Ethics and Statistics

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“The sexy job in the next 10 years will be statisticians.”
1. Ethics in a Data-Driven Society

Ethics identifies, outlines and translates principles, values, processes and the critique of power relations - that are essential for a good life and democratic society - into a digital democratic society.
2. Ethics in a Data-Driven Society:
Questions of Responsibility (1)

„internal“ responsibility:
professional ethical standards
avoid
- biased data
- misleading analysis
- cherry picking results /
- exclusion of data outliers
- „western“ perspectives as self-evident
- epistemic injustice
2. Ethics in a Data-Driven Society: Questions of Responsibility (2)

„external“ responsibility:
social responsibility of the profession
- communication
- limits and uncertainties / epistemic humility
- publishing environment
- effects on society and politics
- dataveillance
„internal“ responsibility:
professional ethical standards

„external“ responsibility:
social responsibility of the profession
3. „Raw“ Data: a Food Metaphor

„[T]he seemingly indispensable misperception that data are ever raw seems to be one way in which data are forever contextualized [...] according to a mythology of their own supposed decontextualization.“

(Gitelman 2017, 5f.)
4. The Quantified World

The German word „vermessen“ has 3 meanings (Mau 2017,33)
1. to measure something,
2. to measure something wrong,
3. to be presumptuous, overconfident, arrogant

The dimensions of a human life that can be translated into the language of numbers plays a decisive role for well-being and prospering.
Human life as a whole cannot be translated into numbers without negating some of the dimensions that make us human.
5. Ethics & Statistics

Need Each Other

- Statistical **and** ethical literacy are important.
- Statistics and ethics **both** deal with uncertainties.
- Ethical judgements are hybrid: they combine empirical **and** normative knowledge.
- **Both** strive for epistemic justice.
No. Not just the facts, Sir.

„I will remember that I didn‘t make the world, and it doesn‘t satisfy my equations.“

(Derman/Wilmott 2009, Hippocratic Oath)
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