

Inf2 - Foundations of Data Science

S1 Week 3 Workshop - Ethics and Data Science

In this workshop, we will explore ethical challenges in data science, focusing on the two case studies presented in the task sheet from S1 Week 2. We are assuming that you will be sitting in a group of 4 or 5 students.

Discuss the following questions with your group, for at least one of the case studies, starting with Facebook (Case 1).

We suggest that you take turns making a note of your group's discussion of each question. We may ask groups to feed back their conclusions to other groups in the room during the workshop.

You don't have to reach a unanimous conclusion. If there is disagreement, make a note of it, and try to work out why you are disagreeing – you may be working from different assumptions.

Questions

1. What are the most relevant ethical challenges for data scientists that are reflected in your case study?
2. What specific, significant harms to members of the public did the researchers' actions risk? List as many types of harm as you can think of.
3. How should those potential harms have been evaluated alongside the prospective benefits of the research claimed by the study's authors? Could the benefits hoped for by the authors have been significant enough to justify the risks of harm you identified above?
4. List the various stakeholders involved in each case, and for each type of stakeholder you listed. What was at stake for each of them in this episode? Be sure your list is as complete as you can make it, including all possible affected stakeholders.
5. How did the lead investigators defend their position in each case, and how ethically valid is this justification?
6. Describe several things that the lead investigators of each study could have done differently, to acquire the benefits of the study in a less harmful, less reputationally damaging, and more ethical way.