

Draft Conference outline

Better Algorithms for Better Policies

*Towards benevolent AI
for responsible and evidence informed policymaking*

November 30, 2021,
The Hague, The Netherlands

STEPS
Strengthening & Transferring Evidence
for Policies & Politics Society



Universiteit
Leiden
Governance and
Global Affairs

In collaboration with:

NOREA
DE BEROEPSORGANISATIE VAN IT-AUDITORS



Rijksoverheid

NL AI Coalitie



DATA
COALITION

ScienceWorks
Connecting Science & Society

First day of STEPPS' annual Conference

Evidence For Policymakers



Towards benevolent AI for responsible and evidence informed policymaking

This conference is the follow up of the expert meeting “Making governments AI Proof”, which took place in December 2020 in The Hague. It will continue the conversation on how governmental organizations can better organize data driven policymaking including the use of Artificial Intelligence for the public good. Some conclusions of this expert meeting are described hereunder.

How can we gain trust in the use of Algorithms within Governments?

AI is often regarded as a “boogy man”. We therefore need to enhance awareness and regulation in order to use AI in responsible ways. Not using AI seems not an option in the long run.

Some experts state that algorithms need to be *certified and listed* in order to build more trust. In The Netherlands and Finland, algorithm registers have been established for this purpose. In order to use these registers properly we need to agree on how we wish to scrutinize or supervise AI, and make sure that transparency is not just for the sake of transparency, but is actionable for various stakeholders. Algorithms are not right or wrong in itself. It’s the use of it that can lead to mistakes.

A point of attention is how to turn the stigma of the public towards AI around, leading to a more positive focus on the improvements AI may foster and is already making. It received far less attention when the Netherlands Court of Audit stated that no forms of “uncontrolled AI” had been founded, as opposed to the more regular blaming of algorithms to cover political or governmental misconduct. Therefore, algorithms might deserve to be also addressed within politics or by the media as the cause for success.

How to use AI as an integral and secure part of government innovation?

How to stimulate innovation responsibly? Best practices from industry may demonstrate which innovation will work or will not work in a sector where the turmoil is generally lower than in the public sector.

Although we may have the risk that the private sector will outclass the public sector, public-private cooperation is essential for innovation. This needs to be fully transparent on the related conditions; private ownership of data may, for example, may become a hurdle too high to overcome in the public sector.

Another point of attention is that we should leave ample space for *experiments* in order to find out how we can work with algorithms e.g. in order to enhance the prediction of specific interventions or to reduce costs. We should enable standards and create a safe environment in which these experiments may take place for the purpose of learning.

What can the government do internally to improve data driven policymaking?

Standards are important in order to be able to cooperate not only technologically but also on the process level. In all these processes we need standards in order to bridge data-use between public agencies/departments, between governmental levels and – in some cases - between public- and private parties. For creating transparent AI, we need not only to build trust between parties and on conditions but some central management and supervision is essential as well.

In general we may state that we need data engineers and data scientists to build AI, we need academia to understand the underlying principles and methods and we need policymakers to have the capacities to deal with both the conditions and the consequences for the people. This conference will discuss how to make use of each other’s expertise in – particularly – the earliest phase of development, allow for piloting and a safe environment for learning. Therewith, we should investigate how we can share best practices internationally, for generating benevolent AI that is instrumental for improving the public good.

Draft Programme

12.30 - 13.00 Registration

13.00 - 14.15 Plenary opening; How to enhance the Public Value of Algorithms

Bram Klievink *, Chair of the Conference & Professor of Public Administration at Leiden University with a special focus on Digitalisation and Public Policy

Timothy Persons*, Chief Scientist and Managing Director, Science, Technology Assessment, and Analytics at the United States Government Accountability Office

David Budtz Pedersen*, Professor of Science Communication at Aalborg University, Knowledge Broker for the “Algorithms, Data & Democracy Initiative (ADD), Denmark

Nick Hart*, CEO, Data Coalition & President, Data Foundation, USA

14.00 - 14.15 Panel Discussion and Q&A

14.15 - 14.30 Break

14.30 - 15.30 Parallel Session

Gaining trust for AI
within government

Chair: **Barbara Ubaldi***,
Data Lead OECD

How can AI generate
Evidence for Policy

Chair: **Nick Hart ***
CEO, Data Coalition & President, Data Foundation, USA

Jiri Hradec*,

Analyst on Policy, Data and Text Mining at the European
Commission’s Joint Research Centre, Italy

15.30-15.45 Break

Draft Programme

15.30 - 15.45 Break

15.45 - 16.45 Parallel Session

Understanding and controlling algorithms and AI

Chair: **Timothy Persons***

Chief Scientist and Managing Director, Science, Technology
Assessment, and Analytics at GAO, USA

Public-private cooperation
in an innovative government

Chair: **Kees van der Klauw ***

Strategist and Manager
Dutch AI Coalition, The Netherlands

16.45-17.00 Break

17.00 – 17.45 Closing panel; Points of Action for public data strategies

17.00 - 17.10 Recommendations for the closing panel, presented by the chairs of the parallel sessions

17.10 - 17.45 *Moderator:* **Bram Klievink ***, Chair of the Conference & Professor of Public Administration at Leiden University with a special focus on Digitalisation and Public Policy

Panel Members:

Nick Hart*, CEO, Data Coalition & President, Data Foundation USA

17.45 Closing Remarks and reception