DEVELOPING A CONCEPTUAL AND ETHICAL FRAMEWORK OF DIVERSITY

Internal Presentation

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Laura Schelenz, Karoline Reinhardt

*International Center for Ethics in the Sciences and Humanities ,
Eberhard-Karls University of Tübingen (EKUT)*

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D 9.1 Ethical Framework of Diversity

- diversity from an ethical perspective

- why diversity matters

- diversity concept in WeNet

- modelling diversity after social practices

- points to consider/recommendations

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D9.1 DEVELOPING A CONCEPTUAL AND ETHICAL FRAMEWORK OF DIVERSITY

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Authors	Laura Schelenz, Karoline Reinhardt, Daniela Gjuraj (EKUT)
Reviewers	George Gaskell (LSE)

Abstract	This deliverable provides a conceptual analysis of "diversity" from an ethical perspective. It addresses the following issues: what is ethics, what is

Diversity: a normative concept

"Diversity can mean the quality or fact of actively including a range of people and things. This is the sense in which for instance anti-discrimination law and affirmative action policies use the term diversity. The term diversity is closely linked to the concepts pluralism and multiculturalism."

Diversity understanding in different fields

Natural sciences, biology, medicine:

- Diversity traditionally seen in terms of defection, genetic inferiority (e.g. due to illness), in social sciences also deviation from the norm seen as pathological, irrational, problematic, in need of treatment

Political sciences, international relations:

- Diversity in terms of pluralism of nation states, cultures, value systems and a challenge for international cooperation

- Diversity as identity groups, but even here perceived need to homogenize groups for success in identity politics

Business and management:

- Diverse individuals as assets for team, to be empowered to the level of leadership

Diversity understanding in WeNet

I. Diversity as positive and of instrumental value

- exploit diversity in everyday life because makes us better

- for successful European future

II. Diversity as a source of anxiety and potentially threatening

- exposure to diversity (online) scares individuals, has social implications

III. Diversity as in need of control and alignment

- for individuals to benefit from diversity, we need to mediate diversity and reduce its complexity

Questions derived from our understanding of diversity

"For what outcome or for whom" should we leverage diversity? What is the goal of leveraging diversity and improving online social interaction? What assumptions about **development, progress, and human well-being** come with the rationale that diversity should be used to improve online social interaction?

If we believe that diversity causes anxiety in humans, what exactly is this anxiety or fear about? It seems vital to know this in order to address the fear and adequately mediate exposure to diversity. Also, what are **appropriate methods and criteria for aligning diversity**? What are implications for users' social interaction?

Modelling diversity as social practices

✓ flexible, dynamic, focus on social interaction and interrelation of society members

– focus on "normal" behavior, problems of structural inequality in (re)production of practices, no reflection on morality of social practices
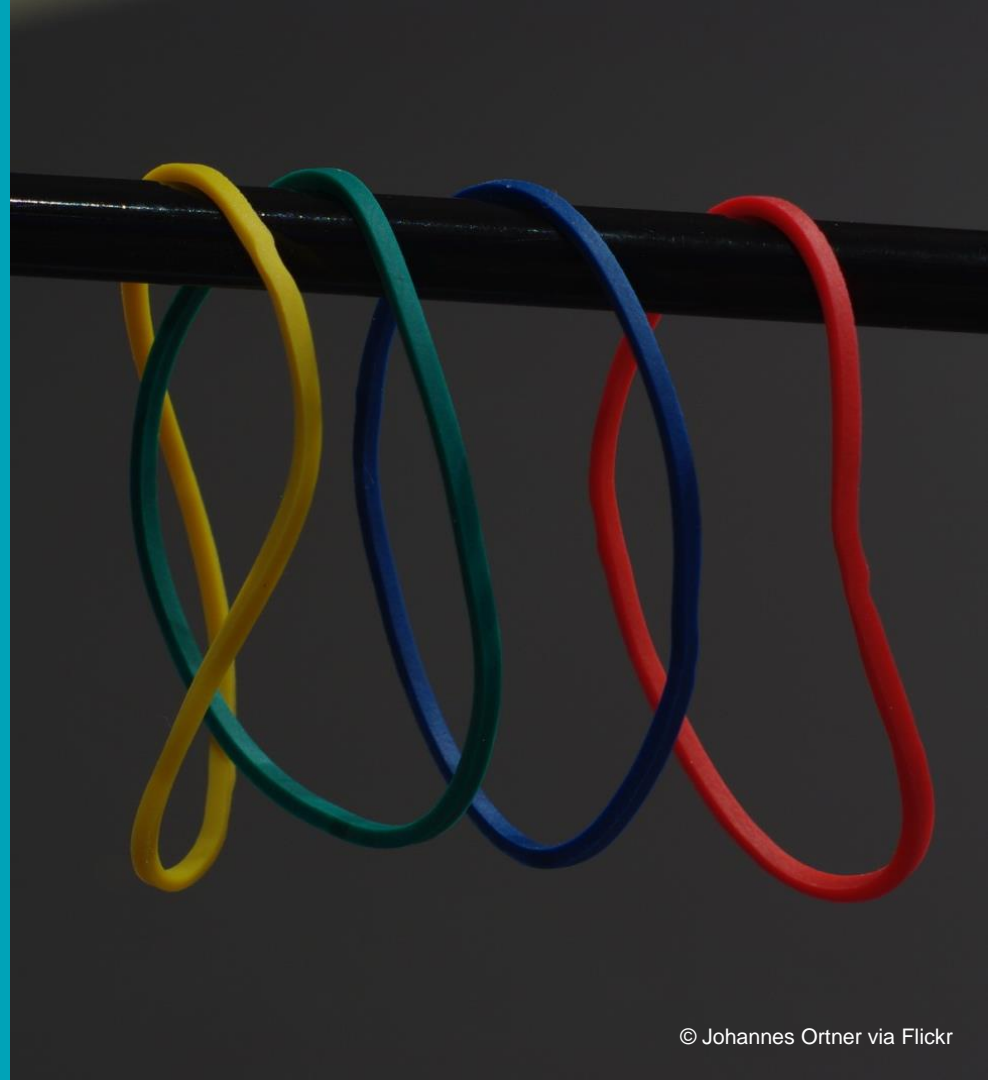
Social practices and deviating behavior

social practices = "patterns how certain mundane practices are typically and habitually performed in (a considerable part of) a society" (Holtz 2013)
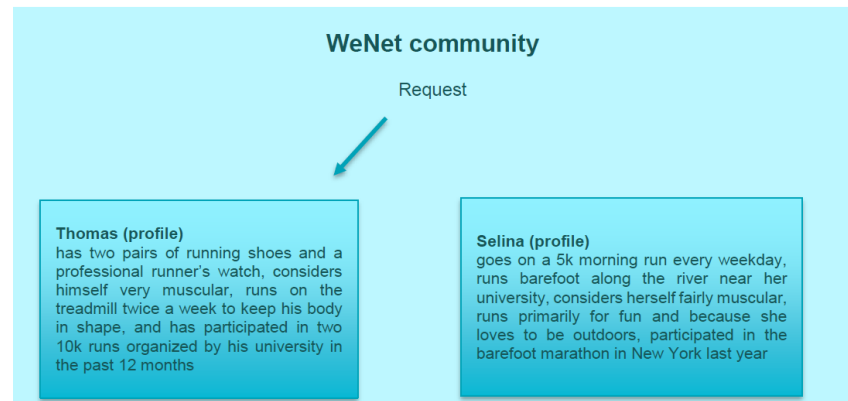
social practices consist of a) meaning, b) material, and c) competences

e.g. „running", page 30 of D9.1

WeNet Technology
(matching users according to their social practices)

REQUEST: "I want to **run** my first marathon and heard that **running** a marathon requires significant mental strength. How can I best prepare for that?"

→ the technology might infer from this request that it must look for "runners" to match the person

WeNet community

Request

Thomas (profile)
has two pairs of running shoes and a professional runner's watch, considers himself very muscular, runs on the treadmill twice a week to keep his body in shape, and has participated in two 10k runs organized by his university in the past 12 months

Selina (profile)
goes on a 5k morning run every weekday, runs barefoot along the river near her university, considers herself fairly muscular, runs primarily for fun and because she loves to be outdoors, participated in the barefoot marathon in New York last year

Social practices and structural inequality

social practices are social constructs, they are "coded" to certain ideas, values, attributes
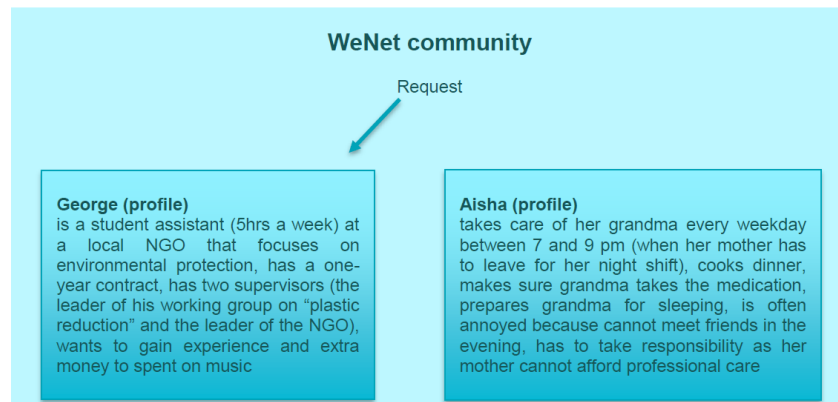
→ race and gender bias

e.g. working = only contract-based work, no reproductive or care work

e.g. "working", p. 35 of D 9.1

**WeNet Technology
(matching users according to their social practices)**

REQUEST: "I noticed that **working** and studying at the same time is a challenge for many students. I want to create a self-help group that focuses on better balancing **work** and studies. Who wants to join?"

➔ the technology might infer from this request that it must look for "workers"/employees to match the person

WeNet community

Request

George (profile)
is a student assistant (5hrs a week) at a local NGO that focuses on environmental protection, has a one-year contract, has two supervisors (the leader of his working group on "plastic reduction" and the leader of the NGO), wants to gain experience and extra money to spent on music

Aisha (profile)
takes care of her grandma every weekday between 7 and 9 pm (when her mother has to leave for her night shift), cooks dinner, makes sure grandma takes the medication, prepares grandma for sleeping, is often annoyed because cannot meet friends in the evening, has to take responsibility as her mother cannot afford professional care

Implications of modelling diversity as social practices

- social practices that deviate from the norm (e.g. running barefoot) will fall through the cracks

- social practices are not recognized as such due to the coded nature of social practices and societal bias (e.g. working) → certain already marginalized individuals will fall through the cracks

➢ look at the dataset and questionnaire, discuss levels of granularity, ask students in pre-pilots for plurality of their social practices

➢ look at the machine learning algorithms and make sure that they account for non-standard behavior

Recommendations

We should reflect our own understanding of diversity, being aware of the normative implications of the concept, and make our assumptions about diversity explicit/transparent

We should discuss and decide (and make explicit/transparent) what kind of diversity we want to leverage and how much we regulate diversity in the online platform

We should use the social practices approach with caution, given that the approach largely reflects "normal" behavior and marginalizes alternative practices

We should prevent data and algorithmic bias by accounting for practices that deviate from the norm and are thus truly diverse

We should constantly reflect and review the design of the data gathering tools (e.g. questionnaire) as well as the algorithmic models working with data on social practices

Thank you! Any feedback?
laura.schelenz@uni-tuebingen.de
karoline.reinhardt@uni-tuebingen.de

EBERHARD KARLS
UNIVERSITÄT
TÜBINGEN

INTERNATIONAL CENTER
FOR ETHICS IN THE SCIENCES
AND HUMANITIES (IZEW)