Wednesday 18 November 2020
14:00-18:00 CET
Online conference

Governance Of and By Digital Technology

The rapid pace of technological change and the deepening reliance of societies on digital technologies raise profound governance questions. Some of these governance questions are relatively familiar, such as what kinds of rules and regulations are needed to prevent new technologies from causing harm?
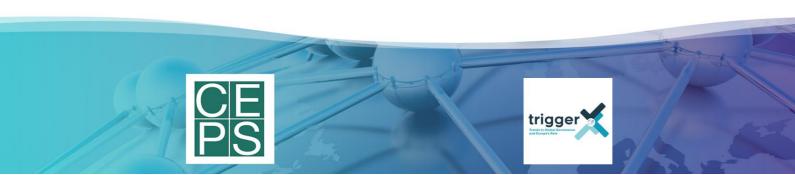
However, in addition to these "governance of technology" questions, we increasingly face questions about our increasing "governance by technology". This raises high-profile risks, such as the danger that decision-making algorithms will remove decision-making abilities or reduce the quality of decision-making processes within and between societies.

On 18 November 2020, the EPFL International Risk Governance Center (IRGC) will convene a group of leading policymakers, researchers and practitioners to consider the future of "Governance Of and By Digital Technology". Here are some of the issues that the conference will consider:

- How can a technology like machine learning be used to enhance the performance of decision systems while ensuring that issues of accuracy, bias and misuse are addressed?

- Are there lessons about governance of and by technology to be learned from the rapid roll-out of digital contact tracing apps as part of governments' urgent public health response to Covid-19?

- Does the EU's approach to digital technology point to the future of global governance in this area—for example, the extraterritorial reach of the GDPR or the new focus on technological sovereignty in the EU's recent data strategy?

- Central to all these questions is the need to make trade-offs between values and goals that can come into tension when new technologies are developed and deployed—for example, how should we weigh performance or efficiency against ethics or sustainability in different domains?

- Who should make decisions about governance of and by technology? To take a recent example, is it healthy that major private sector actors have been left to take the lead on decisions about the use of facial recognition technology?

This conference is organised under the auspices of the Horizon 2020 TRIGGER project (2019-2021). Led by CEPS (Centre for European Policy Studies), the project focuses on Europe's role within the evolving global governance landscape. The EPFL International Risk Governance Center (IRGC) is leading the TRIGGER work streams that deal with digital technologies, focusing in particular on machine learning, data protection, distributed ledger technologies, open source and open standards.

The conference will take place online.

Programme

14:00 - Welcome and Introductions

- Marie-Valentine **Florin**, EPFL
- Andrea **Renda**, CEPS
- Jim **Larus**, EPFL

14:20 - Privacy, efficacy and the digital response to Covid-19

Data protection is at the heart of debates about the governance of digital technologies, but concerns have been raised about hampering innovation. This session will assess the relationship between privacy and technological efficacy, drawing on the recent development of Covid-19 contact tracing apps.
– *Moderation: Jim **Larus***

- Jeffrey **Bohn**, "*Striking a balance between data privacy & effective machine intelligence for algorithm development*", Swiss Re
- Elettra **Ronchi**, *"Are there lessons about governance of and by technology to be learned from the rapid roll-out of digital contact tracing apps as part of governments' urgent public health response to Covid-19?"*, OECD
- Michael **Veale**, *"Privacy, infrastructure and the digital response to Covid-19"*, University College London

15:10 – Keynotes

- Stuart **Russell**, *"Governing AI: A few suggestions",* University of California, Berkeley
- Joanna **Bryson**, *"Governing AI made easy",* Hertie School

15:40 - Governance of technology: the challenges of regulating machine learning

The increasing role played by machine-learning algorithms in a growing range of decision-making processes raises legal, technical and ethical challenges. In this roundtable session, participants will discuss the priorities, constraints and trade-offs that policy-makers face in the regulation of machine learning.
– *A roundtable discussion* with Andrea **Renda** *(facilitator), Stuart **Russell**, Joanna **Bryson** and:*

- John **Zysman**, *"Governing AI: Understanding the limits, possibility, and risks of AI in an era of intelligent tools and systems"*, University of California, Berkeley
- Karen **Yeung**, "*Why the EU White Paper's approach is incorrectly described as 'risk-based'*", University of Birmingham
- Bernd **Stahl**, *"Governing AI ecosystems"*, de Montfort University
- Raja **Chatila**, *"Technical robustness and safety of AI based systems as a means for their governance"*, Sorbonne University
- Kelsey **Farish**, *"Difficulties in regulating emerging and rapidly evolving digital technologies: Deep fakes"*, DAC Beachcroft

16:50 - Break

17:00 - Governance with and by technology: digitally enabled policymaking

Given the transformation that new technologies have unleashed in many areas of life, the impact in the public sector has been relatively modest. This session will discuss whether greater use could or should be made of digital technologies in developing and implementing public policy.
– *Moderation: Marie-Valentine **Florin**, EPFL*

- Gianluca **Misuraca**, *"Digital Europe 2040: AI & public sector innovation in a data driven society"*, Danube University Krems
- Bryan **Ford**, *"When and why Machine Learning should never, ever be used in governance"*, EPFL
- Peteris **Zilgalvis**, *"The EU approach to blockchain/DLTs"*, European Commission