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Computer says no: understanding digital authority

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COMPUTER SAYS NO

Understanding Digital Authority

Daan Weggemans

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Computer Says No

Understanding Digital Authority

PROEFSCHRIFT

Ter verkrijging van
de graad van doctor aan de Universiteit Leiden,
op gezag van Rector Magnificus prof. dr. ir. H. Bijl,
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klokke 16:00 uur

door

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in 1986

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An old man enters a hospital and walks up to the reception desk to register.

“I have an appointment to see the cardiologist. My name is Peter Bale.”

The receptionist types on a computer, looks up and replies:

“Computer says no. Apparently you are already dead.”

“That must be a mistake” the man says.

The receptionist looks at the computer again.

“Dead” she nods affirmatively.

Hopeless and bewildered the man left.¹

1 Little Britain Sketch ‘Computer says no: 14’.

CONTENTS

AUTHOR SAYS

8

PART 1: CONTEXT

1 INTRODUCTION

12

- 1.1 Digital security and beyond 13
- 1.2 Decision-making in a world of complexity 14
- 1.3 Beyond trust 15
- 1.4 The influence of things 16
- 1.5 On the concept of authority 18
- 1.6 Authority of technology? 19
- 1.7 Research question and goal 21
- 1.8 Philosophy for human security 23
- 1.9 Notes on authority-discomfort and techno-skepticism 25
- 1.10 Outline of the book 27

2 DECISIONS IN A DIGITOPE

30

- 2.1 A world of digital technologies 31
- 2.2 Digital governance and decision-making 37
- 2.3 Techniques to improve the human mind 40
- 2.4 Why you should not automatically follow a machine 43

3 AUTHORITY

48

- 3.2 Consequential communications 52
- 3.3 Authority is relational 53
- 3.4 Authority is situational 55
- 3.5 Authority is cultural 58
- 3.6 Towards a theory of digital authority 59
- 3.7 Conclusion part 1 61

PART 2: CONSTRUCTION

4 RELATION

64

- 4.1 Relating to technology 65
- 4.2 Authority relations with technologies 67
- 4.3 What things say 68
- 4.4 The evolution of parking enforcement 70
- 4.5 The ones to speak in an epistemic niche 72
- 4.6 Persuasion in technology 74
- 4.7 Authorisation and coercion in technology 76

5 SITUATION	80
5.1 We have a situation here!	82
5.2 Definitions, cues and scripts	84
5.3 Authority situations as role cues	86
5.4 Anthropomorphism: seeing human	88
5.5 The media equation: computers are social actors	90
5.6 Technologies in authority situations	93
5.7 A digital proxy?	96
6 CULTURE	100
6.1 Mental software	101
6.2 Technological cultures?	103
6.3 Tech fixes, tech ruins	105
6.4 A culture of risk	108
6.5 Uncertainty and new authorities	111
6.6 Digital authority as cultural phenomenon	113
6.7 Conclusion part 2	115
PART 3: LIMITATION	
7 HUMAN SAYS NO	120
7.1 "I will not do what you tell me!"	121
7.2 Relation: individual and technological characteristics	123
7.3 Situation: significant others and wrong cues	130
7.4 Culture: programmed reluctance and uncertainty	134
7.5 Artificial unintelligence	137
7.6 Making people think	139
7.7 Conclusion part 3	145
8 CONCLUSIONS	148
8.1 The research domain: authority, technology and security	149
8.2 Understanding the authority of things	151
8.3 Digital authority, its limits, and implications	157
8.4 Ongoing challenges and future directions	159
8.5 The future - where is this going?	164
NOTES	166
SAMENVATTING	180
LITERATURE	192
ABOUT	214

A | AUTHOR SAYS

We are shaped by the interactions with others and the settings we find ourselves in. This also holds true for the things we make. In any artifact - whether tables, phones, or dissertations – lie hidden the ideas, criticisms, passive aggressive sighs and tons of time, patience, and support of others. Nothing happens in isolation. This book developed out of the countless encounters with people that have inspired and supported me over the years.

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