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CS-Colloquium

To Automate or To Heteromate? A Revised History of Computing

Prof. Hamid R. Ekbia, Ph.D.
Indiana University, Bloomington, USA

Wann? 29. Juni 2016, 15:00 Uhr

Wo?   Hörsaal 3
          Währinger Straße 29
          1090 Wien

Abstract
The history of computing can be written from different perspectives, all of them provocative and paradoxical at once. I propose a revisionary history of computing on the basis of the division of labor between humans and machines — from automation of early decades through the augmentation of personal computing to the more recent stage that I dub "heteromation." The intensive computerization of the economy in recent years has reshaped that division of labor, systematically moving a large majority of people toward economically essential but marginal roles. In this arrangement, much of the work undertaken by humans is hidden, uncompensated or poorly compensated, and naturalized as part of what it means to be a "user" of digital technology. This trend gives rise to yet another paradox for the economy, for computing, and, ultimately, for all of us: to automate or to heteromate? I examine this paradox within the broader historical developments of the last century.

Bio
Hamid Ekbia is Professor of Informatics, Cognitive Science, and International Studies at Indiana University, Bloomington, where he also directs the Center for Research on Mediated Interaction. He is interested in the political economy of computing and in how technologies mediate cultural, socio-economic, and geo-political relations of modern societies. His forthcoming book, Heteromation and Other Stories of Computing and Capitalism (MIT Press, 2016), examines new computer-mediated modes of value extraction in capitalist economies. His earlier book Artificial Dreams: The Quest for Non-Biological Intelligence (Cambridge University Press, 2008) was a critical-technical analysis of Artificial Intelligence. He is the co-editor of a volume titled Big Data Is Not a Monolith (MIT Press, 2016). Currently a Senior Fellow at IFK in Vienna, he is studying the political economy of drone warfare.