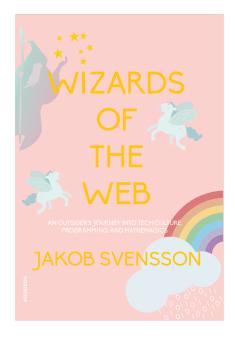# Wizards of the Web

Jakob Svensson

In our connected data societies, the importance of algorithms and automated systems is obvious. They determine search engines' rankings, what driverless cars do when a child appears on the road, and stock market changes. Today data-driven algorithms and automated systems are everywhere.

While algorithms and automated systems themselves are often a topic of controversy and debate, this book is about the people behind them; it is an account of the cultures, values, and imaginations that guide programmers in their work designing and engineering software and digital technology. Technology, it is argued, is not neutral and developed free of context. And since algorithms and automated systems exercise power in connected data societies, it is pivotal to understand their creators, who could be labelled, it is argued in the book, Wizards of the Web.

This book is the result of an ethnographically inspired study based on interviews with software engineers and programmers, observations made at tech head-quarters and conferences in Denmark, Sweden, Brazil, Germany, India, and the US, and a case study of the introduction of algorithmic automation on the front page of a Scandinavian newspaper.

The author, Jakob Svensson, is professor of Media and Communication studies at Malmö University. The book is part of the research project Behind the Algorithm (funded by the Swedish Research Council, 2018–2020).

Read the book here

The book is available to read and download free of charge from Nordicom's website.

NORDICOM

UNIVERSITY OF GOTHENBURG

Nordic Council of Ministers

Nordicom is a centre for Nordic media research at the University of Gothenburg, supported by the Nordic Council of Ministers.