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## ALGORITHMIC RESISTANCE IN EUROPE AND THE QUESTION OF COLLECTIVE AGENCY

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One of the key critical questions of our times is the understanding of how data, algorithmic logics and AI are altering our agency as citizens, and what forms of resistance and opposition are emerging on the ground. The rise of surveillance capitalism (Zuboff, 2019) implied that the personal data of citizens could be collected, cross-referenced, shared, and sold in the form of *predicting products*. Over the last decades, we have thus witnessed a social, cultural and economic transformation, whereby the data traces of citizens started to be used by different profiling machines (Elmer, 2004; Solove, 2004) to make data-driven decisions about their lives and to determine their rights (Kitchin, 2014; Pasquale, 2015). In this context, different researchers have started to focus on how the very notion of citizenship – and its relationship to agency – was being transformed by the new data environments. What became evident is that, over the last decades, individuals were no longer only digital citizens using online technologies (and especially social media) to self-construct in public and claiming rights (Isin & Ruppert, 2015) – they were also becoming datafied citizens, as they were being defined in public by processes of data inferral and algorithmic profiling (Barassi, 2016 & 2017; Hintz et al., 2017 & 2018; Cheney-Lippold, 2019).

Today, more and more private and public institutions, at global level, are relying on AI systems and machine learning technologies to profile individuals and determine their rights. These technologies are used by governments for predictive policing (Dencik et al., 2018; Amore, 2020), border control (Metcalf and Dencik, 2019) or to aid decisions in the education sector (Williamson, 2017), criminal justice sector (Forrest, 2021) and welfare allocation (Eubanks, 2018). These technologies are also used by companies in the workplace, to hire and fire employees or as forms of automated surveillance and

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assessment (Crawford, 2021; Hirth and Rhein, 2021; Walker et al., 2021). The rapid and unregulated expansion of algorithmic profiling in different areas of social life implies that we must understand processes of datafication more holistically within their social, economic and cultural contexts and with regards to issues of inequality and social justice (Dencik et.al, 2016).

Although over the last years much research has emerged on the civic and human rights implications of automated systems and algorithmic profiling, little attention has been paid to what was happening on the ground and how social movement actors were actively organising against algorithmic profiling. Some scholars have shown how algorithms both prohibit as well as aid activists' agency (Milan, 2018; Treré, 2019; Etter and Albu, 2021), while others have focused on how individual activists challenge the power of algorithms and reclaim a sense of agency (Velkova and Kaun, 2021). Although insightful, research in the field is still scarce and much more work is needed in the exploration of how social movement actors *resist algorithmic profiling* and reclaim a sense of *collective agency*.

In this paper, we draw on ten semi-structured interviews with actors from civil society or non-governmental organisations in Europe, who struggle against algorithmic decision making, and combine these findings with a qualitative textual analysis of ten campaign websites. The aim of the paper is to shed light on the discourses and practices of social movement actors when it comes to resisting algorithmic injustices. The key question that we are interested in addressing is to explore how – in the everyday resistance to algorithmic profiling – actors rely on three different strategies of action (algorithmic *literacy*, algorithmic *regulation* and algorithmic *accountability*). These strategies of action are of central importance if we want to understand the way in which collective agency against 'the power of algorithms' (see, for instance, Velkova and Kaun, 2021) is built and negotiated by social movement actors on a daily basis. Analysing these strategies as well as the challenges that activists face on the ground is key for us to appreciate that the question about algorithmic profiling is at the heart of new and emerging conflicts in our society.

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