Questions for the ethical practitioner

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Human-centered design
Technology is not neutral

If designers want to do work with purpose, do we share responsibility for its consequences?
“Human-centered design” implies a set of ethics.

But not all instances of “human-centered design” are ethical.

How does the design fit with the values of the users/stakeholders?

Who gets the power to determine what a “good” outcome is?

What other behaviors does this displace, enable, or prevent?

What unforeseen consequences might occur over time and space?

Whose interests are served?
More questions…

Do we really need to gather this information from our users?

Does this really need to be accessible?

Will women or minorities feel safe if we build it this way?

How do we close the gap between our corporate values and what we are actually doing?

What should we do if designers are not being given enough time to give proper attention to a system that users will be using 8 hours a day?

Is it ever, and when is it, flatly unethical to participate in the design of a certain technology?

Why can’t people simply opt not to use technology they think is bad?

Are there methods we can use in our work to make it more ethical?

Should designers have a code of ethics?

When should technology and design be regulated?

How do I begin learning about ethics in design?
How do we know what’s right?

How can we incorporate ethics into practice?
Ethical practice in design is a wicked problem.

Ethical pluralism, complex ecosystems, unpredictable change
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“multiple, located, partial perspectives that find their objective character through ongoing processes of debate” (Lucy Suchman)
ethics

vs.

ethical practice

ongoing, social, personal, reflective, inclusive, dialogic, contextual
How do we know what’s right?

How can we incorporate ethics into practice?

How can I find the agency to do ethical work?
A vision:

Every design and technology professional has the skills, support, and agency they need to practice as ethically as possible, wherever they work.
Ethical Technology / Ethical Design Group

- A group of designers, developers, engineers, managers, entrepreneurs, and others on Slack
- Members involved with meetups in Austin, TX and London, UK

Future projects

- Local meetup groups in Boston and other cities
- Online book club
- Community Wiki (ethicsofdesign.org)
- e-zine, Medium, or publication?
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