



AUTOMATED LAW ENFORCEMENT

An assessment of China's Social Credit Systems (SCS) using interview evidence from Shanghai

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This paper provides a fieldwork-based research account of China's Social Credit Systems (SCS), focusing on automated law enforcement. It draws evidence from interviews with Shanghai-based government officials, judges, and corporate employees in April 2021. The paper examines the use of blacklists and joint sanctions within the SCS framework, revealing their detailed workings and perceived impacts. Automation achieves efficient scaling but also has negative consequences, including code rigidity and counter-productive incentives, resulting in 'institutional overload'. The paper proposes an institutional theory of computational law, emphasizing the need for human judgement alongside automation for effective enforcement. In conclusion, governance operates in a layered manner, from social norms to laws, data, and code, sustained by human work and societal feedback.

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