Co-Governance of Algorithmic Systems - A Guide

Developed by Dr. Christina J. Colclough, The Why Not Lab as an addition to DRO training material - Chapter 3

Our Digital Future
Algorithmic systems can be governed in multiple ways. This Governance Guide refers explicitly to Co-Governance Structures and Collective Bargaining.
Getting to know the Guide

• The Guide consists of questions workers and their union should be asking management in connection with the implementation of digital systems in workplaces.

• It consists of 19 questions bucketed into 7 different themes

• Practice before approaching management!
The 7 Governance themes of the Guide

1. Transparency & procurement contracts
2. Responsibility
3. Right of Redress
4. Data Protection & Rights
5. Harms and benefits
6. Adjustments
7. Co-governance
Theme 1: Transparency / procurement contract

1. Which digital systems is the employer using that affect workers and their working conditions? What are the purposes of these systems?

2. Who designed and owns these systems? Who are the developers and vendors?

3. What are the contractual arrangements between developer, vendor and the employer with regards to data access and control as well as system monitoring, maintenance, and redesign?

4. What transparency measures can be established to ensure disclosure of any algorithms being used in the digital system?
Theme 2: Responsibility

5. What oversight mechanisms does management have in place? Who is involved?

6. What remedies are in place if a system fails its objectives, harms workers, and/or if management fails to govern the digital system?

7. How do you ensure the system is in compliance with existing laws and collective agreements?

8. Which managers are accountable and responsible for these systems?
9. What mechanisms can be established to ensure that workers have the right to challenge actions and decisions taken by management that are assisted by algorithms?
10. If personal data and personally identifiable information are processed in these systems, what protections for that data currently exist? What additional protections are needed?

11. Are datasets that include workers’ personal data and personally identifiable information sold or moved outside the company?

12. What mechanisms can be established to ensure workers have the right to access, edit and/or erase personal data and personally identifiable information?
13. What assessments have you and/or a third party made of risks and impacts (positive as negative) on workers’ well being and working conditions?

14. How do you control for and monitor possible worker harms in these systems, e.g. health and safety, discrimination and bias, work intensification, deskilling?

15. What is your plan for periodically reassessing the systems for unintended effects/impacts?
16. What are the mechanisms and procedures for amending the digital systems?
17. How will you log your assessments and adjustments?
18. What mechanisms can be put in place, so unions are party to this governance?

19. What skills and competencies do management and workers need to implement, govern and assess the digital systems responsibly and knowledgeably?
Well done!

1. Congratulations on going through the themes and the questions.
2. Prepare thoroughly before approaching management!
3. Keep a log of their responses...
4. Return to this guide periodically - digital systems need to be governed, and governed again and again.
Prepared for PSI’s
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