

The Social Construction of Algorithms

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The project investigates the everyday use of algorithmic management by workers. The basic assumption is that algorithms unfold their impact only in interaction with people who implement their instructions. However, this transfer by individuals does not happen unfiltered and is influenced by their understanding of the technologies. In order to determine the concrete effects of algorithmic management, it is therefore not only necessary to research the mode of operation of the algorithms, but also the assumptions of the workers and how these guide their actions. Only through such a praxis-oriented perspective a realistic view of the actual effects as well as possible resistant practices of the workers is possible. The focus of the project thus lies in the praxis-focused theorisation and analysis of algorithmic management, which understands algorithms as ontogenetic and subsequently connects the top-down structures of digital control processes with a bottom-up perspective.

The research project examines algorithmic management and employees in three different work contexts: Logistics, banking and professional e-sports. By contrasting them, both differences and commonalities of subjective algorithm constructions will be analysed. Within the framework of a multi-methodological research design, qualitative interviews, group discussions and participant observation are used as instruments of data collection.