



Algorithmic democracy or democratise the algorithm

20 July 2022, 16.30h – 18.30h

Ca l'Alier, Barcelona's Urban Innovation Centre. Pere IV 362, 08019 Barcelona

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In an urban environment marked by digitisation, the use of emerging technologies like artificial intelligence (AI) modifies the way we perceive, inhabit, and organise the city. These thoroughgoing changes have come with a new wave of urban innovation that offers the opportunity to incorporate AI as a tool to analyse and design urban policies and infrastructure aimed at covering citizens' needs.

Hence, there is an increasingly pressing need to reflect on whether the use of algorithmic tools make cities more open and participatory, facilitating exchange between local administrations and citizens, and supporting the exercise of democracy in general. As it is, the growing presence of such tools in urban planning for the design of open, democratic, and sustainable cities is not exempt from dilemmas that threaten integration, inclusion, and endeavours to foster social justice. Risks like discrimination or automatic and unaccountable decision-making about sensitive matters challenge the idea that algorithmic tools can help improve cities' democratic governance.

In response to this reality, in July 2021, CIDOB, together with the cities of Barcelona, Amsterdam, and London, in collaboration with UN-Habitat and within the framework of the Coalition of Cities for Digital Rights, launched the Global Observatory of Urban Artificial Intelligence (GOUAI). The GOUAI aims to monitor good practices and generate applied research on technological humanism and digital ethics which would serve as an inspiration for cities when designing their public policies and as a reference when launching their AI projects. The ultimate goal is to encourage an ethical and democratic implementation of algorithms in cities.

These are the background circumstances giving rise to the debate's concerns. Can algorithms help make the urban governance of cities more democratic? What are the limits of algorithmic democracy? How could cities help mitigate the risks to democracy posed by the use of algorithmic tools? What is the role of citizenship? The objective of the session is to analyse, in a humanistic and practical debate, how to rethink the integration of artificial intelligence in the urban environment, and how to do this from a civil society standpoint.

Programme

16.30 – 16.45 **Welcome remarks**

Poi Morillas, Director, CIDOB (Barcelona Centre for International Affairs)

Laia Bonet, Deputy Mayor for the 2030 Agenda, Digital Transition, Sports and Territorial and Metropolitan Coordination, Barcelona City Council

- 16.45 – 17.30 **Global Observatory of Urban Artificial Intelligence Presentation**
Agustí Fernández de Losada, Senior Research Fellow and Director of the Global Cities Programme, CIDOB (Barcelona Centre for International Affairs)
Milou Jansen, Coordinator, Cities Coalition for Digital Rights (*online*)
Michael Donaldson, Commissioner for Digital Innovation, Electronic Administration and Good Governance, Barcelona City Council
Theo Blackwell, Chief Digital Officer, London City Hall (*online*)
Lydia Prinsen, Project Manager, CTO Team, City of Amsterdam
- 17.30 – 18.30 **Debate “Algorithmic democracy or democratise the algorithm”**
Daniel Innerarity, Professor of Artificial Intelligence and Democracy, European Institute of Florence
Carina Lopes, Head of Digital Future Society Think Tank, Mobile World Capital Barcelona
Chair: **Carme Colomina**, Research Fellow, CIDOB (Barcelona Centre for International Affairs)