

Hi, my name is Alexandre Bertails.

I work for the World Wide Web Consortium, also known as W3C.

We standardize the technologies for the Web.

I'd like to share with you my understanding about how Social Media work today, and see if we can improve them, and how.

In order to be social, I need an identity.

Well, I should say my identities, because I have so many of them.

Most of my family and friends know me as <https://www.facebook.com/bertails>.

Others refer to me as <https://twitter.com/bertails>

But I also have accounts on

Google plus, Wikipedia, Fourquare, and so on.

Hold on. That is crazy!

Why the hell so many identities?

Can't I use my real identity, <http://bertails.org>?

Ok, let's say I have an identity that I can share,
now I need a Social Network to interact with.

Let's see.

I have hundreds of friends on Facebook,
then hundreds of followers on Twitter,
then there is Google Plus, LinkedIn...

I have no way to unify my relationships through all the
different Social Networks...

Because for them, people only exist for their own
service.

And what about the usage?

According to Wikipedia,

Social Media are all about sharing content.

If I want to do micro-blogging, I'll go on Twitter.

For my favorite places, it will Foursquare.

For collaborative content, it's Wikipedia,

To share videos, Youtube

pictures will be on Facebook, and my resume on LinkedIn.

It's like every Website put me in a silo,

and I can't escape from them.

because they own my "identity",

my "social network",

and my content.

The least we can say is that -- as a user -- I don't have much control over the Medium.

So let's see how we can improve that.

Having that kind of Websites is not what we want.

My point is that we can use the Web ITSELF to leverage social media.

We call it the Social Web. And it's possible, NOW.

Actually, I'm sure that you have already identified a pattern in your usage of Social Media on the Web, but you're maybe not fully aware of it yet.

Have you realized how we speak about things -- or resources -- on the Web?

We refer to them as HTTP URIs,
for Uniform Resource Identifier.

That's good, because we are ALREADY able to speak about
Web content like Videos, Pictures or Websites,
but also about people AND things

For example,

The video you are currently watching has its own URI
Look at the URL bar in your browser

Also, Wikipedia gives you is an easy way to refer
uniquely to abstract concepts.

Use the page for Barack Obama to speak about Barack
Obama as a Person

So remember: ONE CONCEPT EQUALS ONE HTTP URI.

But that's not enough,
we need *just* a bit more
in order to describe RELATIONSHIPS between THINGS on
the Web.

For example: + GESTURE

Alex	http://bertails.org/alexandre#me
knows	http://xmlns.com/foaf/0.1/knows
Eve	http://tastet.org/eve#me

And then, I could say that every person that I know
can comment on the Videos I share

That's a new kind of content, it's DATA.

So we need Data ON the Web,
that can be UNDERSTOOD by both
Humans and
Machines

through SHARED vocabularies.

And guess what, it's already out there

It's called

Linked Data

<http://linkeddata.org/>

And it's taking off in many areas,
just not yet for Social Media,
mainly because of the lack of tools and infrastructure.

So, how does it work?

I'm glad you ask.

To understand, just think about your **Web browser**

you give it a document as an HTTP URI

it **gets** the document

it **displays** it so that you can read it,

and from there, you **discover** new documents by following the links

That's the **Web of Documents** as we already know it.

Linked Data -- and here more specifically the Social Web -- is very **similar**.

Let's assume that your identity is just an HTTP URI.

And under this URI, instead of a document,
we put **data that can be processed by a machine.**

This time, the machine -- a **Linked Data browser** --
will **get** the data
and **extract** the interesting bits of information

You may use that information to **authenticate** yourself
with this Web identity

Or learn more about your social network
because **here again, you can follow links,**

and **discover** for example **the friends of your friends.**

We already have a **standardized vocabulary** to express these relationships,

it's called Friend-of-a-Friend,
or **FOAF** <http://www.foaf-project.org/>

FOAF is **fully decentralized**,
that means that you can **share** and **link** data
between different Websites.

FOAF gives you control over the data that is shared,
either to **other humans**,
or to **machines.**

To summarize,

with **existing Social Media**

users don't have control over their identity

neither they have control over their own data

existing Social Media don't use the full potential of
the Web

on the other hand,

Linked Data and the Social Web let you

put **your** Data on the Web

there, people, content and things are

identified using HTTP URIs

Your identity, your social network, and your data

are all **linked together** using the FOAF vocabulary.

You no longer ask for permission to use a particular service

instead, **you** give permission to People and Machines
if they want to access your data,

and you say **how**, and you say what data.

That's why I think that the Social Web **is** the future of
Social Media.