

Call for papers

SASE Mini-Conference on the future of algorithmic inequalities and organizational dynamics

27-29 June 2019

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Computational techniques including machine learning, big data analysis and artificial intelligence are disrupting established methods of data collection and analysis in the social sciences. Researchers are also questioning the social, cultural and political impacts of data-driven technologies in hiring and employment, medicine, finance, and criminal justice, among many other areas of social life.

On one hand, algorithms represent new data-intensive mechanisms for coping and counterbalancing unequal structures of opportunities and power. On the other side, new data tools could exacerbate existing social, economic and political hierarchies under a guise of technocratic neutrality. Society could potentially derive enormous benefits from new kinds of data, but challenges persist. For example, in healthcare algorithmic and AI systems could also lock-in existing accumulated advantages, open new divides, such as privacy or security, and create new patterns of privilege or exploitation.

This SASE mini-conference will focus on the organizational dynamics of algorithmic systems and artificial intelligence. We welcome submissions presenting empirical evidence or developing theoretical reflections on the intersection of socio-technical systems and organizational realities. Contributions are invited on a broad range of topics, including but not limited to the following:

- Traditional sources of social inequalities such as gender, race and class origin are embedded and encoded into algorithmic systems and may lead towards even more subtle forms of discrimination, far from the promise of neutral and efficient data-driven decisions. What socio-economic mechanisms contribute to the power of algorithms to reproduce and reinforce inequality and bias? Are there organizational processes or structures that mitigate or exacerbate algorithmic inequality?
- How do users engage in and solve trust issues in algorithmic settings? What new digital competences arise as different actors and stakeholders articulate their power and influence within algorithmic organizational settings?
- How do algorithms and AI change the social and organizational dynamics of authority, agency and voice? There is a potential for reconfiguration in power practices due to AI and algorithms promised capacity to substitute human experience, judgment and expertise, as organizational and social institutions try to adjust. What emerging evidence do we have as these systems diffuse from the technology sector into more kinds of work, organizations and industries?
- Do algorithmic and AI systems support or hinder the processes of organizational innovation? What do scholars need to understand to build algorithmic systems to encourage creativity and collaboration among workers?
- How does organizational analysis help illuminate the “dark side” of algorithms? How do different actors in an organization understand and use algorithms differently? How do they adapt their daily practices in algorithmic settings and how do they modify, push back or resist algorithmic logics?
- How can socio-economic and organizational analysis contribute to showing how fairness, transparency and accountability can best be built into the design, deployment and use of algorithmic and AI systems.

- Many studies of algorithmic systems and AI have focused on the US and Europe. What cross-country empirical evidence helps scholars to understand the emerging dynamics of these systems in a wider array of settings?

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Gina Neff is a Senior Research Fellow and Associate Professor at the Oxford Internet Institute and the Department of Sociology at the University of Oxford. She studies the future of work in data-rich environments. Her most recent book, *Self-Tracking*, co-authored with Dawn Nafus (MIT Press, 2016), focuses on the practices and politics of using consumer technologies to track health and other everyday personal metrics. Her book *Venture Labor: Work and the Burden of Risk in Innovative Industries* (MIT Press, 2012) about the rise of internet industries in New York City won the 2013 American Sociological Association Communication and Information Technologies Best Book Award. She leads a new project on Data Diversity that studies the challenges of using artificial intelligence for decision making. She holds a Ph.D. in sociology from Columbia University, where she remains a faculty affiliate at the Center on

Organizational Innovation. Her writing for the general public has appeared in *Wired*, *Slate* and *The Atlantic*, among other outlets.

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Laura Sartori is an Associate Professor of Sociology at the Department of Political and Social Sciences, University of Bologna. She studies innovation, money, and disasters. She has an on-going interest for the social and political implications of ICT's: from digital divide and digital inequalities to more recent algorithmic inequalities. Current projects are about Complementary currencies and Sociology of disasters and social innovation. She published "La società dell'informazione" (Il Mulino, 2012), "The Political Party as a Network of Cleavages: Disclosing the Inner Structure of Italian Political Parties in the

Seventies", (with P. Parigi, *Social networks*, 2014), "From complementary currency to institution: A micro-macro study of the Sardex mutual credit system" (with P. Dini, 2016); "Social Innovation and natural disasters: the case of the Casa Italia Plan" (2017); "The Social Roots of Political Inequality: Structural and Cultural Constraints on Women's Political Participation" (in *Social Politics* (2017)). She holds a Ph.D. in Sociology and Social Research from the University of Trento (2002). She has been research fellow at Columbia University, Stanford University and London School of Economic. She is Editor of *Polis*, a Journal on social and political research.