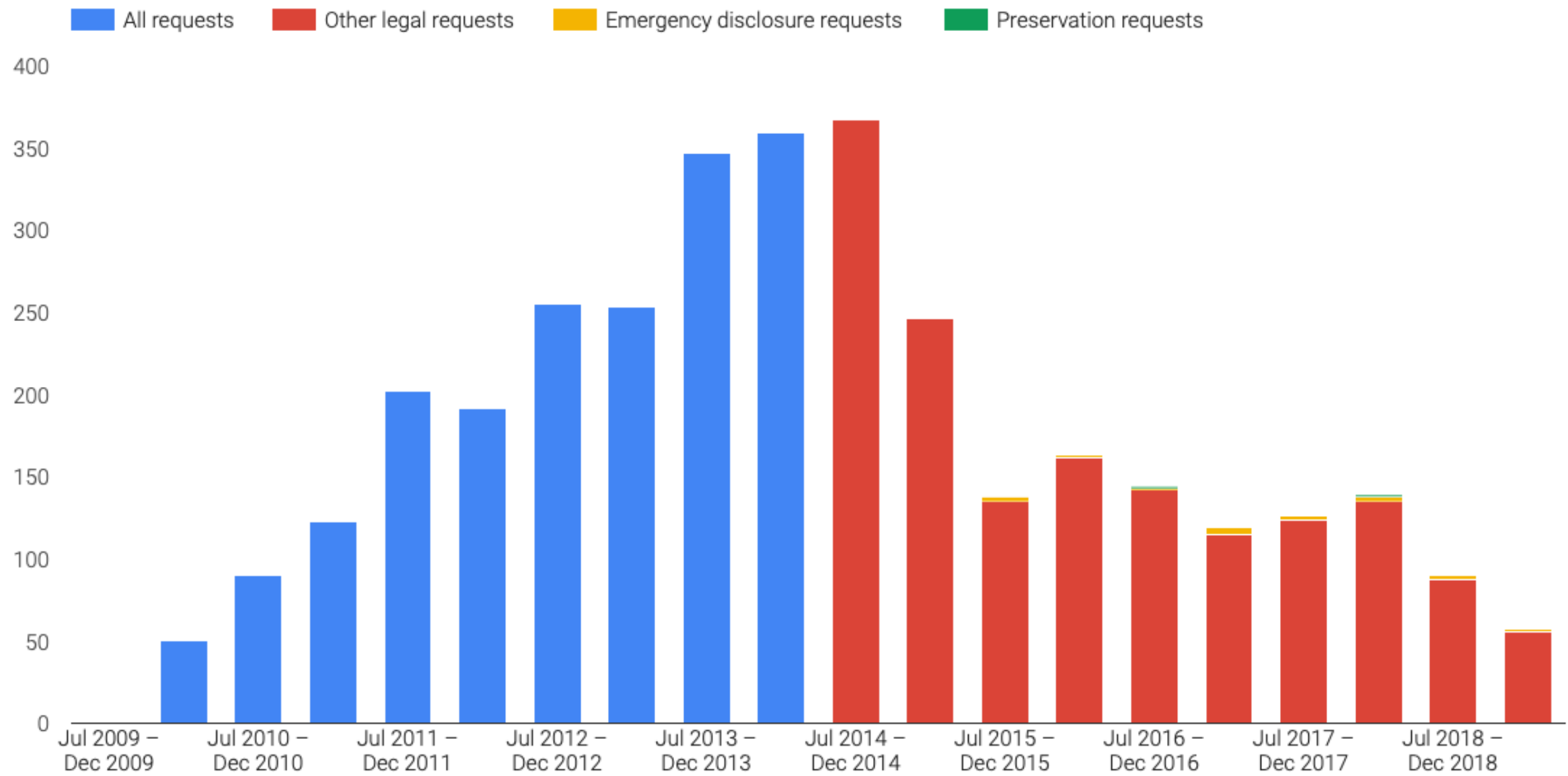
Who stores the majority
of user data worldwide?

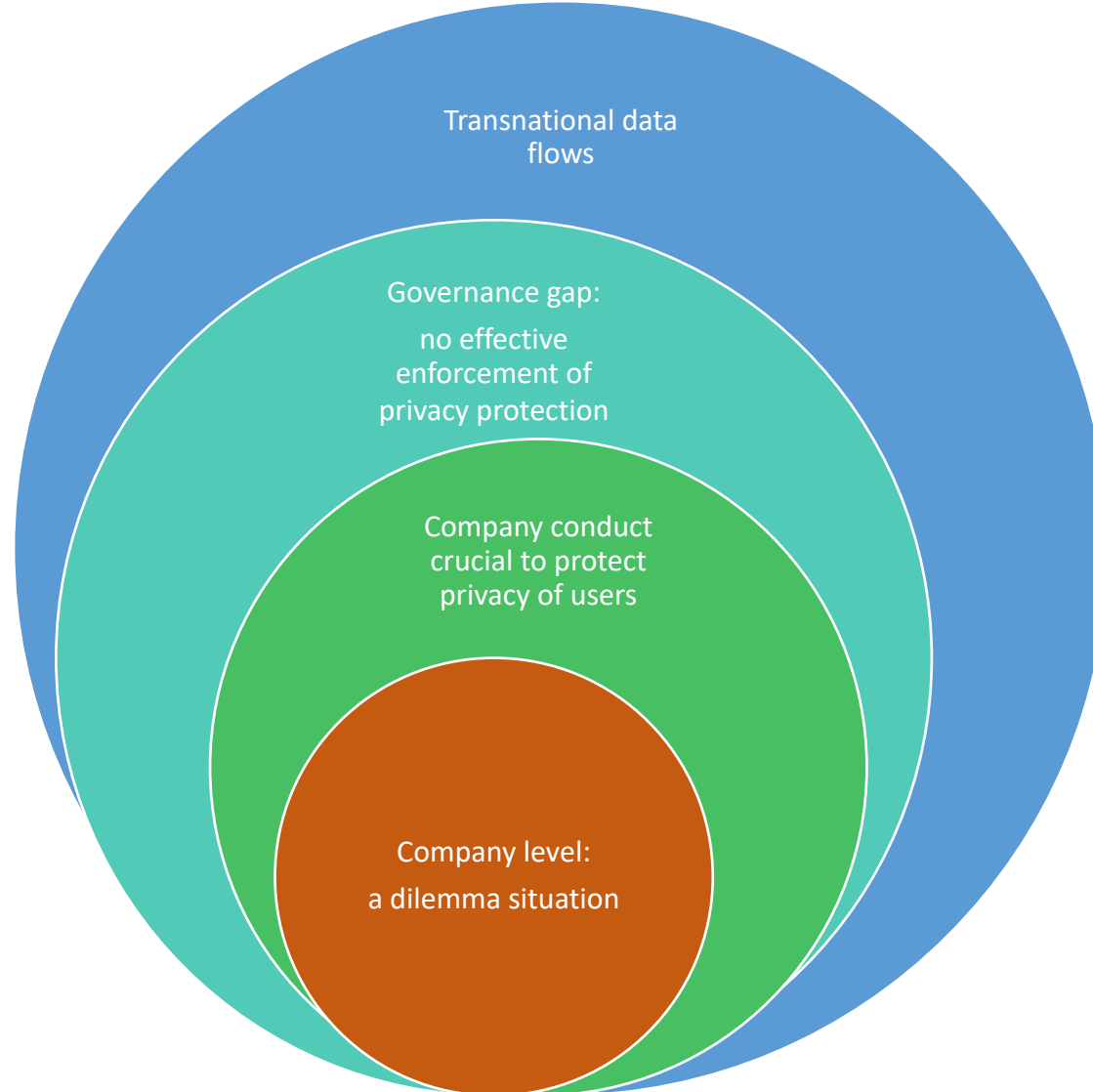
Overview

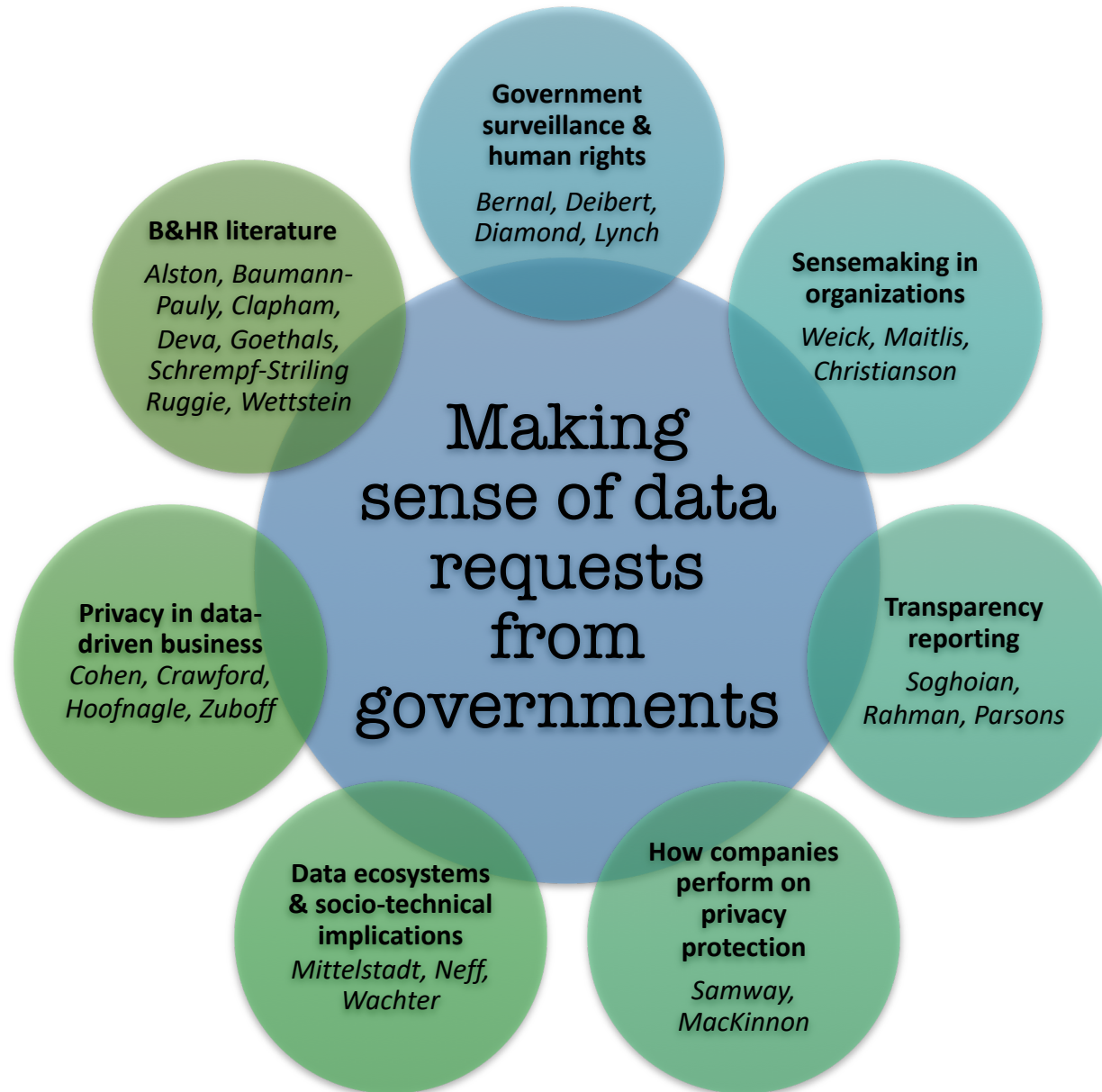




Overview: Hong Kong









**Sensemaking as an ongoing process to create order and make sense of what occurs
(Weick, Maitlis)**

Research sample:

- Sectors with high exposure to govt. data requests: Telecommunications, platforms
- Emerging: Automotive



COMPANY LEVEL

policies, practices and
strategies

Internal process

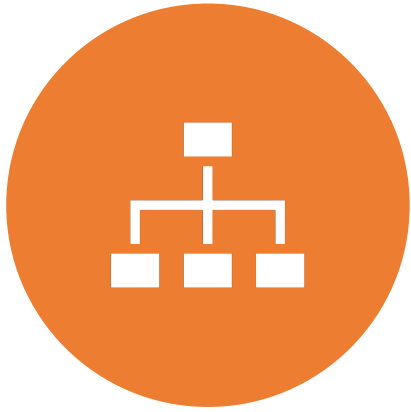
External engagement



Reaction to
government
requests for
user data?



- **25 interviews** with senior management & experts working with tech companies on disclosure requests (duration 1-2 hour/s)
- Qualitative data analysis using thematic coding (Atlas.ti8)
- Engagement on preliminary results
- Planned: Roundtable for engagement on research findings



ORGANIZATIONAL FACTORS AND STRUCTURES

How interdependency and differentiation of roles exists in the organization?

How much agency do actors have?



SHARED UNDERSTANDING IN THE ORGANIZATION

How do individuals hold different pieces of information?

Are they able to collectively construct a new meaning?

Are goals diverse?



EARLY ACTIONS TAKEN

How do early actions determine the trajectory of the crisis?

Inaction as the absence of action can have as much influence as action here.



Organizational factors and structures



Locating Responsibility



Managerial strategy defines relationship between headquarter & subsidiary: “blame the group policy vs. local accountability”



“Group will have to report on this incident to the London Stock Exchange”



Early actions taken



Public ambiguity vs. internal staffing strategy



Some companies claim that ambiguity in their public policies on dealing with data disclosure requests helps to push back request



Yet staffing in company with former govt. people can lead to increased cooperation with govt. (revolving door)



strategy of preserving ambiguity and preserving discretion as a means to protect users...consistent with how these companies operate and how lawyers might be advising them to operate



Shared understanding in the organization



Nature of the local government



Incalculable behaviour => corporate emergency strategy



Company wide awareness raising



„Governments pick a completely random person within the company who is usually never on a daily basis dealing with requests“



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Thank you!

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