# Legitimacy, desirability, fallibility

*A state of the art of the contestation facing public algorithms*

A report supervised by the University Laboratory NETIC
Université de Bourgogne Franche-Comté

## Preface to the administrative anticipation report presented to the Prime Minister on September 24, 2029

This report reviews the state of the art of the forms and practices of contestation towards public algorithmic systems.

This evaluation follows the acceleration of algorithms deployment within the central administration and local authorities, as part of the digitalisation of public action supported by the Government.

The review takes a closer look to the tools operating within a grey area, between legality and illegality, as well as to emerging uses and transpartisan initiatives.

Our study endeavours to avoid passing judgement about the reviewed cases. Nevertheless, it ambitions to help administrations in acknowledging the contestation from citizens-users, and in adapting the processes to these forms of conflict.

According to our conclusions, this is a decisive factor for the forthcoming redesign of public algorithms governance.

This documentation is based on the following classification in order to build archetypes of contestation:

### Opposition

*Tools and practices for administrative and legal contestation of the decisions taken or informed by an algorithm.*

### Obstruction

*Techniques and strategies for corruption, alteration or incapacitation of public algorithms operations.*

### Falsification

*Techniques for low-level and organised fraud aiming at an opportune exploitation of algorithmic weaknesses for a personal benefit.*

### Delegitimisation

*Mobilisations and rhetoric developing a critic of an algorithm legitimacy or its deployment opportunity.*

### Bypassing

*Function creeps, unexpected uses and obfuscation techniques allowing to escape an algorithmic processing.*

# A guide book to contest algorithmic decisions

## Offered by **Vodroi**, a legal tech cooperative.

*Vodroi* provides for free a practical guide book of contestation, to dispute a decision ruled by an algorithm or to obtain compensation.

Although this ready for use guide is quite generic, it seems to be designed as a loss leader for a premium legal assistance, suggested in an option by *Vodroi*.

*A 'small guide for algorithmic contestation' offered in free download by Vodroi (Screenshot, May 2029)*

# Advices pack
# ‘Public algo, personal profit!’

Offered by **Julien Daro**, *fin-lifestyle influentrepreneur* and *self-digital optimisation* coach.

Julien Daro, an active social media influencer and self-appointed financial advisor, sells a service offer for identity falsification when facing public algorithms.

Those different *‘advice packs’* bring deception techniques together allowing users to modify their digital profile. These methods aim at deceiving public algorithms and promise clients both to be granted with services and aids they would not access otherwise, and to escape a personalised taxation.

Some of the function creeps presented by the tutorials opportunely exploit known-but-not mitigated biases from automated systems.

*Webstore page displaying an advice pack from Julien Daro (Screenshot, April 2029)*

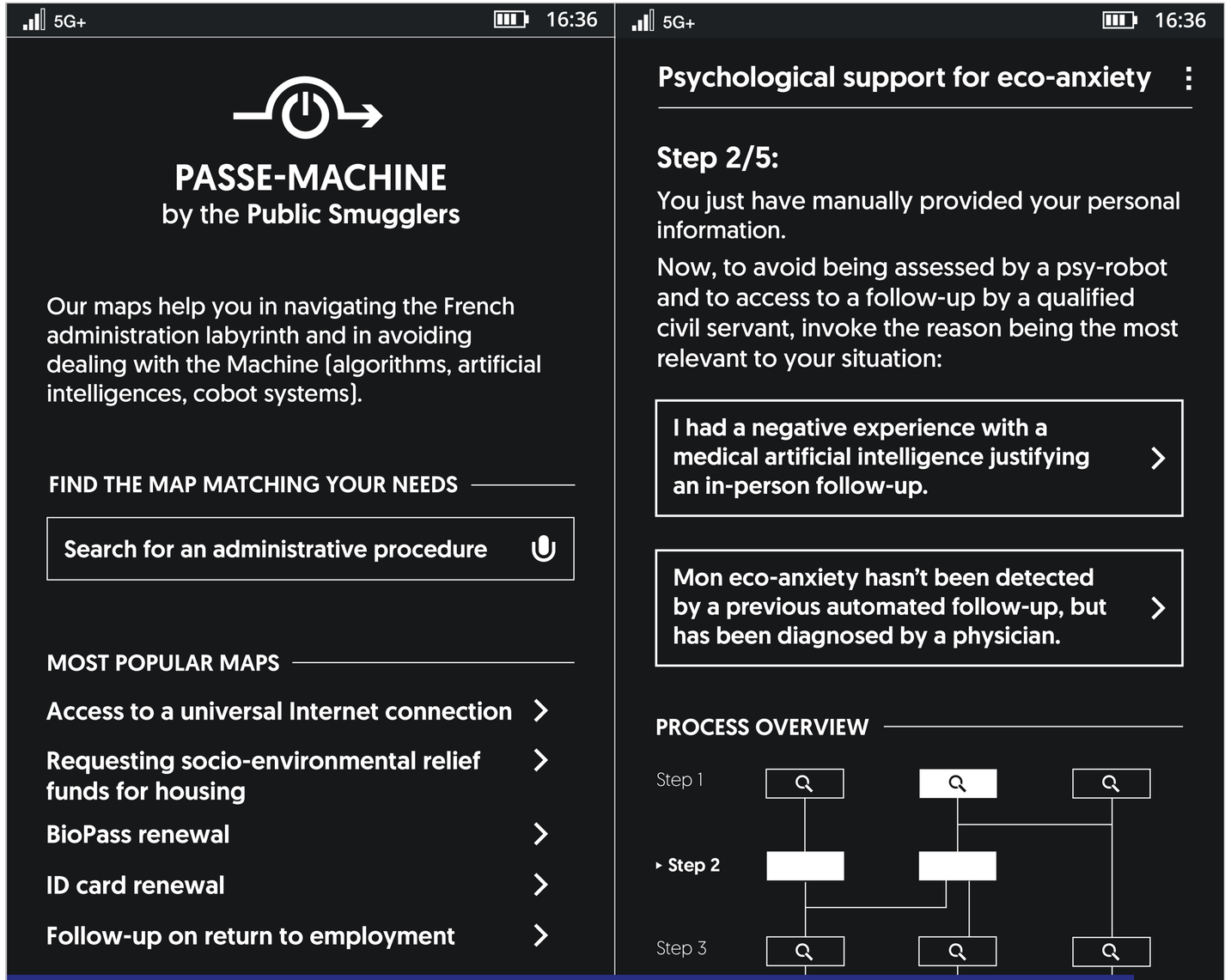
# The unofficial cartography of desalgorithmised procedures

## Offered by the **Public Smugglers**.

The *Public Smugglers* collective have mapped out user journeys excluding algorithms to avoid contact with an algorithm or an artificial intelligence during an administrative procedure.

The various maps are available in an interactive format, working as a personal assistant to '*navigate the administration maze and avoid the machine*'. These maps are available on smartphones, personal assistants and as printed guides as well.

Behind this anonymous collective are several public servants. If their name is a bit provocative, they claim to be '*positive saboteurs*'. Their public motivation is to '*make sure humans and machines are used for what they are really good at, and not only for financial or ideological reasons.*'




*Interactive maps from the 'Passe-Machine' helping to bypass algorithms, available on smartphones and assistantials (Screenshots, February 15, 2028)*

# The #Occupalgo movement

## An initiative from the **Occupy Algorithms** collective.

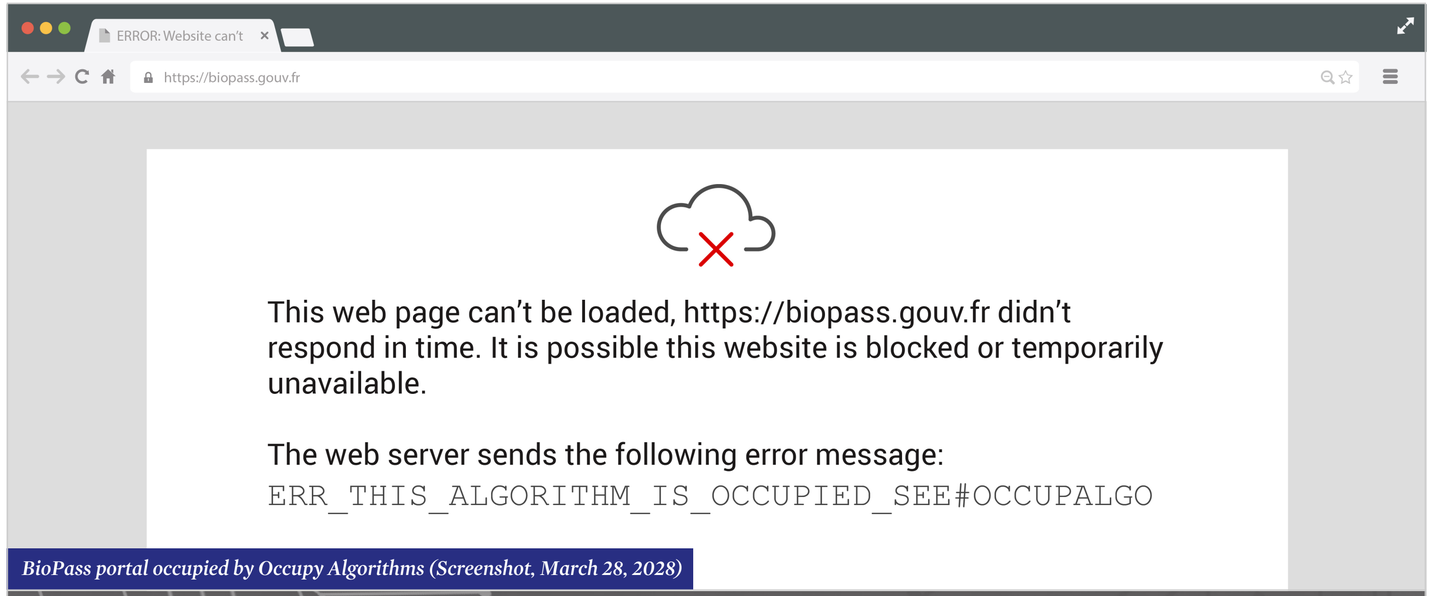
Inspired by the legacy from the early 2010s *Occupy* movements, the activist group *Occupy Algorithms* has developed collective strategies intending to '*occupy*' contested algorithms.

This notion of occupation has a double meaning, having as a common denominator the concept of saturation: the invasion of the digital space and the (over)solicitation of technical capacities of the hosted algorithm.

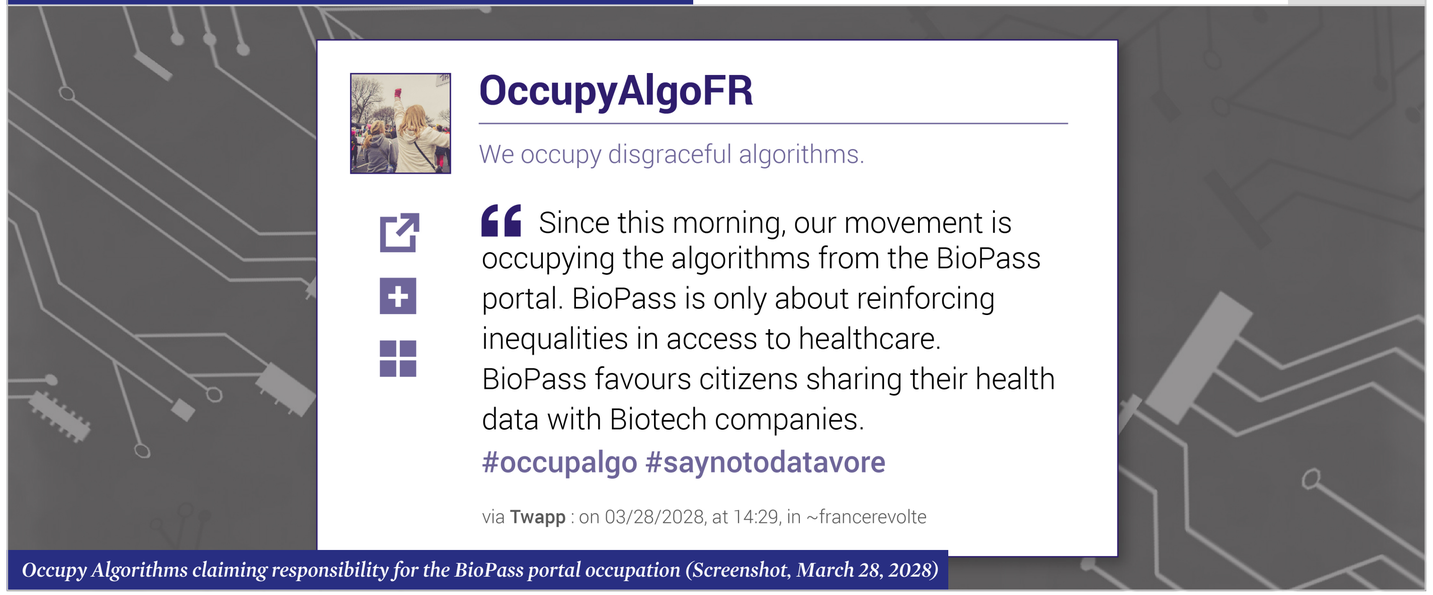
Midway between the traditional demonstration and the denial of service attack (*DDOS*), this occupation technique reinvents the right to demonstrate within digital spaces deemed as public, such as an administration Web site.

In concrete terms, an action from *Occupalgo* (usual abbreviation for *Occupy Algorithms*) sees the massive mobilisation of activists, coordinating to saturate the operational capacities of an algorithm. It can also take the form of a targeted *defacing* action to modify the Web page letting user access to the algorithm. These two modes of action, occasionally joint, seeking to make the contested algorithm unavailable and make visible the opposition this system fuels.

The occupation technique of algorithms has become a key asset for negotiation between activist movements and the public authority.




*BioPass portal occupied by Occupy Algorithms (Screenshot, March 28, 2028)*




*Occupy Algorithms claiming responsibility for the BioPass portal occupation (Screenshot, March 28, 2028)*