The Algorithm in the Room

Gerrymandered Places: The Geography of Algorithmic Power in America

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This paper examines computer-assisted gerrymandering as an example of geographical catachresis. While the political and legal aspects of gerrymandering are important, my own work on this subject places a stronger emphasis on its onto-epistemological ramifications. Acknowledging that gerrymandering mirrors the "cartographic anxiety" (Gregory, 1994) of users who are faced with the truth effects of a representational form, I argue that gerrymandering is equally deployed to obtain material rewards from exercising algorithmic controls in a political environment that is clearly unprepared to grapple with digital affordances. By addressing these points in relation to the broader field of spatial media, my presentation explores how algorithmic gerrymandering has become at once an obscene and dominant form of political storytelling, a conduit for political identity as expressed through an elemental unit of cartography, namely drawing, and an ongoing determinant of social inequality in America.

Joshua Synenko is an Assistant Professor in the Department of Cultural Studies at Trent University, and Coordinator of the Media Studies undergraduate program. He is President of the Canadian Comparative Literature Association (CCLA), and serves as Assistant Editor for Media Theory (MT), an international peer-reviewed journal. His current research focuses on technologies of mobility, and on connections between memory, visual culture, and mediations of space.

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Coding Happiness: Algorithmic Representation of Human Emotion

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Algorithm driven applications use facial detection and semantic analysis to interpret mood in photos, videos, text, and speech. The proposition that happiness and human emotions can be objectively studied and reliably measured is rooted in a neo-liberal, techno-scientific ontology which is compelled to translate subjective experience into hard numerical data. The codification of emotion is conceivable on the condition of successful translatability of information from one signification system into another. For this reason, a necessary part of the study of automatic emotion recognition, is detailing the different classes of signs that constitute the representational chain of algorithms. Algorithmic representation of emotion re- contextualizes problems like: what is emotion; what are its functions and meaning, and what is the role of institutions or corporate entities in the construction of new forms of emotion management.

Lyuba Encheva is a PhD in Communication and Culture from Ryerson University and a Research Associate at Decimal Lab (UOIT). She evaluates the social implications of technological practices such as gamification and automatic emotion detection through rhetorical analysis and critical theory lens. Recent publications include a book chapter in Trifonova, T. Contemporary Visual Culture and the Sublime (2018), and a paper in Rhetor: Journal of the Canadian Society for the Study of Rhetoric, Volume 7.

How AI is driving conversations in Social Media Environments

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A great part of our conversations in Social Media Environments is driven by AI. Bots are in constant evolution. Rather than simply sending automated messages that a platform might delete, they are now reprogrammed to amplify and spread messages written by simple humans in the digital ecosystem. This paper explore how AI is shaping public perception regarding some important topics. A mixed methodology using data mining, social network analysis, and content analysis has been used to analyze approximately millions of tweets and corresponding accounts captured through the Twitter API.

Fernando Gutiérrez (Mexico) is the head of the Division of Humanities and Education at the Monterrey Institute of Technology and Higher Education (State of Mexico Campus). He earned a PhD in Design and Data Visualization from The Metropolitan Autonomous University (UAM). He is author of several titles about media and communication.

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How AI Is Reshaping Freedom of Choice: The Ethical Influence of Algorithms on Human Behavior

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In our hyper-connected era, we look at the rise of an increasingly AI-based (hence: automated) world. This presentation sheds light on how the pervasive influencing power of the algorithmic design of ubiquitous AI-based ICTs – from IoT to OSP (such as Internet search engines and SNS) – is affecting and reshaping our space of freedom of choice and action. Today, AI (and algorithms specifically) – as a different form of smart, interactive, and autonomous agency – is filtering the epistemological and ontological fabric of our daily onlife experience, by showing a huge predicting power that, when it is misused (e.g. in OSP and in political campaigns), can threaten our right and constitutive ability to self-determine our lives: our choices, actions, and behavior. This analysis highlights the AI's ethical impact on human behavior, by arguing how algorithms' silent nudges can affect the key-conditions of individual freedom as freedom of choice and action in the Infosphere.

Simona Tiribelli is a doctoral researcher in Global Studies. Justice, Rights, Politics at the University of Macerata. Her researches are particularly in the fields of Media Ethics and Ethics of AI. Tiribelli holds a Master's Degree cum laude in Media Ethics and the Giacomo Leopardi School of Advanced Studies' Diploma of Excellence. In 2019, she is awarded a Fulbright Scholarship and will be a visiting scholar at the MIT Media Lab of the Massachusetts Institute of Technology (US).

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