The World Wide Web, invented in 1989 by Tim Berners-Lee, has fundamentally reshaped our lives. Operating on the Internet, the web strives to be universal. It doesn't matter if you access it with your phone, desktop or which browser you use. The web is for everyone.

And how was this universality realized? Well, by having standards that provide interoperability. Devices could communicate with each other, regardless of who manufactured them, because they implemented the same standards.

The web aims to bring freedom of expression to everyone, to create a place where anyone could contribute and interact with anyone else without someone looking over your shoulder. By doing so, the web enables continuous innovation, driven by ideas from users. On the web, everyone is invited to participate and start building.

Decentralization was one of the key pillars when the World Wide Web was created. However, from the late 1990s, with the start of the browser wars, the decentralisation and universal usage and access came under threat. Depending on whether you used Netscape or Internet Explorer, you had a different user experience, which undermined interoperability. The browser wars were followed by the search engine wars of the 2000s, with one big player monopolising the market and limiting innovation.

But the battle you are probably most familiar with is the platform wars. People are currently interacting on the Web through centralized services provided by big companies, most of the time located in the US. And if you're not on these platforms, well, then you are missing out or even excluded from using certain tools and applications. The same phenomenon takes place for the provision of cloud computing services. The Web in its current shape and form needs to decentralize again.

This centralization evolution created a lot of inconveniences for the users of the World Wide Web. For example, try switching your music service without losing all the personal playlists you created. Or send a friend request to someone who didn't register on a particular social media. It won't work. The barriers to move from one company to another are extremely high. You need to either move the data or the people, which can become a burdensome or even impossible task. This allows monopolies to exist and makes it very hard for new players to compete. These circumstances brought up the idea to re-decentralize the web again. And have users regain control over their data.

In this context, Solid provides a new paradigm. The project, led by Web inventor Tim Berners-Lee, aims to bring interoperability back to the web.

Data is a precious thing and needs to be handled carefully. Therefore, data needs to be separated from systems and applications. It's important to disentangle them both.

In the centralized world of today, data and applications are coupled. When we talk about facebook or linkedin, we mostly talk about the data they possess rather than the application itself. It's very hard to share data across platforms. And the data is not synchronized. Actions you perform on one platform, like attending an event, are not reflected on any of the other platforms you use. This is the problem when data is coupled to applications, when you use data silos.

Solid wants to change this situation by pushing the data out of the silos and storing all of the data in people's personal data pods. Data can be accessed using standard, open, and interoperable data formats and protocols. This completely changes the situation. There is no longer any need to sync. Because the data is stored in a personal data pod, and there is only one version of it

This makes sense, as you don't have "Facebook friends" anymore, you have friends.

You don't have "Instagram photos", you have photos.

You don't have "Whatsapp messages", you have messages.

This way, Solid brings the control over data back to the individual. By having applications viewing your personal data pod, instead of owning it. People have control over their own personal data pod and decide to whom they give access rights.

In the single market for centralized apps that we have today, where competition is based on data harvesting, great ideas and innovation are blocked by the high entry barriers in the market. This changes when you move the data out of the apps and to the people. A separate data and app market will evolve, each having their own competition. And it's up to people to decide which data pod provider they want and which applications they use.

Applications are decoupled from data. And because everything is interoperable, different applications can read and write the same data, instead of creating new data silos that make your data difficult to use in its entirety. The applications will have to compete on the service they provide rather than on the data they own. And the data pod providers will need to build trust in the market.

People will get the choice they currently don't have. You will probably have the choice to go for a paying solution, to have a data pod with unlimited storage for example or one that offers high-speed transfers or maybe one with secure backups. But most likely, you will also have a choice to go for a provider that pays you. In return, you would allow the providers to mine your data for marketing purposes or medical reasons, or anything you agree with. The possibilities are endless. The market becomes competitive again.

Solid is a disruptive innovation, it creates new markets and eventually it will disrupt the existing ones. And for new technologies to flourish, they need a supportive environment.