In IBM’s recent “Let’s build a smarter planet” ad campaign, a collection of company technologists explains why database and data mining technologies matter. According to one of the IBM fellows, “Every day we are creating 15 petabytes of new data. That’s 8 times as much data as there is in all of the libraries in the United States combined.” As one of the speakers in the IBM commercial explains, “If we can analyze and mine this data, then we can understand it. And if we can understand it, then we can understand trends about it… The more data you have, the clearer you see.” This example of technology boosterism fails to comment on how data mining technologies may be also digitally sorting us out in old and new ways. What is the nature of these trends and data-driven ways of seeing? And how will the social shaping of data mining technologies in the coming decade shape us as individuals and groups and, in turn, our life chances?

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