



WORLD ECONOMIC FORUM

Topic A: Technology as Pharmakon: Fostering Inclusive Algorithms

Internet platforms are often considered objective, an open and equal space from which real human democracy, unhindered, can flourish. Freedom in discourse, a utopian dream, seemed to become a reality. However, an exploration into the subjective, inherently biased construction of algorithms reveals this understanding untenable — the human trace will always be left within the machine. I will frame my topic's argument as thus: (1) the dependency of individuals and society on technology; (2) the inherent biases within algorithms in reproducing discrimination; (3) ethical considerations, and (4) the remedy and path forward, with you.

Algorithms have offered humanity unprecedented benefits — instant connectivity, data-research breakthroughs, etc — in conjunction with unprecedented harm. This is technology's inherent pharmacological nature. Technology, the drug, is at once society's benefit and poison, and it is up to some sort of leading body to mediate technological transition. Our committee will focus on simulating the World Economic Forum (WEF), a unique space for public-private cooperation. Overall, delegates each represent an individual I have selected who has either attended the WEF before or holds global significance. Not every individual will be of equal significance, but that does not mean those delegates cannot have a substantial impact on the debate. For instance, an environmentalist during topic one can shape solutions addressing how algorithms may (or may not) affect climate change debate. The capacity for creativity and innovation lies in the direction delegates want to go. My role here is to facilitate conversation.

The implications for algorithms and AI are wide-ranging. This is one of society's most pressing issues and the crux of my studies. On the one hand, algorithms can be beautiful, opening up the door for an improved quality of life and greater prosperity than ever before. On the other hand, however, they can both reproduce existing biases that violently discriminate against marginalized others and create new spaces for radicalization. In the age of the fourth industrial revolution where these factors will either carry us towards prosperity or drag us down to despair, let's work together to foster a space for innovation, for an improved world, for something better.

Topic B: Fostering public-private altruism

Often times, governments fail to promptly address societal-scale issues due to slow legislation, bureaucratic lag, and lack of funds or resources. The World Economic Forum provides an inclusive space where cooperation among governments, businesses, NGOs, academia, and others can create social good.

This topic will revolve around constructing a general framework for public-private partnerships. Your role will be to caucus with others and find solutions the most pertain to your individual's interests. You will be given a lot of freedom to be creative during this part of debate, and I recommend already having an idea of what solutions you want to build beforehand.

Delegates will bring their own ideas as to where this kind of cooperation is applicable. Possible examples include digital identification services for refugees, environmental sustainability and markets for sustainable goods, mental health support, reaching the UN Sustainable Development Goals by 2030, incorporating businesses into UN values, data's effects on the pharmaceutical industry, mobile banking and fintech, infrastructure construction, global health preparedness for epidemics, etc — the choice is yours. As you conduct your research, consider how you can caucus for long-term solutions that benefit all.

While the shortcomings of the WEF may become apparent during your research, I find this simulation to be a fascinating exercise in understanding both how a certain, often elite section of the population reaches societal-scale decisions and what new forms of cooperation for the social good can yield. I hope you join me and my fellow vice-chairs in our journey to know more.