

Editorial

A team of researchers from MIT Media Lab published a 206-page research report on June 10, 2025, titled “Your Brain on ChatGPT: Accumulation of Cognitive Debt when Using an AI Assistant for Essay Writing Task” (Kosmyrna et al., 2025). The paper is currently in preprint and has not yet completed peer review. Nevertheless, it has already received wide coverage in media such as The New York Times, Time, The New Yorker, and CNN.

The study focuses on essay writing task, a common tool for assessing students' cognitive abilities in standardized tests. Essay writing was chosen specifically because it is a complex cognitive skill requiring simultaneous use of various cognitive processes in addition to working memory. Conducted over four months with 54 participants, the study compares three groups writing essays of different lengths and topics: one using a large language model (LLM), particularly ChatGPT, one using search engines, and one relying solely on their own brain. To evaluate participants' brain activity, measure cognitive engagement and load, and monitor neural activations during writing, the researchers employed EEG and NLP analyses.

EEG results show that each of the three groups demonstrated internally homogeneous but distinct neural connectivity patterns, pursuing different cognitive strategies. The most significant finding from the analyses is that brain connectivity systematically decreases with the amount of external support. Corroborating this finding, it was observed that tool users relied more on visual processing, while memory recall, citation, and ownership of written content declined. Whereas the early phases of LLM use showed some benefits, subsequent phases revealed declines in mental, linguistic, and scoring dimensions.

As evidenced by this study and many others today, researchers emphasize the need for broader and longer-term projects and close tracking of developments. Various disciplines and fields of expertise are working to assess and predict the complex structure of tools and their potential impact on humans. While acknowledging certain reservations regarding this process, both the scientific community and public opinion appear to have already been split into two groups. The first, more hegemonic and agenda-setting group argues that technological change such as AI is inevitable, that it will shape the future, and that rapid adaptation is our only option. The second group, adopting a more cautious tone, advocates keeping the critical eye of scientific reasoning open. The importance of studies like this one lies precisely at this point. Bringing this research to the opening pages of our academic journal is also important from this perspective. Regardless of our discipline or field of expertise, as technological advancements shape our capacity for critical thought and reshape our research and educational domains, we must observe and interpret these transformations. As *Publicus* set out, we said that current developments in every area related to public and public administration would fall within our scope—including “thinking about thinking.”

In this third issue of *Publicus*, while varied in type, three contributions invite us to think critically about our intellectual and collective intellectual activities, along with their methods and forms. Although these three submissions from researchers in different fields happened to come together by coincidence in this issue, we chose to begin this edition with them since they remind us of the importance of deep thought and debate on these topics.

The first is a comment article by Ahmet Alpay Dikmen, titled “Administrative Reason, Artificial Intelligence, and Statistics,” which discusses the relationship between AI and administrative reason. Alpay argues that, in each era, administrative reason takes shape

within established norms; today, the architects of techno-feudal capital, using artificial intelligence, are creating an administrative reason system rooted in the “statistical presumption of normality” that filters multivariate data to elevate general trends. Just as modern administrative reason transformed blue-collar labor into efficient but unskilled machine-like work, AI now functions as a machine replacing the white-collar worker, increasing the productivity of wage labor that generates relative surplus value while de-skilling it and lowering its wage. In doing so, it strengthens capital concentration, particularly for the sake of techno-feudal capital. However, as Alpay emphasizes, since AI also qualitatively transforms labor in the production process, it distances the white-collar worker from expert knowledge, turning them into a cog in the computer and imposing the statistical logic based on the statistical presumption of normality to run the machine. By exploring this shift in the system of reason with compelling examples, Alpay points out that the critical thinking practice encouraged by the Enlightenment is now on the verge of a destructive transformation.

The second piece is a book review by Cengiz Ekiz of “Management in a Liquid Modern World”, co-authored by Zygmunt Bauman, Irena Bauman, Jerzy Kociatkiewicz, and Monica Kostera. Ekiz’s work goes beyond the limits of a book review and comes closer to a comment article, interrogating today’s world and management-administration paradigms through the authors’ concept of “liquidity.” The authors depict a fragmented, rule-less, individualized, and privatized liquid world in which there is no place for a gardening utopia and where a dystopia of “winner-takes-all” prevails. In this neoliberal world, control lies at the hands of the liquid capital, and the flow of commodities is maintained and consolidated whatever the speed and complexity of the content and data flows. Public administration has become a satellite of the management sphere; responsibility has shifted to the governed, whereas agenda-setting remains a prerogative of

property owners. Ekiz not only presents this vibrant analysis of the contemporary world but also, from a critical perspective, opens the door to the possibility of a different understanding. According to him, the book falls short of offering a horizon. He finds the authors' view that capitalism's intense competition could only be tamed by "corporate utopia" via cooperation and sharing to be overly optimistic. Nonetheless, he recognizes the vibrant and creative thinking practice about administration today as itself horizon-opening. The formation of the book through a process of dialogue-discussion also enables collective knowledge production across disciplinary boundaries and fosters creative ideas.

The third contribution is an event report by Aslı Yılmaz Uçar, written about the Netherlands Institute of Governance Annual Conference. Noting that event reports—a genre once common in scholarly journals from the 1920s to the 1980s—have gradually disappeared, Yılmaz Uçar argues that critically addressing events in different countries and at the international level, in terms of format, content, and participants, could be highly enlightening for the development of critical thinking and production. She suggests that perhaps the time has come to revive this tradition. She emphasizes that this tradition has benefits such as documenting scientific agendas, comprehensively evaluating events, and transferring knowledge to other scholars who were unable to attend. Thus, bringing a fresh breath to *Publicus* event reports, she analyzes this events in detail with an analytical lens, making visible to us the opportunities they offer in terms of topic and methodology.

Although all three contributions engage with current issues, instead of offering field-specific contributions, reinforcing inevitable or dystopian approaches, they seek possibilities for critical thinking. In a century when technological advancements pose a high risk to undermine our capacity for critical thinking, they invite us to mental production without being trapped in the boundaries of anti-intellectualist

resistance, away from collective production, solidarity, and critical inquiry.

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This third issue of *Publicus* also includes three research articles, two of which focus on public personnel administration. The first research article is Oğuz Göksu's "A Model Proposal for the Training of Senior Civil Servants in Turkey." Göksu begins by emphasizing the important role of senior civil servants playing in formulating strategies to help public institutions achieve policy goals, making quick and inclusive decisions in crises, ensuring effective coordination among employees, and achieving institutional success. He underlines the need for senior civil servants who understand societal dynamics, have expert knowledge in their fields, and possess developed administrative skills, and then, argues that senior civil servant training is needed to meet this achievement. Based on this, he presents a proposal for a training model.

Selime Yıldırım's article, "Why Does the Search by Public Personnel Never End?: A Document from 1911," addresses the social security system of public personnel through a historical document. Yıldırım begins by noting that, although the period from appointment to retirement had been specially regulated, retirement and post-retirement issues have remained unresolved from the Ottoman Empire up to the present, constituting an ongoing problem. While noting current causes, she emphasizes that some reasons are inherited from the past. Based on the report prepared by Monsieur Ultramar on the regulation of the Mülkiye, İlmiye, and Military Pension Funds, she analyzes these reasons in detail.

Kenan Şahin's research article, "A Study on Citizen Perception of the Basic Income Model in Samsun," addresses a pioneering social policy application: the basic income model. Şahin argues that existing social policy practices have failed due to global epidemics, local and regional

wars, economic conditions and crises, technological advances and digitalization, and unemployment. He shares research showing that basic income offers a holistic approach to combating poverty, promoting fairness in income distribution, and addressing unemployment, and has the capacity to improve outcomes in social policy. He argues the opportunities suggested by basic income model in case of Samsun city.

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In addition to these articles, this issue of *Publicus* features other works covering a variety of topics in different types of paper. Sedat Çobanoğlu's review article, "An Evaluation of the Ottoman City from the Perspective of Anatolian Cities," is a literature-based secondary-source survey examining Ottoman-era Anatolian towns in spatial context.

Tülay Demir-Şimşek's book review, "Becoming a Diplomat of the Republic: A Prosopographic Study on Early Republican Ambassadors," examines the book of the same name by Müzeyyen Ezel Ünal. Taking the transformation of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs—a key component of public administration—through a prosopographic, or collective biography method, it shows what research and analytical opportunities this book offers us. Instead of focusing on each diplomat individually, it demonstrates in detail how examining the cohort of diplomats historically and socially can help establish links between the institutional and social spheres and comprehend the historical and social transformation.

The event report "2nd Symposium on the History and Cultural Heritage of Turkey from Göbeklitepe to the Present: Cultural Heritage Management," prepared by Ozan Yetkin and Sezgin Sezgin, shows us how broad the field of public administration is and how much it deserves to be a subject of knowledge production. The report details

how this symposium—conceptualized under the rubric of cultural heritage management—hosted a series of innovative presentations highlighting both Turkey’s cultural wealth and the ways it has been and can be managed.

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The final piece we are pleased to present in the Editorial is an interview. As the *Publicus* Editorial Board, we thought that the tradition of writing autobiography, memoir, or giving interviews about individual experience is weak in Turkey—and even weaker when it comes to public personnel—so we decided to start a new series of articles. Titled “Interviews with Public Administration Experts,” this series aims to connect us with individuals who have worked in public administration for many years and have significant expertise and experience in the field. We believe their personal knowledge, experiences, and recommendations can be both instructive and a subject of research for students, academics, and professionals in our field. To this end, I conducted the first interview of the series with Fatoş Koç, Head of Financial Markets at the OECD.

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We hope all these articles will serve as valuable resources for our readers and spark ideas for new research.

Editor

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References

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