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Editorial: Ethics as Creativity in Design

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Editorial: Ethics as creativity in design

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Track theme

Designing requires enormous social and moral responsibility as our surroundings -full of products and services that we shape- in turn shapes the way we live (Dorrestijn, 2012). Not only do these products and services serve utilitarian functions and guide our actions, they also influence our norms and values in often unforeseen ways (Verbeek, 2006). The challenge of responsible design (Eggink et al., 2020) asks for active reflection on ethical issues.

Following a classical top-down approach, ethics may be perceived as restrictive, setting boundaries for what is allowed and what not (Sonneveld, 2014). A recent proposal in philosophy of technology is the more constructive approach of the ethical accompaniment of technology development (Verbeek, 2017). We want to proceed further in that direction and are proposing a move towards what could be called 'creative ethics'. We are exploring how a bottom-up approach of dialogue and deliberation about values and impact may foster inspiration and imagination for desirable futures and directions for design. In other words, we want to propose ethics as a fundamental driver for design, rather than an assessment criterion.

In this track we therefore welcomed papers that investigate or show how incorporating ethical reflection in the design process can foster creative solutions for future use of technology. Or the other way around: how design can cater for a creative approach to ethical deliberation. Completely in line with the theme of our track, the submitted papers show that there are multiple other creative ways to connect ethics and design.

Papers

The first contribution in the track is by Rachel Armstrong. In her paper "Biodesign for a culture of life: of microbes, ethics, and design" she explores the boundaries of technology and design at the doorstep of the biotechnological age. She shows that we will need our human



creative potential more than ever in designing for a desirable future where we can really live together with *everything* around us.

The second paper in the track is called “Ethics, Design, and Creativity: a Fruitful combination”. It is written by ourselves and our co-authors Karin van der Heijden and Ilse Ouwens with whom we work together in a project about stimulating ethical deliberation in higher education. In the paper we show with an extensive example how we foresee the integration of ethics, creativity and design in practice. Our approach is based on the use of philosophy of technology theory in design research, for which we introduced the term “the practical turn” (Eggink & Dorrestijn, 2018). Although not as outside-the-box as with Rachel Armstrong, you might notice that our interpretation of ‘technology’ is still rather broad.

In the third contribution; “Plagiarism or Reference? Exploring the detection criteria and solutions of visual design plagiarism” we take yet another interesting perspective to creativity and ethics. Here, authors Shenglan Cui, Fang Liu, Yinman Guo, and Wei Wang show how creativity itself can be a source for ethical deliberation. They argue that creativity in graphical design cannot do without reference to other designs, however at the same time can leap into plagiarism. The demarcation and linkage between the two is an ethical problematic.

The last paper in the track is simply called “Ethics Through Design”. Here, Maria Alejandra Luján Escalante, Luke Moffat, and Monika Büscher make clear how they tried to influence the ethical aspects of the development of digital innovations over the years with the considerate use of creative design exercises. However, more importantly they make a case for more ethical consideration in technology development processes. Fortunately, the papers in this track show that this does not have to be a dry and cumbersome exercise. So following up on our earlier call for a constructive and practical approach to ethics we would like to say: “Just do it!”

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