Algorithmic accountability in NYC

September 7, 2018

A few days ago I arrived at Columbia University, where I'm kindly hosted by David Stark and affiliated as a Visiting Scholar with the Center on Organizational Innovation for the next three month. In the weeks to come I will try to immerse myself in the interdisciplinary research culture at COI that draws on Economic Sociology, Science & Technology Studies and Organization Studies. At the same time I will continue an empirical research project on "Algorithmic Accountability in NYC", which I started earlier this year together with Malte Ziewitz (Cornell University). Our project is part of a larger research initiative at Cornell on "Algorithms, Big Data, and Inequality". From our project description:

"On December 18, 2017, the New York City Council unanimously passed a bill that established a task force to examine the city's 'automated decision systems' – systems that significantly impact New Yorkers' lives by matching students with schools, assessing teacher performance, or detecting Medicaid fraud. In this project, we accompany the legislative process and trace the considerations involved in passing regulation for algorithmic accountability through a mix of interviews and documentary analysis. How do different actors and stakeholders think about the promises and challenges of such regulation? What options are considered, justified, and undermined? What can this process teach us about attempts to ensure accountability in computational systems? We document and analyze this process with the help of recent work in organization studies and science & technology studies."