

Technology, data, law, and governance

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Project Description:

This call is looking for research students interested in advancing critical scholarship on the intersections of technology, data, law, regulation, and governance with an eye on economic, political, philosophical, and cultural effects. We are keen to supervise projects that analyse technologies, such as blockchains and quantum computing, data, and law as interrelated sites of ideological production; as psycho-political phenomena (e.g. technological fetishism); as constitutive and trans-jurisdictional projects (e.g. promotion of personal data sovereignty *contra* formal State mechanisms and authority); and as philosophical and phenomenological objects.

Information technology and knowledge industries are vast, powerful, and influential in the twenty-first century. Sensors pervade all walks of life and vast accretions, stores, lakes, and clouds of personal and non-personal data (“big data”) underpin data operations (DataOps) models and algorithmic predictive pathways and modes of analysis. “Big data” totalling zettabytes (10^{21}) has an otherness and conceptual obscurity that only large numbers, immense landscapes, or seemingly infinite space creates in the human mind. Data and the technologies that generate, manage, and organise it, for a variety of stakeholders, increasingly make-up the foundations of administration and bureaucracy operating domestically and globally today. “Open data” policies and the sophistication of technologies such as blockchains, cloud computing, machine learning, artificial intelligence, and quantum computing, are testing law and governance at every level. Many of the tensions between the role and place of law and regulation and the adoption of technologies and data practices in the systems and networks of modern societies remain unexplored and unchallenged.

State governance is linked to illegal practices of state mass surveillance not only in authoritarian regimes but also in liberal democracies as exposed respectively by NSA whistleblower Ed Snowden and the development of a social credit system in China. Those practices and how they circulate between different forms of state regimes could be problematised and interrogated. Governance is carried out not only by states but also by organizations such as Google, Apple, Facebook, and Amazon (GAFAM). From that perspective, the strengths and specificities of organizational regulation compared with state regulation could be analysed. Scholars disagree on the way data governance operates in terms of power relations and the

notion of algorithmic governmentality remains debateable. A Deleuzian framework of societies of control can be employed in order to analyse how are standard organizations deploying organizational digital surveillance of customers, operations, and workforce in response to the “new normal”. And the materiality of information technology governance and its effect on bodies, objects, and the environment warrants further investigation.

About the Supervisors:

Dr Robert Herian is the author of multiple books and articles analysing technology, data, and law, including *Regulating Blockchain: Critical Perspectives in Law and Technology* (Routledge, 2018) and *Data: New Trajectories in Law* (Routledge, 2021).

Dr Charles Barthold works on the articulation of power and resistance in organizations and neoliberalism – for example, in *Resisting Financialization with Deleuze and Guattari* (Routledge, 2018).

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