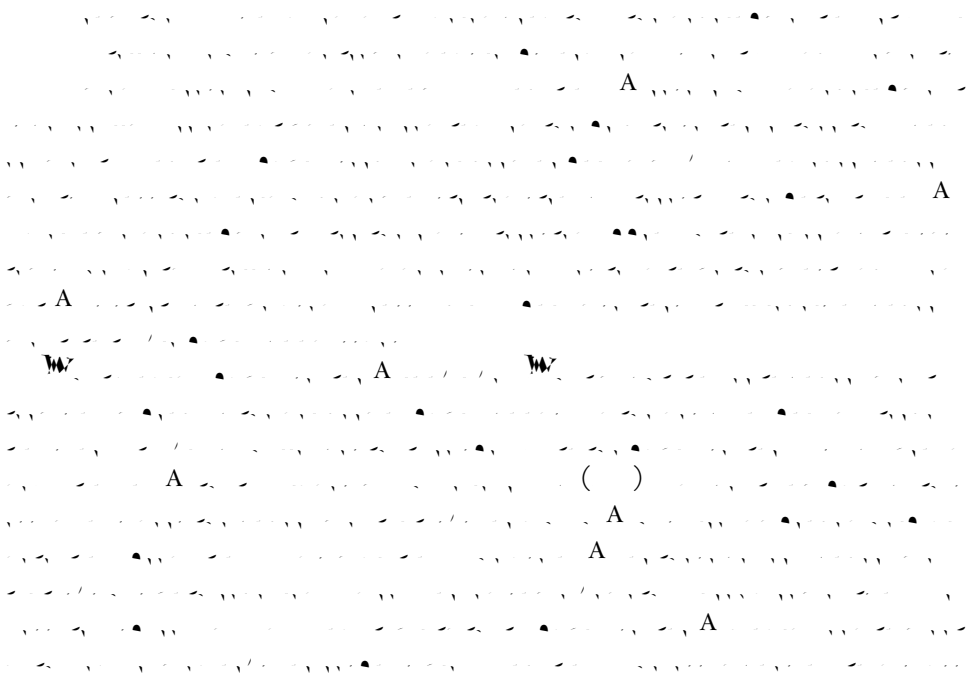


Helen Margetts

This essay examines what AI can do for government, specifically through three generic tools at the heart of governance: detection, prediction, and data-driven decision-making. Public sector functions, such as resource allocation and the protection of rights, are more normatively loaded than those of firms, and AI poses greater ethical challenges than earlier generations of digital technology, threatening transparency, fairness, and accountability. The essay discusses how AI might be developed specifically for government, with a public digital ethos to protect these values. Three moves that could maximize the transformative possibilities for a distinctively public sector AI are the development of government capacity to foster innovation through AI; the building of integrated and generalized models for policy-making; and the detection and tackling of structural inequalities. Combined, these developments could offer a model of data-intensive government that is more efficient, ethical, fair, prescient, and resilient than ever before in administrative history.



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ENDNOTES

- ¹ Helen Margetts, *Information Technology in Government: Britain and America* (New York: Routledge, 1999).
- ² Thomas M. Vogl, Cathrine Seidelin, Bharath Ganesh, and Jonathan Bright, "Smart Technology and the Emergence of Algorithmic Bureaucracy: Artificial Intelligence in

¹⁶ Daniel Birks, Alex Coleman, and David Jackson, “Unsupervised Identification of Crime Problems from Police Free-Text Data,” *Crime Science* 9 (1) (2020): 1–19.

¹⁷ Rhema Vaithianathan, Emily Putnam-Hornstein, Nan Jiang, et al.,

- ³¹ Helen Margetts, “Post Office Scandal Reveals a Hidden World of Outsourced . . . the Government Trusts but Does Not Understand,” *The Conversation*, April 29, 2021.
- ³² Engstrom et al., *Government by Algorithm*, 55; and Vogl et al., “Smart Technology and the Emergence of Algorithmic Bureaucracy.”
- ³³ Engstrom et al., *Government by Algorithm*, 33–34.
- ³⁴ Patrick Dunleavy and Helen Margetts, *Digital Er*