Algorithmic Management

Myths, Realities, Harms and Potentials
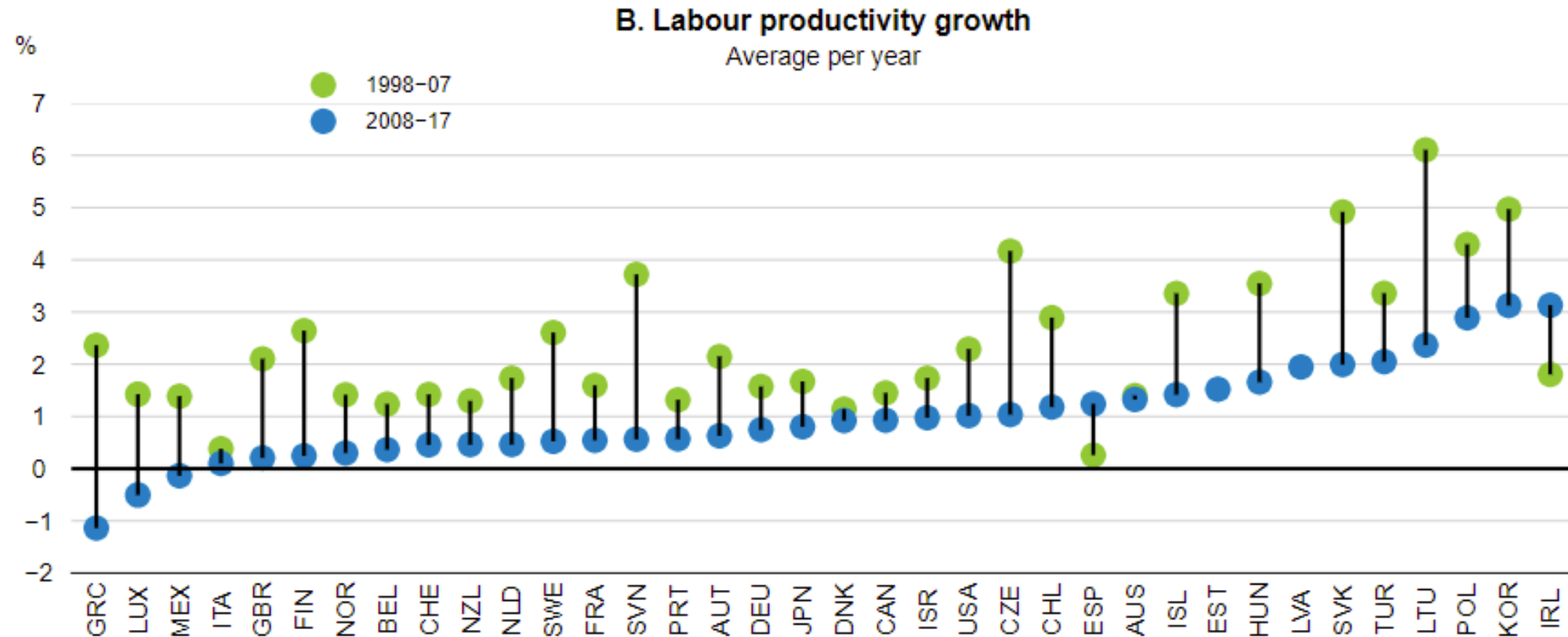
THE WHY NOT LAB

Myth: Digital Tech Increases Productivity and Efficiency

Tech companies have succeeded in planting the narrative that digital technologies will boost productivity and increase efficiency. But do they?

OECD graph

B. Labour productivity growth
Average per year

● 1998–07
● 2008–17

It's more a question of power

- Power over workers

- Power over competitors

- Power over the market

Collect data directly from job candidates, employees, customers

Purchase digital profiles from third parties

Extract digital traces from computer and network systems

Detect and transmit via sensors in handheld devices, wearables, or equipment

Generate via computer analysis of audio and visual data streams

5 Ways Management Extracts Data

Positive and negative harms and potentials of data extraction
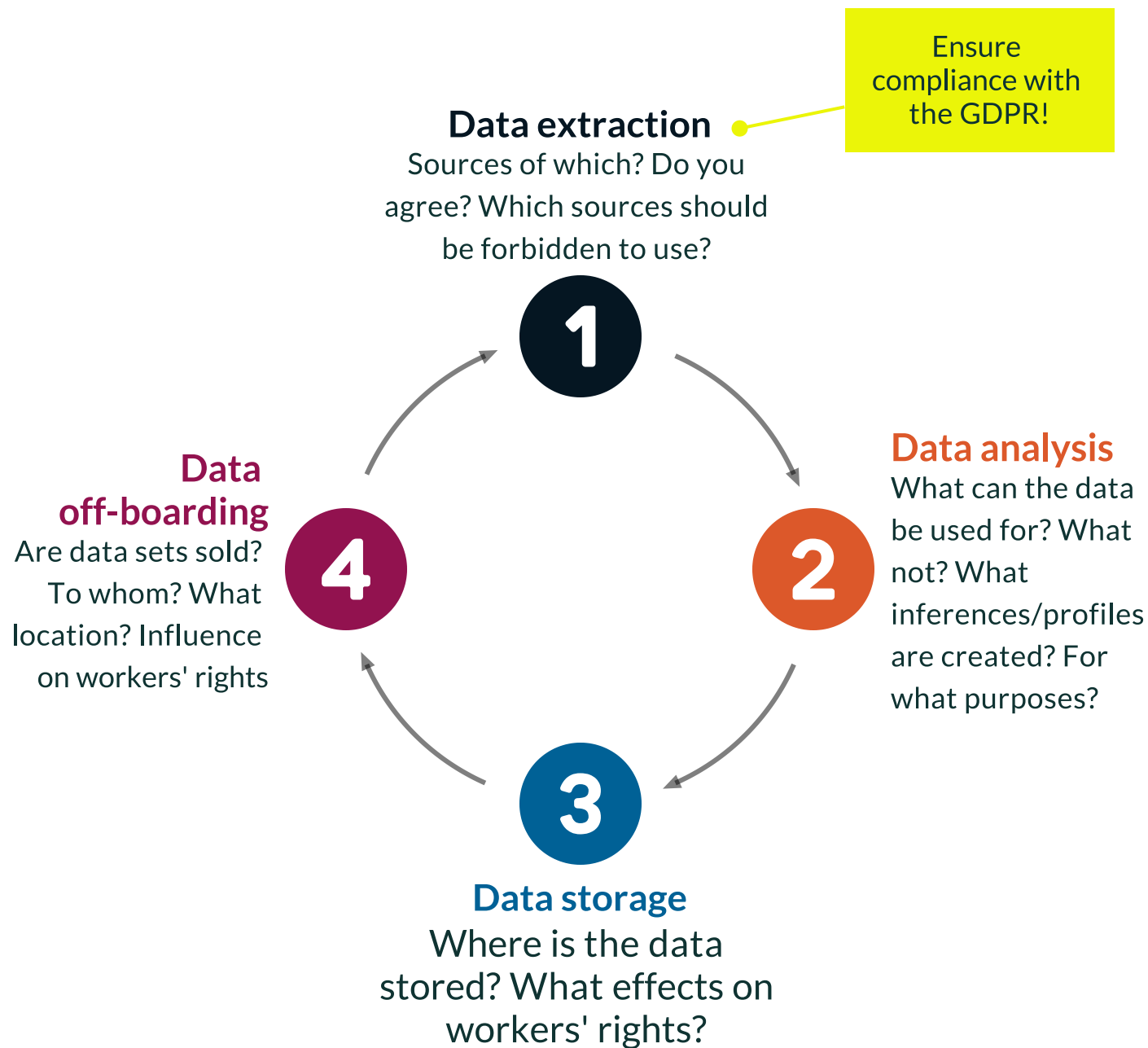
Negative (all lived harms)

1. Work intensification - working time - pace of work
2. Discrimination/bias in who gets an opportunity, who is denied
3. Mental health, physical health pressures
4. Deskilling and job loss - contingent work forms on the rise
5. Lower wages, economic insecurity, less mobility
6. Suppression of organising
7. Loss of autonomy and dignity
8. Loss of privacy

Positive (all thought examples)

1. Lowering of over-time
2. Better distribution of tasks
3. Protection of workers' rights
4. Collective agreement compliance check
5. Better, more balanced worker evaluations
6. Better control over worker competencies (soft and hard)
7. Better understanding of workers' and customers wishes

2 key ideas to reverse the tides

Ensure compliance with the GDPR!

Data extraction
Sources of which? Do you agree? Which sources should be forbidden to use?

Data analysis
What can the data be used for? What not? What inferences/profiles are created? For what purposes?

Data off-boarding
Are data sets sold? To whom? What location? Influence on workers' rights

Data storage
Where is the data stored? What effects on workers' rights?

1

4

2

3

1

Negotiate the data life cycle at work

2

Co-govern the algorithmic systems!

An absolute must

7 Governance Themes

(from the Why Not Lab's Guide)

1. Transparency & procurement contracts
2. Responsibility
3. Right of Redress
4. Data Protection & Rights
5. Harms and benefits
6. Adjustments
7. Co-governance
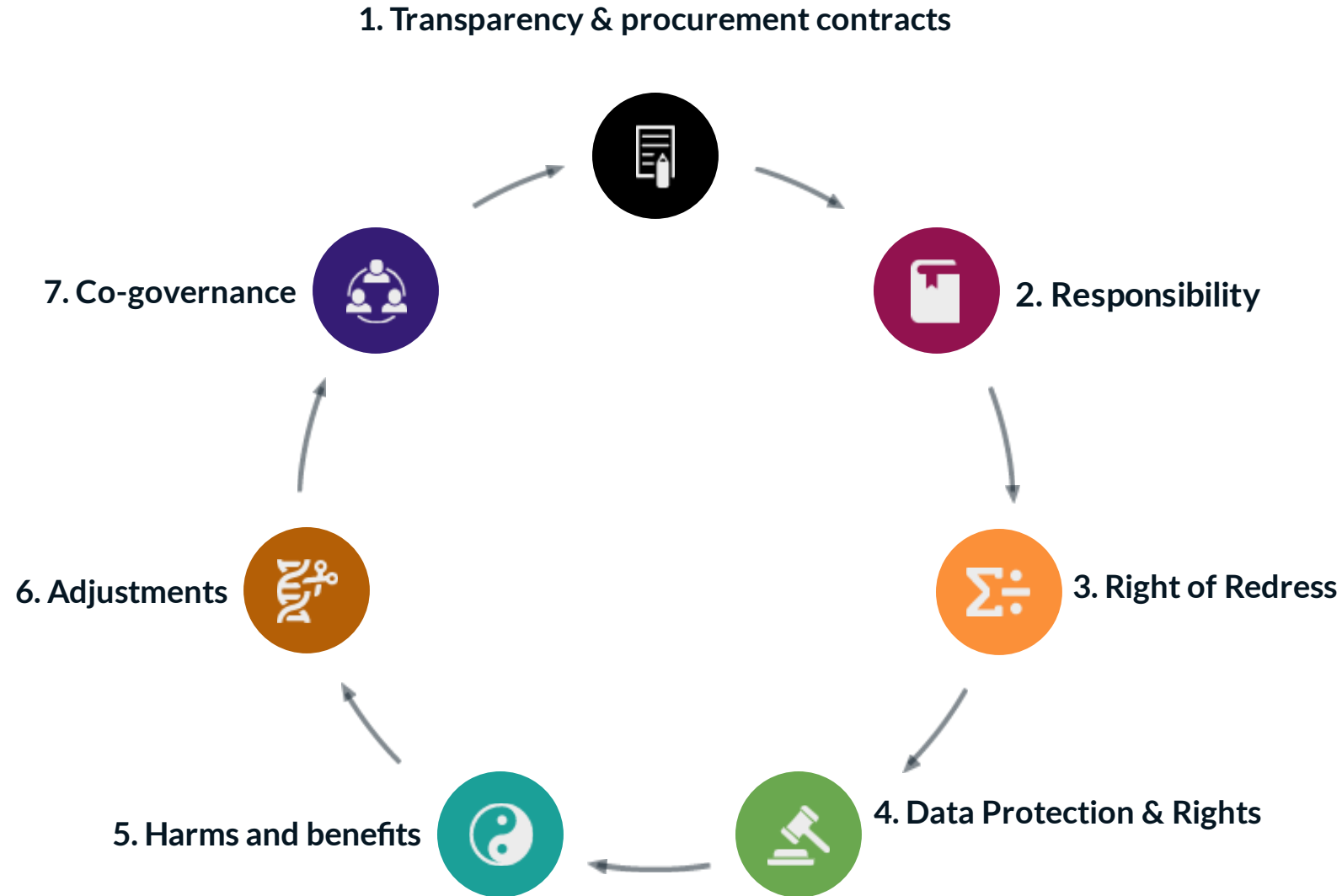
THE WHY NOT LAB

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