Abstract

Everyone wants to use big data and data algorithms to "make sure" the many private providers we now have in the system - this includes many small businesses - deliver excellent services. The most popular quality assurance checks use auditing technologies that rely on intensive data collection, subsequent risk analysis, and performance audits (or the threat of performance audits, a sanction in itself). This paper discusses the limitations of the approach.   Being excellent at service delivery may be a step beyond the algorithm if you are an innovator. The prime incentiive becomes delivering to the algorithm and not trying to excel in novel ways. The providers that can play the algorithm game and deliver standard-meeting services will dominate. This will generally be the large providers. Providers with the resources to play this game become more equal in their service delivery around mediocrity. Those whom we would like to see benefit from the services have their chances for social equality compromised because the opportunity for innovative responsiveness to their needs by a potentially excellent provider is made near impossible by "the system". The social capital that is at the heart of effective social service delivery is compromised by a regulatory system that is technocratic and depersonalised, and is deaf to the need to regulate while mobilising social capital for greater equality and fairness.