Call for Papers

Artificial Intelligence: The New Frontier of Business and Human Rights

Asser Institute, The Hague

7 September 2021

The [Business and Human Rights Working Group of the Netherlands Network for Human Rights Research](#) and the [Asser Institute](#) invite submissions of abstracts for an international **Workshop on Artificial Intelligence: The New Frontier of Business and Human Rights**.

The workshop will take place on **Tuesday, 7 September 2021**. We aim to hold the workshop in person or in hybrid format, depending on the situation regarding the Covid-19 pandemic.

Themes

Artificial Intelligence (AI) is omnipresent in public discourse across the world. For every social ill or need there appears to be an AI solution ready to revolutionise the way we control borders, deliver social services, wage war or simply find what we are looking for on Google or Amazon. Our lives are clearly affected by the operation of AI systems in ways that remain often unknown or un-cognisable by us as consumers and citizens.

Unsurprisingly, perhaps, the growing presence of AI-guided behaviour raises fundamental ethical and legal questions with regard to its effects on those who are subjected to it. What are the consequences of a Facebook algorithm choosing to censor certain publications but not others? Under what conditions (if any) can an AI model be used to determine whether a convict is suitable for parole or not? Is it acceptable for an AI model to be sold to an autocratic regime to better target its repressive measures? The ethical and legal concerns raised by AI are increasingly expressed in human rights terms, with growing acceptance of using human rights law frameworks to tackle the negative effects of AI.

Our event goes one step further by focusing on the *human rights responsibility of private corporations* that produce, sell and use AI technologies, as well as the responsibility of States in regulating private actors in order to safeguard human rights. Currently, AI businesses are keen to adopt codes of ethics and self-regulatory tools to show their willingness to act ethically. Yet, one may wonder whether these are really effective in holding the companies accountable for the negative effects of their AI technologies. It is essential that the human rights responsibility of businesses engaging in the production of AI is investigated sooner rather than later.

The conveners of the Workshop particularly invite the submission of abstracts on the following four themes:

1. *Human rights as a legal check on AI*

The first theme addresses the foundational matters of AI and human rights. Topics could include: Should AI's adverse effects be captured in human rights language (rather than that of ethics)? What are the advantages and risks of framing AI critique in human rights terms, and of using a legal rather than an ethical approach? To what extent does the current international (and regional) human rights law framework place legal restraints on the development of AI?

2. *The translation of business and human rights discourse into practice*

The second theme addresses the translation of the business and human rights discourse to the context of the production and commercialisation of AI tools. Here, the interplay between business and human rights theory and practice is crucial. Questions include: What types of responsibilities can we expect from businesses producing AI? What would the draft EU legislation on human rights due diligence mean for AI businesses? How can human rights due diligence be exercised in the AI context? Can lessons be learned from other sectors, and what specific challenges do AI businesses face in the implementation of effective human rights due diligence?

3. *Embedding human rights compliance into AI products*

The third theme concerns attempts to technically embed human rights compliance into AI products. For instance: Is this technical integration of human rights considerations into AI even possible? Can lessons be learned from privacy-by-design to enable businesses to incorporate human rights-by-design? How could the effectiveness of technical embedment of human rights be checked and who is to decide whether human rights have been properly integrated or not? Can human rights compliance be coded or do we still need a human to adjudicate it?

4. *Using AI tools in the framework of human rights due diligence processes*

The fourth theme deals with the use of AI tools during a business' human rights due diligence process. Possible use of AI here could include the identification of risks to human rights, the suggestion of measures that could mitigate those risks, or even the operation of a grievance mechanism. Questions arise such as: What benefits and risks to human rights protection would be posed by the use of such tools within due diligence processes? What lessons can be learned for human rights from similar, existing uses of AI by public actors?

Submission of abstracts

We invite abstract submissions from both established and early-career researchers, including PhD students. Submitted abstracts should be no more than 500 words and should be accompanied by a short author biography (maximum 200 words).

All abstracts should be submitted to Dr Lottie Lane at c.l.lane@rug.nl before **14 June 2021** and will be assessed by the conveners of the workshop. A decision on acceptance of the abstract will be communicated by **2 July 2021**.

Expected output

To facilitate discussion, authors of accepted abstracts are expected to submit an extended abstract of 2,000 words by **30 August 2021**.

We plan to publish a select number of papers in either an edited volume or as a special issue in an international journal. Papers would be chosen based on academic excellence and originality, and would go through a rigorous peer review process. Should you wish your paper to be considered for inclusion in these plans, please indicate this when submitting your abstract.

Additional information

Further information regarding the conference, including the programme and registration details, will be made available on the websites of the Business and Human Rights Working Group and the Asser Institute in due course.

The Workshop is kindly sponsored by the Netherlands Network for Human Rights Research