

Association of Former UNESCO Staff Members (AFUS) Memory & Future Club

Artificial intelligence the new frontier of ethics

A video interview with **Dafna Feinholz**, UNESCO's Chief of Bioethics and Ethics of Science and Technology, and **Maksim Karliuk**, Program specialist. Carried out by **Russ Russell-Rivoallan**, political scientist and AFUS member.

Since the 1950s, "artificial intelligence" has been describing machines capable of performing routine tasks, then so-called learning machines, and has gradually entered our lives, eventually become indispensable during the recent pandemic.

AI algorithms now surpass human cognitive capacities in reasoning, analysis, problem solving and even creativity. They intervene in the processing of masses of data, but also in the choice of the news we consult, the music we listen to, the decisions we make. They are a growing source of information for doctors, judges, scientists. They determine the future of education, science, culture and communication, thus touching the heart of UNESCO's mandate.

This profound influence of AI, the extent of its social, political and cultural repercussions, raises many concerns arising from the possibility of abuses, such as fraud and crime, hate speech and discrimination, misinformation, invasion of privacy, fear of unemployment.

While many governments and organizations - including the European Commission, the OECD, ITU, WHO - are concerned about the ethical implications of AI, UNESCO, since the 1970s, has developed important expert networks such as the World Commission on the Ethics of Scientific Knowledge and Technology (COMEST) or the Global Ethics Observatory (GEObs), as well as international instruments, such as the Universal Declaration on Bioethics and Human Rights (2005), the Declaration of Ethical Principles in Relation to Climate Change (2017), or the Recommendation on Science and Scientific Re-

searchers, in order to assist Member States in establishing reasoned policies on ethical issues concerning science and technology.

Already involved in the follow-up to the World Summit on the Information Society (WSIS) for the implementation of major orientations concerning the ethical dimensions of the information society, UNESCO has taken the lead, within the United Nations system, on issues related to the ethics of artificial intelligence. As a result, an Intergovernmental Committee of technical and legal experts met in April and June 2021 to consider a draft Recommendation on the Ethics of Artificial Intelligence (AI).

This text will be submitted to all Member States by UNESCO's General Conference at its 41st session in November 2021. If adopted, the Recommendation will be the first global standard-setting instrument in this field.

This success is due in large part to the work of the team of the Bioethics and Ethics of Science Section of UNESCO's Social and Human Sciences Sector. For the Memory and Future Club, the Chief of this Section, **Dafna Feinholz**, and **Maksim Karliuk**, a program specialist, kindly answered questions from their former colleague **Russ Russel-Rivaollan**.

Biographical notes



Dafna Feinholz-Klip joined UNESCO in 2009 as Chief of the Bioethics and Ethics of Science and Technology Section (SHS). A psychologist and bioethicist by training, she was previously a member of the Mexican Research Council, Director of the Women and Health Program in Mexico, Academic Coordinator of the Mexican National Human Genome Commission, and Executive Director of the Mexican National Bioethics Commission. From 2000 to 2006, she was the founder and President of the Latin American Forum of Health Research Ethics Committees (FLACEIS), an organization supported by WHO. As part of her work for UNESCO, she contributes to the establishment and

support of national ethics committees and the formation of ethics committees worldwide.



Maksim Karliuk is Programme Specialist in the Bioethics and Ethics of Science and Technology Section (SHS). He started at UNESCO as the principal consultant on ethics of AI, and now continues the work on supporting the process of elaborating the global normative instrument in this field. He is also member of the European Commission Expert Group on AI and Data in Education and Training. Previously he was Deputy Director and Leading Research Fellow at the International BRICS Competition Law and Policy Center and Associate Professor at the Faculty of Law, National Research

University Higher School of Economics, Moscow. He holds a PhD in Law from Ghent University and an LLM in European Law from the College of Europe, Bruges Campus.



Frederick (Russ) Russell-Rivoallan is a political scientist and policy analyst with over thirty years of international diplomatic experience. He worked for UNESCO from 1997 to 2020, specializing in post-conflict reconciliation and post-disaster reconstruction. He has held multiple positions in the Organization's governing bodies, including as Secretary of the Programme and External Relations Commission of UNESCO's Executive Board, following his appointments as Policy Advisor to three Chairpersons of the Executive Board. He has led international development projects in the areas of youth engagement, gender equality, and sport for peace

and development, including the creation of a regional Model UN conference.