ALGORITHMS WE LIVE BY AND RESIST. HOW ARTIFICIAL INTELLIGENCE RESHAPES DAILY ORGANIZATIONAL PRACTICES AND CONTROL

Roland Bal

Erasmus School of Health Policy & Management, Erasmus University Rotterdam

Lieke Oldenhof

Erasmus School of Health Policy & Management, Erasmus University Rotterdam

Iris Wallenburg

Erasmus School of Health Policy & Management, Erasmus University Rotterdam

Brit Ross Wintereik

IT University of Copenhagen

Abstract:
Artificial Intelligence (AI) and machine learning are portrayed as an emerging promise in our evolving world, forestalling a digital and yet unknown future. Consumer-oriented mobile technologies offer new ways of capturing a digital organizational understanding of how people behave and interact. AI is seen as a promissory solution to urgent societal problems like workforce shortage, unmet social needs, welfare inequality, personalized medicine and precision welfare. However, AI is also viewed as a sincere threat to human well-being. The 'googlization' of healthcare and welfare would enlarge our dependency on corporate actors like Apple, Amazon and Facebook for the delivery of essential public goods (Sharon 2020). Also, automated eligibility systems and predictive risk models increasingly decide on who receives public resources, who is short-listed (or not) for employment, and who is 'red flagged' and investigated for fraud (Eubanks 2018). Rather than enhancing well-being and good organizational life, AI would foster traditional power relationships and discriminate the ones that most need government protection and support (D'Ignazio & Klein 2020).

In this panel, we reconsider the big dreams, threats and contested imaginaries of AI in contemporary welfare states. We explore how (both public and private, for profit and non-profit) agencies organize for, and work with AI, and what contingencies they produce. We aim to empirically scrutinize and theoretically conceptualize how AI emerges from the micro-activities of organizational actors, data scientists and clients, and how these activities become part of AI-driven service delivery – but also, conversely, what organizations or occupational practices may be indifferent to the algorithmic wave. We are interested in how AI emerges as, and is embedded in new ways of thinking about public and private agencies and control; how it disciplines both workers and recipients, and how this may also ensue practices of algorithmic indifference and resistance (e.g. in the form of 'algoactivism' (Kellogg et al. 2020) – and with what consequences for the social good.

References

D'Ignazio, C. and L. F. Klein (2020). Data feminism. Massachusets, MIT Press.

Eubanks, V. (2018). Automating inequality. How high-tech tools profile, police and punish the poor. New York, St Martin's Press.

Kellogg, K. C., M. A. Valentine and A. Christin (2020). "Algorithms at work: the new contested terrain of control." Academy of Management Annals 14(1): 366-410.

Sharon, T. (2020). "Blind-sided by privacy? Digital contact tracing, the Apple/Google API and big tech's newfound role as global health policy makers." Ethics and Information Technology.