Keynote: Algorithmic Governance in Europe: Inside the Digital Machinery of Discrimination

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This talk examines the rise of the digital welfare state in Europe and its implications for social justice, focusing particularly on the discriminatory mechanisms of algorithmic governance. While presented as tools for modernizing public administration and optimizing resource allocation, automated decision-making systems used in welfare programs often institutionalize exclusion, amplify existing inequalities, and erode fundamental rights. Drawing on cases from Europe, the talk highlights how semi-automated fraud detection systems operate opaquely and ineffectively, disproportionately targeting marginalized populations under the guise of efficiency and fraud prevention. Central to the argument is the application of an intersectional lens — rooted in Black feminist thought — which reveals how these systems perpetuate complex forms of discrimination along axes such as gender, race, disability, and economic status. The analysis critiques existing legal frameworks for failing to address systemic and intersectional forms of algorithmic discrimination and calls for a rethinking of legal interventions.

Biography. Raphaële Xenidis is assistant professor in European law at Sciences Po Law School in Paris, France. Her current research focuses on algorithmic bias and discrimination in automated decision-making systems in the context of European equality law. Raphaële holds a PhD in law from the European University Institute and is an Honorary Fellow at the University of Edinburgh Law School and a Global Fellow at iCourts, University of Copenhagen.

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