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# Auto Practices

## Governing AI Technologies in Weapon Systems from the Bottom Up: Practices to Sustain and Strengthen Human Agency

An international research project funded by the European Research Council and hosted by the Center for War Studies, University of Southern Denmark

## About

Autonomous and AI technologies (AIT) have become part of military targeting decision-making. Algorithmic logics may therefore prevail in use-of-force decision-making, raising humanitarian, legal, ethical, and security concerns. Currently, there are no specific legal rules to govern AIT in the military domain. In their absence, practices of design, of training personnel for, and of using AIT in the military domain shape a norm of what counts as the requisite form of human agency. As the AutoNorms project has found, this emerging norm appears to accept a diminished, reduced form of human agency when designing and using military AIT as "normal" and "appropriate". This emerging norm is a societal challenge and a public policy problem because it risks undercutting the meaningful exercise of human agency over life and death decisions in war.

The insight that practices make norms holds the potential for social innovation as a process of recontextualising norms through enacting different practices. Stakeholders could therefore shape a positive norm of human agency and accountability through changing their practices from the bottom up through a process of social innovation.

# Goal

AutoPractices aims to become a source for diffusing a positive norm of human agency in military decision-making from the bottom up. We aim to do this through co-creating a practical toolkit of best practices to sustain and strengthen human agency in the military domain. For this endeavour, we collaborate with stakeholders representing diverse professional backgrounds and regions of the world.

# Process

The AutoPractices project proceeds in three steps:

- 1 Raising awareness** among stakeholders about the effect of their practices on the emerging human agency norm in the military domain via empirical mapping of practices.
- 2 Co-creating a set of best practices with stakeholders** to sustain human control in weapon systems integrating AIT at workshops.
- 3 Diffusing the co-created set of best practices** via a practical toolkit and dissemination through multipliers.

# Background and funding

AutoPractices is a Proof of Concept project funded by the European Research Council (ERC). It builds directly on findings by the ERC-funded AutoNorms project.

# Team

The AutoNorms team includes the following researchers (in alphabetical order by last names), under the leadership of the Principal Investigator Ingvild Bode: Hendrik Huelss, Anna Nadibaidze, Guangyu Qiao-Franco, Tom Watts, and Qiaochu Zhang. For AutoPractices, the AutoNorms team will collaborate with Alexander Blanchard at the Stockholm International Peace Research Institute (SIPRI), Shimona Mohan at the United Nations Institute for Disarmament Research (in her personal capacity), and Ariel Conn (expert, Global Commission on Responsible AI in the Military Domain). AutoPractices runs from June 2024 until December 2025.

For updates about the project, please visit [www.autonorms.eu](http://www.autonorms.eu)