

General Seminar

Algorithms in the Public Sector: Accountability in the Age of AI

Tuesday 21 April 2020

12.30-2.30 pm

Sciences Po, Room Goguel
27 rue Saint-Guillaume, 75007 Paris

Artificial intelligence (AI) algorithms govern in subtle, yet fundamental ways, the way we live and are transforming our societies. Importantly, algorithms are increasingly not only the purview of private actors – that drive innovation in this area – but are also widely relied upon by governments and public (regulatory) bodies. The promise of efficient, low-cost or ‘neutral’ solutions harnessing the potential of big data has led public bodies to adopt algorithmic systems in the provision of public services. What is more, algorithms are increasingly relied upon by public authorities in high-stakes decision-making – where they are highly consequential for individuals’ lives. Their use has not been deprived of controversy. By virtue of their ‘black-box’ character and proprietary nature, AI algorithms can give rise to significant opacity challenges in terms of being able to interrogate the rationale behind decisions.

As AI algorithms have permeated high-stakes aspects of our public existence – from our access to information, to hiring and education decisions, to the governmental use of enforcement powers (policing) or liberty-restricting decisions (bail and sentencing), this necessarily raises important accountability questions: What accountability challenges do AI algorithmic systems bring with them, and how can we safeguard accountability in algorithmic decision-making? Given the current challenges that have thus far become manifest in the field, we critically reflect and assess in a conceptually guided manner, the implications of these systems, and the limitations they pose, for accountability within a public sector context.



Speaker

Madalina Busuioc, Institute of Public Administration, Leiden University

Madalina Busuioc is Associate Professor at the Institute of Public Administration, Leiden University, where she leads, as principal investigator, a large European Research Council (ERC) grant. Much of her work has focused on the study of public accountability and increasingly in

this context, as public power is encoded algorithmically, her work on accountability has turned towards exploring the implications of AI systems for public accountability. Her research has been published in *JPART*, *Public Administration Review*, *Public Administration*, *Journal of European Public Policy*, among others. She is field editor in Public Administration of the *Journal of Public Policy* and serves on the editorial board of the *Journal of Public Administration Research and Theory (JPART)*.

Discussion

Dominique Boullier, Sciences Po, CEE

Matthias Brunn, Université de Montpellier, CEPEL, CNRS & visiting researcher at Sciences Po, CEE

Compulsory registration on the link above - Contact: katia.rio@sciencespo.fr