Summary of the session at Techfestival 05.09.2019

Ethical AI: Actioning a Nordic Stronghold Together

Data for the common good

It is well-known that Nordic countries are internationally renowned for being highly digitalized. But how do our societies and we as humans respond to the challenges of using data that is transforming our societies and our daily lives on many different levels: politically, technologically, commercially and culturally.

Artificial intelligence is not possible without data - raw material of today and tomorrow's algorithms. This proliferation of big data drives rapid research, innovation and huge investments in machine learning, data mining and neural network applications. These developments raise some acute questions in a global, European and regional context.

How do we develop and utilize ethical AI in the Nordic region to our competitive advantage and create a regional stronghold? Could part of the answer to this question be, that our societal values such as trust, transparency, responsibility, privacy shape and define the potential of ethical AI in our region?

The session at Techfestival was curated by the Association of Nordic Engineers, ANE and the Nordic Council of Ministers, NCM and was about finding the Nordic way to AI. The session's aim was to design the solutions for creating a sustainable AI landscape – identifying the strongholds and bottlenecks.

OUTPUT

We wanted to get valuable input from society dwellers to find out what should be the next focus in the future of AI and Ethics, and together we crafted specific actions points in order to determine the next steps from a Nordic perspective, presented in the summary section of this document.

RATIONALE

This conversation is important for ANE and NCM to have together with an engaged and broad group of actors in this field with the aim of creating a democratic discussion around AI and ethics, such as trust and critical thought. This conversation is already ongoing on different levels and fora in many countries, and there is a need to open up this discussion to determine the strongholds and create new partnerships in the Nordics.

"We lack a tool kit to assess future AI solutions ethically, so it is not enough to just make public and corporate guidelines." – Mikael Anneroth

Deliberations summarized in three main blocks

1. Defining the strongholds and potentials of our region

2. Identifying challenges and barriers

3. Possible Partnerships & Solutions

"There is a felt need in the AI industry to maintain trustworthiness, but it is still a long way to go before the mitigation of possible negative side effects becomes part of the DNA of engineers' culture." – *Mikael Anneroth*

" Technology is no longer just something for the IT-departments. It is something that all parts of an organisation have to discuss and make decisions upon." – *Mikkel Flyverbom*

1. Defining the strongholds and potentials of our region

1.1. Solid democratic values base

- High ethical standards and values such as trust and equality that should play a key role to avoid bias in AI-solutions
- Long traditions of democracy and strong governmental institutions
- Dynamic and well-resourced public sectors
- It is faster to implement AI in countries with high trust in institutions such as DK/Nordics

1.2. Pragmatism

- Homogenic culture and societies tend to agree on many things and levels
- Healthy scepticism and higher level of critical thinking, when it comes to utilizing new technologies
- Good at challenging and reacting critically on decisions

1.3. Our springboard

- The Nordic countries have the potential to be the "Ethical Valley"
- Ethics can be regarded as competitive advantage
- AI is a potential for the public sector
- Data ethics are one of the competencies that can sustain trust when utilizing new technologies such as AI

2. Identifying challenges and barriers

2.1. Ethical dilemmas

- Lack of awareness about ethics in the general public
- There is observed pressure and competition standing in the way for reflected ethical decisions
- GDPR is a challenge as it is not human-centric or implemented
- Understanding the meaning of "ethical" and "AI" is challenging
- Insufficient engagement of people from tech and outside of the tech-world in conversations on this topic
- High level of trust also makes us naïve, when it comes to utilizing systems and products

- Education needs to combine tech, humanity and social sciences
- It is difficult to test tech-solutions in the region
- Lack of research in the universities that is centred on ethics
- Challenging to convert old data to new data design solutions
- The public sector is not ready to handle data and use it (AI/tech)
- The Nordic region is small, and too dependent on the global development and market
- The readiness of our societies to utilize new technologies such as AI are at a standstill
- Biased data and data security are barriers to overcome
- Lack of experts in AI, and a challenge to attract talents to the region

2.2. Awareness, research and external factors

2.3. Accountability

- Lack of authority/body such as "ombudsman"
- It is challenging to regulate on new technologies such as AI
- Lack of involvement of societal organisations at early stages in the development processes
- It is a challenge to place responsibility of an AI-solution that is wrong-doing
- The governments have responsibility, when it comes to maintain trust in digital services, and they are challenged on this when the wrong-doing cases are exposed in the media
- No clarity on responsibilities for ethics, when developing new products
- AI-monopolies (few big Tech-giants) "unethical" approaches

3. Possible partnerships and solutions

3.1. Possible Partnerships & Solutions

- Open Access could be a solution
- Certification could be a way to combine trust of the consumers and branding of Nordic AI products/solutions outside the region
- Ombudsman-authority in the Nordic countries, see Finnish example: https://tietosuoja.fi/en/mission-statement
- It is important to cooperate across the Nordic countries on i.e. data sharing
- It was suggested to create common Nordic platform with the aim to cooperate on data sharing
- It was proposed to develop multiple-level partnerships with the aim of creating combined efforts from both the private and educational sectors, and/or between social sciences and engineering education
- There is a need for independent data protection agencies
- There is a request for interest-group interaction on a ground level.

"Ethics and technology should not only be on the political agenda; we also need to actually implement. When starting digital design projects, we need to start thinking ethics from a very early start and throughout the process." – Vanessa Julia Carpenter

Action points

Raise public awareness about responsibility and rights in the world of emerging technologies and AI

Foster cooperation on establishing a Nordic independent accountability authority/ or cooperation between data protection agencies

Strengthen Nordic cooperation and ensure exchange of experiences on data sharing between stakeholders across the region

Connect and invest in Nordic sandboxes and test facilities on concrete cases when it comes to the utilization of AI technologies in the region

Develop Nordic collaboration on certification (Responsible-AI certificate) to improve the reliance and trust in products and solutions, and to boost the competitive advantage of the region

More information about the session

Session description
Ethical AI: Actioning a Nordic Stronghold Together:

Article by the Danish Association of Masters and PhDs (in Danish)
Techfestival sætter etik på dagsordenen

Article by the Nordic Council of Ministers
Data for Common Good: A Nordic approach to artificial intelligence:

Article by Techfestival
Can Nordic values shape the framework for AI?

Short movie
Ethical AI: Actioning a Nordic Stronghold Together

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