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MINDING NORMS

Mechanisms and Dynamics of Social Order in Agent Societies

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Sala delle Colonne

Introducono

Massimo Egidil, Rettore LUISS Guido Carli
Luigi Nicolais, Presidente CNR
Riccardo Pozzo, Direttore DSU-CNR

Ne discutono

Insieme agli Autori

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MINDING NORMS

Mechanisms and Dynamics of Social Order in Agent Societies

Norms are prescribed conducts applied by the majority of people. Getting across cultures and centuries, norms evolved to rule all human relationships, from the most formal to the most intimate. Impinging on any sphere of life, from religious to political, norms affect social, moral, and even aesthetical behaviours. They are enforced through centralized sanctions or distributed control, and originate through deliberate acts of issuing or from spontaneous interaction in informal settings. Despite ubiquity and universality, norms are still awaiting for a general comprehensive theory, simultaneously doing justice to three intuitions: that, under variable contents, norms correspond to a common notion; that, once brought about, norms feedback on their producers, affecting their conducts; and finally that before and in order to drive the behaviours of individuals, norms must affect their beliefs and goals: people must detect and accept norms before converting them into observable behaviours.

This volume presents an unprecedented attempt to account for all the three intuitions at once, providing a systematic view of norms. Based on a unitary and operational notion of norms, as behaviours spreading thanks to and to the extent that the corresponding prescriptions spread as well, a cognitive architecture, EMIL-A, which is the main output of a research project on norm emergence, is described. EMIL-A is a BDI-like platform for simulation, endowed with modules for detecting, reasoning and deciding upon norms. Next, the EMIL-A platform is applied to generate norms in different simulated scenarios (from a multi-setting world to a virtual Wikipedia), through a complex bidirectional dynamics, i.e., the bottom-up emergence of norms thanks to a gradual, top-down process, denoted as immergence. As simulations results show, norms emerge while immerging in agents' minds, thanks to their detecting, reasoning, and deciding whether to respect them or not.

EDITORS

Rosaria Conte Research Director at the Institute of Cognitive Science and Technologies CNR and Vice President of the Scientific Council of CNR. She is the head and founder of the LABSS, Laboratory on Agent Based Social Simulation. She has published more than 160 works and is recognized as an expert on dependance networks, reputation, and the dynamic of social norms.

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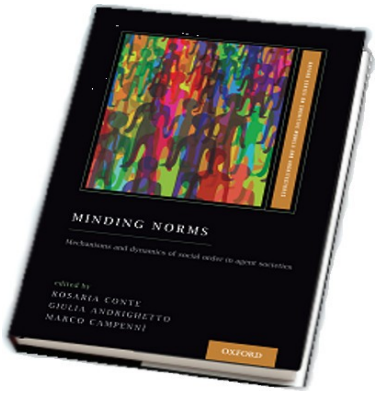

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"Norms are commonly treated as mental phenomena by psychologists and social phenomena by sociologists. This ground-breaking study highlights the structured interaction of norms on the social level of the group and the process of individual cognition. This allows for a dynamic interaction through which norms emerge endogenously and spontaneously. Students of normative behavior from various disciplines will find this book a must-read."

Herbert Gintis, Professor, Santa Fe Institute and Central European University

"Despite their ubiquity, norms are a puzzle. Social scientists don't seem to be able to agree on a definition of what a social norm is, and they have conceptually very different approaches. This book makes two important innovations to clarify the puzzle: first, it argues that we must think of norms in both social and cognitive terms; and second, it proposes that in order to understand the emergence of norms, we can use agent-based modeling. It provides a convincing demonstration of the utility of these ideas, with an accessible introduction to the theoretical and methodological basis of the work and exemplars of its application."

Nigel Gilbert, Professor, Centre for Research on Social Simulation (CRESS), Department of Sociology, University of Surrey, Guildford, UK