

Readings from the Book of Mankind: Donating Data for Peace

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The contribution to be made with this paper will cover a bi-directional perspective from the angles of philosophy and art. The base line will look on the prospective possibilities of searching for structure in “messy” (i.e. not organized and cleaned) data. Cukier/Mayer-Schoenberger (2013) described experiences of professionals in business and public administration with the use of big data to streamline their processes. Their reports boil down to a baseline where the search for correlations put them in a situation, where they solved their problems in a much better way - compared to the search for causal connections.

In the final chapter of his major work “Tristes Tropiques” the French anthropologist Claude Levi-Strauss (1955) did some reasoning about the advantages and disadvantages of modern life in comparison to hunter and gatherers societies. He dreamed about a gigantic matrix, that covers all societies and their behavior. He thought about that to be a Book of Peoples. Nowadays, when we insert just a few letters into google and take a look at the continuously improving recommendations, a vision of machines that understand human behavior on the basis of simple correlations is coming closer. A process covering not only peoples, but all people. Through people donating their data, they contribute to such a “Book of Humankind” and link themselves to the equality of all human beings. Data for peace.