OPEN DATA IN THE FRAMEWORK OF A NEW APPROACH TO RESEARCH ETHICS

ARTO MUSTAJOKI

PHILOSOPHY AND HISTORY OF OPEN SCIENCE #PHOS16
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Ethics is often understood as a set of rules which determine what is not allowed in carrying out research.

We prefer another definition of ethics: it is a set of skills which support problem solving and decision-making.

It is characteristic to ethical questions that they lack clear and clear-cut answers.
A New Approach to Research Ethics
Using Guided Dialogue to Strengthen Research Communities
2017
• Strict principles and rules are important but insufficient in solving ethical questions
• A researcher meets ethical questions everywhere, not only in carrying out research
• In tackling ethical questions one needs problem solving tools
• Capability to conduct ethical dialogue is a characteristic of a high level research community
A researcher meets ethical questions not only in doing research and publishing, but also

- in supervising
- in recruiting people
- in assessing other researchers, organisations and applications
- in interacting with society
- in career building
STEP 1: IDENTIFICATION OF AN ETHICAL QUESTION

- Ethical question
- Concrete question
- Stakeholders
- Rights and responsibilities
- Options
STEP 2: TOOLS FOR MAKING AN ETHICALLY GROUNDED DECISION

Ethically grounded decision

Consequentialist / utilitarian

Principled

Virtue
CONSEQUENTIALIST APPROACH

Focus on the outcome

• Who will benefit from the decision?
• What are the short-term / long-term consequences for the stakeholders?
• Does the decision cause severe harm to someone?
Focus on the process
• What principles should I follow?
• Do I have the right to do it or to not do it?
• Are there responsibilities I should take into consideration?
Focus on the decision-maker
• How would an ideal researcher act in this situation?

Further reasoning:
• Is my understanding about being an ideal researcher based on relevant sources?
A DECISION TO GIVE A TV INTERVIEW

Consequentialist: it benefits me / my department / my research field / researcher community as a whole

Principled: it is my duty / responsibility as a researcher to do so

Virtue: Good researchers do so.
A DECISION TO GIVE
A TV INTERVIEW

If…
I am busy with writing an application / paper
the topic at hand is rather far from my own interests
I am not the best expert in that field in Finland
I do not like the interviewer
there is not much scientific evidence on this issue
RESEARCH ETHICS WITHIN OPEN SCIENCE

Open access
Open data
Participation in research projects
CASE:
OPENNESS OF COLLECTED RESEARCH DATA

**Topic:** What are Finns like in the eyes of Russians?

**Material:** Instances collected from the data base *Integrum*
ETHICAL QUESTIONS

Representativeness of the material:
156157 occurrences “Finns”
70 occurrences “a typical Finn”
506 times “typical” and “Finland” in the same sentence
152 times ”quiet” and “Finn” in the same sentence
ETHICAL QUESTIONS
CONCERNING OPENNESS OF DATA

Whether to make the (raw) data open/public?
ETHICAL QUESTIONS
CONCERNING OPENNESS OF DATA

Stakeholders:
the researcher and his/her department / faculty / university
the researcher community
data provider
financer of research
non-academic knowledge users
people mentioned in examples?
ETHICAL QUESTIONS
CONCERNING OPENNESS OF DATA

Rules and responsibilities:
rules and demands of the university / financer
rules and demands of the data provider
ETHICAL QUESTIONS

CONCERNING OPENNESS OF DATA

Options:
open for all users through an official platform
restricted open use through an official platform
“private” openness to good friends
only for personal use
OPENNESS OF DATA
CONSEQUENTIALIST APPROACH

Consequences (harm and benefit)
the researcher ++++ - - -
the department / faculty / university ++ -
the researcher community (science) ++++ -
data provider ++++ -
non-academic knowledge users ++++ - -

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OPENNESS OF DATA
PRINCIPLED APPROACH

General principles of research
• Honesty
• Credit
• Carefulness / accuracy
• Freedom
• Openness
• Integrity
General principles of research

- Honesty
- Credit
- Carefullness / accuracy
- Freedom
- Openness
- Integrity
SUMMING UP

The new approach to research ethics does not give answers but tools which can be used in reasoning and dialogue around open data and open science challenges.