An ethical framework for TDM via an “Ethics Charter”

DOI: 10.4000/books.oep.1751
Publisher: OpenEdition Press
Place of publication: Marseille
Year of publication: 2017
Published on OpenEdition Books: 31 janvier 2017
Serié: Laboratoire d’idées
Electronic ISBN: 9782821878433

http://books.openedition.org

Electronic reference

This text was automatically generated on 16 septembre 2019.
An ethical framework for TDM via an “Ethics Charter”

1. The results obtained by TDM must of course be interpreted and analysed critically. The risk exists, for example, of erroneously diagnosing causal links to explain the statistics obtained by TDM, leading to false correlations. TDM thus raises new methodological issues.

2. The integrity of research using TDM also depends on compliance with ethical rules. In particular, personal data must be processed with full consideration of the right to privacy. More broadly, the European Commission has decided to use the umbrella term Responsible Research and Innovation (RRI) to refer to good research practice. The goal is to take into account the potential impact on society of each innovation, anticipating future change, and thinking in terms of sustainable and shared development. For example, “Assessment of scientific and technological choices” (better known by the expression “technology assessment”) is an interactive scientific process whose objective is to contribute to the emergence of political and public opinions on new technologies. It is therefore necessary to predict the implications of TDM to ensure a beneficial impact on society.

3. There will consequently need to be serious discussions about the use of these tools. As the CNRS Ethics Committee has stated on this subject:

   “It is not always possible to apply the basic principles of how to deal with personal data, such as informing people about the fate and use of the data, or obtaining their consent. The research process may require obtaining information without the knowledge of the person being investigated. In such cases, it would be necessary to stipulate the principles to be observed in the absence of consent, such as a commitment to inform this person after the event. The question of consent also arises when the research uses information resulting from data mining on social networks. These data, publicly available, are considered by the CNIL as personal data.”
The Ethics Committee has also argued that “confronted by this dynamic movement of data relayed by their supervisory authorities and by their community, researchers must:

- be aware of their individual, deontological\(^2\) and ethical responsibilities, with respect to the community to which they belong;
- be aware of the international undertakings of the institutions on which they depend;
- participate in the definition of ethical principles specific to their discipline in the field of data sharing and of Big Data in general.”\(^1\)

This need for ethical rules was expressed by the researchers themselves during the survey on the uses and needs of STI carried out by the CNRS in March 2015.

Setting up an “Ethics Charter for STI” laying down “Ethical principles to transcend the different categories of instruments and to affirm the goals of public research in a global context of Open Science” may partially satisfy this need.\(^4\)

---

NOTES

4. Results of the survey on the uses and needs of STI for the Research Units, carried out among CNRS Unit Directors – March 2015, p. 59.