

Responsible AI for Policymaking

One of the fastest growing technologies to emerge from the modern age, artificial intelligence (AI), has captured policymakers' attention for its potential to improve human life in administrative processes. The use of AI and its application at such an influential level is a contentious topic. On the one hand, AI has been envisioned as a way to evaluate risk and streamline bureaucratic processes. On the other hand, it may have immense adverse consequences; AI could confirm human biases, promote discrimination, and may even subvert the democratic process of policymaking.

Before these concerns can be addressed, it may be worthwhile to first define artificial intelligence. Artificial intelligence refers to the 'intelligence' attributed to machine learning technology. Described as the precursor to the Fourth Industrial Revolution, a term coined and explored by Executive Chairman and Founder of the World Economic Forum Klaus Schwab, AI as a technology spans a broad number of fields, making it difficult to specifically define on its own. Most academics agree, however, that AI is most concerned with "mimicking" human intelligence and processes, to the point of near-indistinguishability. Thus, AI encompasses the learning, problem-solving, and rationality of machines, culminating in being put into action within operations and procedures that are normally human-driven.

These defining characteristics of AI ultimately lead many to believe that AI could play a role within governmental policymaking as being a complementary component. AI is envisioned not as a leading force with which to replace the human act of policymaking, but instead as catering to secondary needs; it could ultimately reduce the cost, time, and effort that goes into policymaking, effectively streamlining policymakers' work in serving their communities. Here is how AI is seen as fitting in the policymaking cycle: before a bill is even made, AI could collect

massive amounts of population data in a short amount of time through algorithmic processes, enabling policymakers to identify specific problems faced by a population without incurring the high cost usually associated with data collection and mining. These calculations could ultimately be used as empirical data that could ensure the passage of specific bills by backing them with evidence-based information. Additionally, they could optimize the implementation of bills by showing whom they may affect. And finally, if certain bills do not gel with the populations they affect, AI calculations may encourage more recursive policymaking, where policies and their implementation are evaluated quickly.

This isn't to say drawbacks aren't possible with AI. In fact, one of the largest points of contention is over how easy it is for AI to be misused, even unintentionally. In today's era, these unfortunate misuses can be felt intensely. Technological plagues, such as AI botting systems or the propagation of false news, can be seen as driven by the careless use of AI. And if it were to be applied to as sensitive a process as policymaking without caution, AI could serve to run opposite to the goals of serving the general public. Human biases and data flaws as they relate to discrimination, illegal surveillance, and the restriction of basic human freedoms could be constructed and ultimately enforced under mishandled AI application, undermining the purposes of policymaking.

To avoid this misuse of AI as it relates to policymaking, there have been many discussions on the concept of responsible AI. Responsible AI is a guiding, ethical principle within which to use AI. This principle highlights the need for transparency, fairness, and accountability with how AI is used in general, and notably within policymaking. In order to ensure this fair usage, certain protective measures are proposed under responsible AI; risk assessment, evaluative ethical reports, and the general maintenance and emphasis of human

autonomy. Through these measures, responsible AI ultimately maintains the role of AI as supportive to its human users rather than being a directive of it, a principle especially pertinent to policymakers. By enacting such principles, AI can prove to be a force for good, a supporting resource to both transform the act of policymaking into a streamlined, efficient form and better serve the government utilizing it and the communities affected by it.

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