CENTRE FOR INTERNET AND HUMAN RIGHTS

HUMAN RIGHTS AND PERFORMING SECURITY THROUGH BIG DATA

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Collaboration as Big Data Ethics Workshop

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CIHR Research Areas

- **Technology in International Relations**
  - We study how digital technology shapes global politics and foreign policy.
- **Norms embedded in Technology**
  - We study how norms define technology and how technology influences social norms and values.
- **Digital Trade and Development**
  - We study how the Internet changes existing models of trade and development.

Ethics of Algorithms

Should algorithms decide your future?

cihr.eu/ethics-of-algorithms

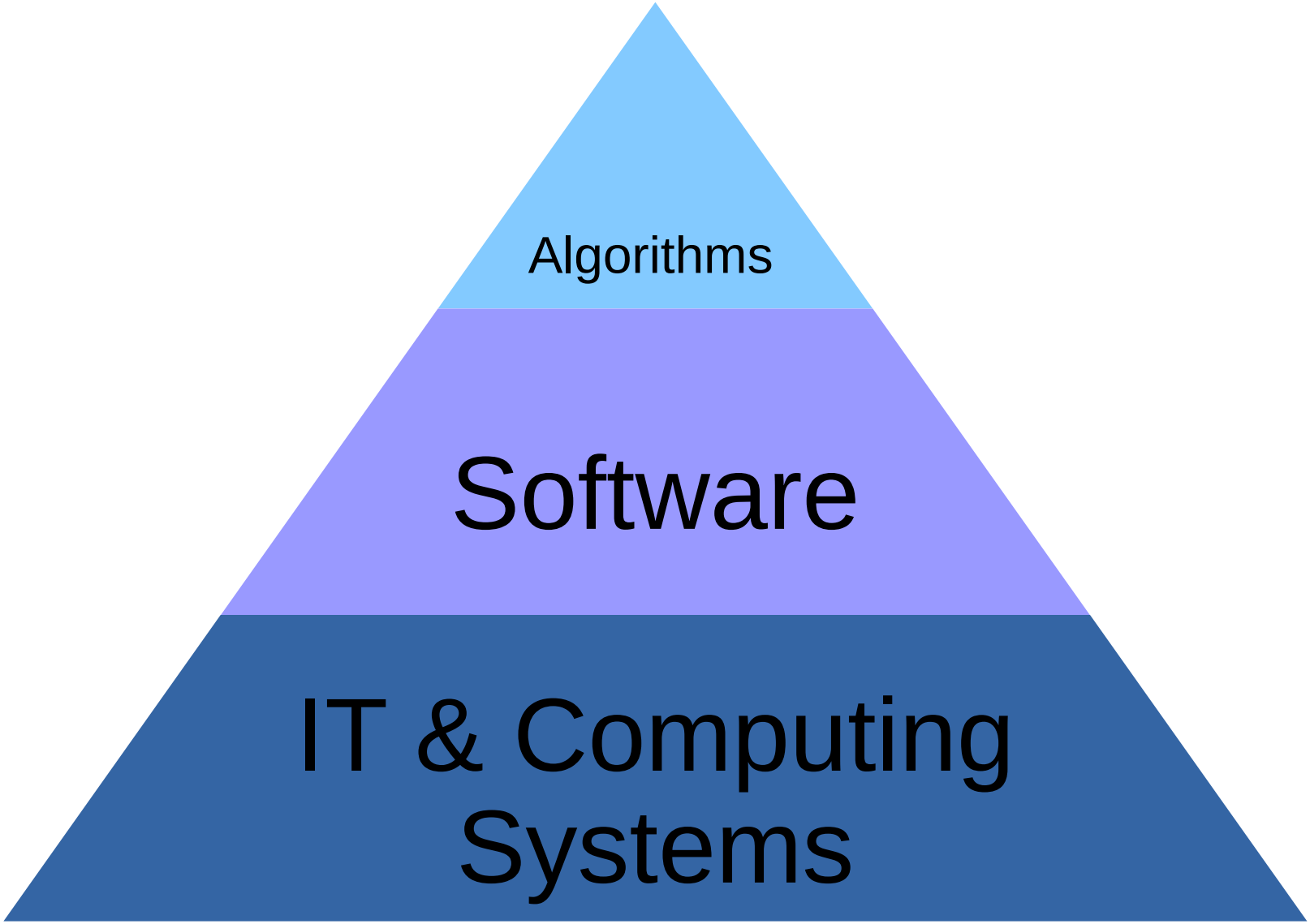
Why do they raise ethical concerns?

1. They keep information away from us: gatekeepers

2. They increasingly make subjective decisions

3. We often don’t know how they work

Condensed Technology



Big Data is a question of ethics of algorithms.

What is Big Data?

1) Technology: maximizing computation power and algorithmic accuracy to gather, link, and compare large data sets

2) Analysis: drawing on large data sets to identify patterns in order to make economic, social, technical claims

3) Mythology: the belief that large data sets offer a higher form of knowledge that can generate insights that were previously impossible

(Crawford & boyd 2012)

Large data sets –
the amount of
data available through
digitization
continues to grow.

Trends in Big Data and Security

- **Broadening** of Security:
  Threats become risks

- **De-differentiation** of Security:
  Blurring of internal and external dimension

- **Privatization** of Security:
  Most data gathered by private actors

The risk-based logic of security is anticipatory.

What is Risk in Security?

Risk = potential damage x probability

This is a question of perspective:

- Everything can be a risk
- Not all risks are interpreted as dangers

→ Process of **(In)Securitization** (Bigo et al. 2006)

From Prevention to Preemption

Big Data Risk Management:

- Permanent monitoring for 'social sorting' (Lyon 2003)
- Logic of 'collect it all'
- From individuals to types of people
- A form of security that classifies groups – separating 'the risky' from the 'at risk'

The Age of (In)Security

Examples of risk-based security:

- Predictive Policing
- Border Security (refugees, no-fly lists)
- Intelligence-based air strikes

Human Rights Concerns:

- Rule of law & due process
- Privacy
- Discrimination
- Ethical Constraints

(Security) Algorithms are not ethically neutral.

Conclusions I

Mythology of Big Data:

- Data does not speak for itself, there is no such thing as raw data
- Theories and models are still needed
- Methods and assumptions have to be made explicit
- Practice and discourse-based approaches may help to disrupt the mythology

Conclusions II

(In)Security and Big Data:

- Risk-based security abandons causality
- We must not depoliticize data in performing security
- Government regulates through algorithms,

  → algorithms have to be regulated

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