INFRASTRUCTURES OF WELFARE

Doris Allhutter

Austrian Academy of Sciences

Anne Kaun

SÖDERTÖRN UNIVERSITY

Stine Lomborg

University of Copenhagen

Karolina Sztandar-Sztanderska

University of Warsaw

Christian Pentzold

University of Leipzig

Abstract:
In recent years, the welfare sector has been facing increasing demands and shrinking resources across the EU and is imagined to be radically transformed by automation and AI-enhancement. Automation is suggested as a response to calls for greater efficiency through data-driven welfare provision and freeing resources to better support the flourishing of citizens in society. The past five years of scholarship have seen a steady stream of critical studies of algorithms, datafication and AI within the human and social sciences in particular. These studies have commonly called for accountability of technical systems, data ethics, transparency and regulatory oversight to ensure human justice in ADM systems. At the same time, reality is rife with examples of violations of human rights by way of privacy breaches, inherent biases in automated systems, and discriminatory impacts (e.g., Human Rights Watch 2021). Critical examples were found across the globe, e.g. in the public sector's use of data excess for fraud detection, distribution of welfare benefits and profiling of (vulnerable) citizens.The notion of 'infrastructures of welfare' (Allhutter &Kaun forthcoming) suggests that the implementation of ADM systems is closely entangled with a transformation of administrative work practices and of the relationship between citizens and the state.
This panel addresses the digital transformation of public welfare and aims to examine the implications of the automation of core welfare services including social services such as employment services, healthcare and social benefits provision. It invites scholars from science and technology studies, political science, sociology, organization studies, administrative science, computer science and beyond for contributions on algorithmic welfare from an interdisciplinary perspective. Contributions may address the following questions and more:
How is welfare automated across Europe and beyond?How is automated decision-making in the public sector co-produced with a transformation of welfare?How is the relationship between citizens

and the state reconstituted with emerging ADM welfare infrastructures? How can the algorithmic governance enacted by welfare infrastructures be theorized?

Allhutter, D. &Kaun, A. Infrastrutures of Welfare. Handbook of Public Policy and the Internet, forthcoming.
Human Rights Watch 2021. https://www.hrw.org/news/2021/11/10/how-eus-flawed-artificial-intelligence-regulation-endangers-social-safety-net