Chapter 16
Exploring Experts' Positionings Towards AI

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ABSTRACT

This chapter delves into the perceptions of artificial intelligence (AI) experts on the societal implications, governance, and ethical responsibilities associated with AI. Drawing on qualitative research, including interviews with six AI experts, the study investigates three key questions: experts' perceptions of AI's societal impacts, their visions for an AI-governed society, and their views on their responsibilities in addressing AI's consequences. The findings suggest that AI experts emphasize the importance of balancing innovation with education and regulation to ensure AI's responsible development and application, leaving out important questions to analyze further, such as their role in AI political governance, and the interest of wide public participation in the process of AI creation.

INTRODUCTION

Today, innovation in science and technology takes place in extraordinarily complex contexts. Scientists activities cover a wide range of areas and relate to both the economy and politics. The reality is far from the ideal advocated by Weber (1972), or Merton (1942), about the lack of interest and detachment of the world from the work of scientists and a predominant characteristic of mode one presented by Gib-

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bons (2013).In fact, scientists are deeply immersed in controversies around science and technology, involving issues of economic and political nature (Latour, 1979; Callon, 1981, 1987; Collins & Evans, 2007; Jasanoff, 2015). Their work enacts the "mode 3" science, which is characterized by the intricacy of relations between them, governments, companies, the media, and the environment (Gibbons, 2013; Carayannis & Campbell, 2009).Issues related to the ethical and social implications of artificial intelligence (hereafter referred to as AI) should be analyzed in this context, particularly if the aim is to understand how scientists define and perceive what role they play in this dynamic. In fact, scientists who influence and shape the debate on the social and cultural values of AI cut across various fields, especially academia, and business. Therefore, their views on AI also tend to be diverse and sometimes contradictory. While some scientists consider AI to hold unparalleled promise for humanity, others point to real consequences for people and democratic systems. As it is undeniable that AI is radically transforming society and imposing new benchmarks, it becomes particularly important to understand more and better who these scientists are and what are their perceptions on the social implications of AI. This analysis is particularly relevant in the context where the media is a major player in shaping public representations of science, as well as the type of information and knowledge that people in general have about AI. Therefore, this chapter investigates the scientists' perspectives and looks to explore these issues by investigating their positions in relation to the social implications of their field. Specifically, it analyzes how their views contribute to broader discussions on AI governance and responsible innovation. Based on six interviews with leading AI experts, the article considers three main themes: i) perceptions of the societal impacts of AI; ii) visions for an AI-governed society; and iii) policy responsibilities.

The chapter is organized into four main sections. The first section describes the theoretical framework. The second section describes the method and then presents the findings. The chapter concludes by discussing the broader implications of the findings for AI governance and responsible innovation.

THEORY

Collins and Evans deconstruct and analyze the concept of expertise as the knowledge or competence needed to act or judge appropriately in specific contexts, concluding that it goes far beyond technical or formal knowledge and is intrinsically linked to social recognition and political legitimacy (Collins & Evans, 2007). The authors propose three distinctions, which are relevant to a better understanding of the current controversies about AI and the role that non-scientists play in its construction: contributory expertise, interactional expertise and noetic or experiential