

Critical Algorithm Studies

Ethics in Algorithms

Martin Asmus



Overview

- What happens, if an algorithm, that a lot of people rely on, acts in favor of a particular interest?
 - The Google Dilemma[1]
 - Is there an ethics of algorithms?[2]
 - Can an Algorithm be Agonistic? Ten Scenes from Life in Calculated Publics[3]
 - Toward an Ethics of Algorithms: Convening, Observation, Probability, and Timeliness[4]

The Google Dilemma[1]

- Search engines make the internet accessible
- Links to websites can construct a consensus about it's content → googlebombing
- Google has to decide, which sites are more important/useful and shape their code accordingly
- Sites listed for certain queries have an social/political impact
- Re-ranking is often considered as an offense
- Rankings are covered by freedom of speech in the US
- National laws can force search engines to censor their results
- Google decisions influence, what information people find and how people associate certain informations

Is there an ethics in algorithms?[2]

- Example: medical image analysis
- The design of an algorithm requires ethical judgement of the designers and/or a company's management
- Postulates, that ethical decisions should be made by users and any assumptions should be transparent
- Decision aid software makes value-judgement per definition
- Decision between accepting false positives or false negatives. Flawlessness is not an option!
- The precautionary principle: it is better to get a false positive rather than a false negative result (i.e. medicine)
- Consensus in Science: avoid false positives
- Choice by users would let them choose the principle
- Transparency enables users to evaluate the context of use and responsibilities of each step in the process

Can an Algorithm be Agonistic?[3]

- where and in what ways may the introduction of algorithms into human knowledge practices have political ramifications?
- Amazon creates a „calculated public“ with certain positions, by analyzing customer behaviour
- Autocratic ↔ plutocratic
- Voting on reddit led to a witch hunt
- Algorithms can't be agonistic. Too many antagonistic influences.
- E-voting on time.com was hacked by 4chan
- Algorithms are always embedded in a lot of human choices

Toward an Ethics of Algorithms: Convening, Observation, Probability, and Timeliness[4]

- Networked Information Algorithms
- assemblages of institutionally situated code, human practices, and normative logics
- Deontological vs consequential ethics
- Convening Constituents by Algorithmically Inferring Associations
- Governing Action by Judging the Probability of Similarity
- Setting Deadlines and Governing Rhythms
- Proposes a systematical framework for ethical analysis of algorithms

thx :)

References

[1] Grimmelman, James. 2008. "The Google Dilemma." New York Law School Law Review, 53: 939.

http://papers.ssrn.com/sol3/papers.cfm?abstract_id=1160320

[2] Kraemer, Felicitas, Kees Overveld, and Martin Peterson. 2010. "Is There an Ethics of Algorithms?" Ethics and Information Technology 13 (3): 25160. <https://link.springer.com/article/10.1007%2Fs1067601092337>

[3] Crawford, Can an Algorithm be Agonistic? Ten Scenes from Life in Calculated Publics <http://sth.sagepub.com/content/41/1/77.abstract>

[4] Ananny, Toward an Ethics of Algorithms: Convening, Observation, Probability, and Timeliness

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