Digital citizenship
– Opportunities and challenges for democracy

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Agenda

• Research context
• What is digital citizenship?
• Automated persuasion
• Controversial encounters
The Centre for Digital Citizenship investigates the social and political consequences of current developments in digital media technologies – smartphones, social media, algorithms, data, and beyond – and asks how these technologies shape individuals, citizens, collectives, and publics. While digital technologies offer progress in terms of political mobilization and public conversation, they also hold the potential to enhance old inequalities and divides, countering trust in society. The Centre for Digital Citizenship seeks interdisciplinary explanations to these complex digital developments and their societal effects.

Research themes

- Algorithmic societies and justice
- Mediated publics and engagement
- Organizational data and governance
- (Dis)information and trust
Algorithms, data & democracy

Controversies regarding the digitalization and datafacication of democracy currently develop along two interrelated axes; algorithmic infrastructures intensify and polarize issues of public concern while algorithmic decision-making is detached from citizen scrutiny and deliberation. The ADD-project focuses on these sociotechnical dynamics in an effort to reconfigure the algorithmic organization of data and strengthen digital democracy.
Digital citizenship v. the ideal of deliberative democracy

- Legitimacy
- Identity
- Debate
Automated persuasion
The trouble with automated persuasion

- Automated decisions: Displacement of responsibility
- Personalized targeting: Reduction of diversity
- Opaque procedures: Limitation to reflexivity

- The transmission paradigm comes back with a vengeance - fear of overt persuasion whilst constantly subject to covert persuasion
- ‘The closing of the rhetorical mind’
Re-charging deliberation with controversy?

- Controversy
- Intensification
- Circulation
What is the concern being raised? And who articulates it?

Who articulates what positions?

How does the controversy unfold?

(How) is the issue resolved?
HOW DO ALGORITHMS MAKE THE NEWS?

4K named entities extracted from 34K Danish news media articles about algorithms, machine learning, and artificial intelligence.

The entities are mapped as a co-word network where each node is an entity (word or expression) and an edge signifies co-occurrence in the same articles. Only the 1006 edges with highest PageRank were kept in the visualization.
Controversial encounters

• What is the problem that this algorithm solves?
• Why does this problem need to be solved?
• How does the algorithm solve it?
• What are the benefits of the solution? And does it have any drawbacks?
Thank you!
And stay in touch:

https://ruc.dk/en/research-centre/centre-digital-citizenship

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