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TAMING THE MACHINES — IT FOR A GOOD SOCIETY

DATA JUSTICE — THE CASE FOR A SOCIAL JUSTICE APPROACH TO DATA GOVERNANCE

PROF. DR. LINNET TAYLOR
TILBURG UNIVERSITY (THE NETHERLANDS)

ÖFFENTLICHE RING-VORLESUNG

About the lecture

How should data technologies be governed? What kind of debate can we have across borders and cultures about datafication, and can we generalise about what constitute beneficial digitisation? The increasing use and availability of data technologies such as mobile phones, internet access and new ways of counting and monitoring presents several challenges. First, accessing new data sources to count and understand people better could mean that vulnerable people will be better represented and served, but it could also mean they will be more surveilled and discriminated against, and easier to target. Second, the private sector's ability to reach and evaluate consumers can be useful in stimulating economic growth and development, but can also enforce patterns of inequality and injustice by excluding marginalised groups more efficiently from access to jobs and services. How to balance the positive and negative potential of data technologies is a question of governance, and specifically of inclusive governance. How can people's experiences of data technologies inform policy decisions about how the data economy should be shaped? Who should get to choose how the new data sources are channeled and applied? These questions touch on some very basic questions of rights and justice, but the data dimension opens up new ways of asking and addressing these questions. In particular, it demands that we think of the relationship between the private and public sectors, and the power of the private sector in social and economic policy, since the new data sources are mostly generated in the private sector. This brings us to some important questions about the political legitimacy of corporate uses of data and about the nature of the social contract with regard to data used by the private sector for public purposes: answering these questions is one of the main aims of the global data justice project.

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Flügelbau West, 2. OG, Raum W221
Edmund-Siemers-Allee 1
20146 Hamburg