

Reclaiming individual autonomy and democratic discourse online: How to rebalance human and algorithmic decision making

Initiative: Künstliche Intelligenz – Ihre Auswirkungen auf die Gesellschaft von morgen

Ausschreibung: Künstliche Intelligenz – Ihre Auswirkungen auf die Gesellschaft von morgen - Full Grant (nur nach Aufforderung)

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Artificial Intelligence (AI) technologies promise to bring unprecedented precision and scale to data handling and decision making in many fields (e.g., medicine or finance), but they also bring challenges and disconcerting outcomes. For example, the current online ecosystem, powered by AI algorithms, has distributed power and knowledge increasingly asymmetrically: the platforms' knowledge about users is immense, but users know little about the data the platforms hold or how the data drive algorithmic delivery of content. This asymmetry and lack of transparency opens the door to manipulation through, for example, micro-targeting of political messages that aim to exploit personal vulnerabilities. The adverse impacts of micro-targeting are amplified by the fact that it is often enlisted to deliver false information to citizens. The business model of the big platforms is based on capturing user attention (for advertising revenue) rather than promoting deliberate cognition and autonomous choice. Tacitly, at least, this model thus condones the production and spread of false information. These phenomena, combined with the amplifying effects of social self-organization and algorithmic optimization, threaten to undermine an open discourse and, hence, the functioning of democratic societies. The objective of the project is to identify evidence-based ways to reclaim individual autonomy and to redress the imbalance in the relationship between human decision makers and corporate algorithms. This will be pursued by (1) designing information architectures that are transparent and act in the interests of the user rather than the advertisers or the platform and (2) promoting people's cognitive competences to navigate digital environments and guard themselves against manipulation.

Projektbeteiligte

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Resolving content moderation dilemmas between free speech and harmful misinformation
A systematic review of worldwide causal and correlational evidence on digital media and democracy.