

Local Government Without Borders

curated publication of texts, articles and studies on innovation and local governance research

July 2023

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[How should a robot explore the Moon? A simple question shows the limits of current AI systems](#)

[Article](#) by Sally Cripps, Edward Santow, Nicholas Davis, Alex Fischer and Hadi Mohasel Afshar: “..Ultimately, AI systems should help humans make better, more accurate decisions. Yet even the most impressive and flexible of today’s AI tools – such as the large language models behind the likes of ChatGPT – can have the opposite effect.

Why? They have two crucial weaknesses. They do not help decision-makers understand causation or uncertainty. And they create incentives to collect huge amounts of data and may encourage a lax attitude to privacy, legal and ethical questions and risks...

ChatGPT and other “foundation models” use an approach called deep learning to trawl through enormous datasets and identify associations between factors contained in that data, such as the patterns of language or links between images and descriptions. Consequently, they are great at interpolating – that is, predicting or filling in the gaps between known values.

Interpolation is not the same as creation. It does not generate knowledge, nor the insights necessary for decision-makers operating in complex environments.

However, these approaches require huge amounts of data. As a result, they encourage organisations to assemble enormous repositories of data – or

trawl through existing datasets collected for other purposes. Dealing with “big data” brings considerable risks around security, privacy, legality and ethics.

In low-stakes situations, predictions based on “what the data suggest will happen” can be incredibly useful. But when the stakes are higher, there are two more questions we need to answer.

The first is about how the world works: “what is driving this outcome?” The second is about our knowledge of the world: “how confident are we about this?” ...([More](#))”.

Data for the City of Tomorrow: Developing the Capabilities and Capacity to Guide Better Urban Futures

[WEF Report](#): “This report is a comprehensive manual for municipal governments and their partners, city authorities, and advocates and agents of change. It invites them to address vexing and seemingly intractable problems of urban governance and to imagine future scenarios. There is little agreement on how different types of cities should aggregate, analyse and apply data to their immediate issues and strategic challenges. Yet the potential of data to help navigate cities through the unprecedented urban, climate and digital transitions ahead is very high and likely underestimated. This report offers a look at what data exists, and how cities can take the best steps to make the most of it. It provides a route into the urban data ecosystem and an overview of some of the ways to develop data policies and capabilities fit for the needs of the many different kinds of city contexts worldwide...([More](#))”.

Assembly required

[Article](#) by Claudia Chwalsiz: “What is the role of political leadership in a new democratic paradigm defined by citizen participation, representation by lot and deliberation? What is or should be the role and relationship of politicians and political parties with citizens? What does a new approach to activating citizenship (in its broad sense) through practice and education entail? These are some questions that I am grappling with, having worked on democratic innovation and citizens’ assemblies for over a decade, with my views evolving greatly over time.

First, a definition. A citizens’ assembly is a bit like jury duty for policy. It is a broadly representative group of people selected by lottery (sortition) who meet for at least four to six days over a few months to learn about an issue, weigh trade-offs, listen to one another and find common ground on shared recommendations.

To take a recent example, the French Citizens’ Assembly on End of Life comprised 184 members, selected by lot, who deliberated for 27 days over the course of four months. Their mandate was to recommend whether, and

if so how, existing legislation about assisted dying, euthanasia and related end-of-life matters should be amended. The assembly heard from more than 60 experts, deliberated with one another, and found 92% consensus on 67 recommendations, which they formulated and delivered to President Emmanuel Macron on 3 April 2023. As of November 2021, the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) has counted almost 600 citizens' assemblies for public decision-making around the world, addressing complex issues from drug policy reform to biodiversity loss, urban planning decisions, climate change, infrastructure investment, constitutional issues such as abortion and more.

I believe citizens' assemblies are a key part of the way forward. I believe the lack of agency people feel to be shaping their lives and their communities is at the root of the democratic crisis – leading to ever-growing numbers of people exiting the formal political system entirely, or else turning to extremes (they often have legitimate analysis of the problems we face, but are not offering genuine solutions, and are often dangerous in their perpetuation of divisiveness and sometimes even violence). This is also related to a feeling of a lack of dignity and belonging, perpetuated in a culture where people look down on others with moral superiority, and humiliation abounds, as Amanda Ripley explains in her work on 'high conflict'. She distinguishes 'high conflict' from 'good conflict', which is respectful, necessary, and generative, and occurs in settings where there is openness and curiosity. In this context, our current democratic institutions are fuelling divisions, their legitimacy is weakened, and trust is faltering in all directions (of people in government, of government in people and of people in one another)...([More](#))”.

How AI could take over elections – and undermine democracy

In a [new article for The Conversation](#), Ash Center Director Archon Fung and Harvard Law School Professor Lawrence Lessig introduce Clogger, a hypothetical political campaign in a black box. Powered by AI, Clogger could create highly personal, increasingly persuasive messages that influence voters on behalf of politicians or corporations – far beyond the bounds of traditional campaign tactics. Fung and Lessig hypothesize how Clogger, unbound by a regard for truth and ethical limitations, could work at unprecedented speeds and go largely unnoticed.

To counter the potential scenario of a Clogger-like political AI tool putting its digital thumb on the scale of an election, Fung and Lessig urge policymakers to adopt new regulatory mechanisms to constrain political AI. They point to the adoption of regulations in Europe and California prohibiting bots from passing themselves off as people as one such example.

"The possibility of a system like Clogger shows that the path toward human collective disempowerment may not require some superhuman

artificial general intelligence. It might just require overeager campaigners and consultants who have powerful new tools that can effectively push millions of people's many buttons," they warn.

Teaching Norms to Large Language Models – The Next Frontier of Hybrid Governance

In this [blog post](#), research director Wolfgang Schulz and his colleague Christian Ollig examine the ways in which we can teach societal norms to Large Language Models, like DeepMind Sparrow, and therefore introduce the concept of hybrid governance.

Large Language Models (LLMs) have significantly advanced natural language processing capabilities, enabling them to generate human-like text. However, their growing presence raises concerns about potential societal risks and ethical considerations. To ensure responsible deployment of LLMs, it is crucial to teach them societal norms. This blog post explores the ways in which we can teach norms to LLMs and introduces the concept of hybrid governance, which emphasises the interdependencies of public and private norms. We will also delve into DeepMind Sparrow and its 23 rules for reinforced human feedback as an example to illustrate effective norm teaching methods.

The Prediction Society: Algorithms and the Problems of Forecasting the Future

[Paper](#) by Hideyuki Matsumi and Daniel J. Solove: "Predictions about the future have been made since the earliest days of humankind, but today, we are living in a brave new world of prediction. Today's predictions are produced by machine learning algorithms that analyze massive quantities of personal data. Increasingly, important decisions about people are being made based on these predictions.

Algorithmic predictions are a type of inference. Many laws struggle to account for inferences, and even when they do, the laws lump all inferences together. But as we argue in this Article, predictions are different from other inferences. Predictions raise several unique problems that current law is ill-suited to address. First, algorithmic predictions create a fossilization problem because they reinforce patterns in past data and can further solidify bias and inequality from the past. Second, algorithmic predictions often raise an unfalsifiability problem. Predictions involve an assertion about future events. Until these events happen, predictions remain unverifiable, resulting in an inability for individuals to challenge them as false. Third, algorithmic predictions can involve a preemptive intervention problem, where decisions or interventions render it impossible to determine whether the predictions would have come true. Fourth, algorithmic predictions can lead to a self-fulfilling prophecy problem where they actively shape the future they aim to forecast.

More broadly, the rise of algorithmic predictions raises an overarching concern: Algorithmic predictions not only forecast the future but also have the power to create and control it. The increasing pervasiveness of decisions based on algorithmic predictions is leading to a prediction society where individuals' ability to author their own future is diminished while the organizations developing and using predictive systems are gaining greater power to shape the future...[\(More\)](#)"

[Making Sense of Citizens' Input through Artificial Intelligence: A Review of Methods for Computational Text Analysis to Support the Evaluation of Contributions in Public Participation](#)

[Paper](#) by Julia Romberg and Tobias Escher: "Public sector institutions that consult citizens to inform decision-making face the challenge of evaluating the contributions made by citizens. This evaluation has important democratic implications but at the same time, consumes substantial human resources. However, until now the use of artificial intelligence such as computer-supported text analysis has remained an under-studied solution to this problem. We identify three generic tasks in the evaluation process that could benefit from natural language processing (NLP). Based on a systematic literature search in two databases on computational linguistics and digital government, we provide a detailed review of existing methods and their performance. While some promising approaches exist, for instance to group data thematically and to detect arguments and opinions, we show that there remain important challenges before these could offer any reliable support in practice. These include the quality of results, the applicability to non-English language corpuses and making algorithmic models available to practitioners through software. We discuss a number of avenues that future research should pursue that can ultimately lead to solutions for practice. The most promising of these bring in the expertise of human evaluators, for example through active learning approaches or interactive topic modelling...[\(More\)](#)"

[Five reasons to give communities power to tackle poverty](#)

How can local areas tackle very deep poverty? Our new [report](#) with Joseph Rowntree Foundation explores how services, charities and policymakers can work with people affected by poverty to 'design out' hardship in local areas.

Πηγές

<https://theconversation.com/>

<https://www.weforum.org/>

<https://www.thersa.org/>

Ταυτότητα

Η ενημερωτική σειρά «Τοπική Αυτοδιοίκηση Χωρίς Σύνορα» αποτελεί έκδοση του «Εργαστηρίου Πολιτικών του Μέλλοντος» του πυλώνα «Οι Κιχώτες του Πολιτικού», ο οποίος αναπτύσσεται και λειτουργεί συνεργατικά στον ιστότοπο: www.diaplous-autodioikisi.gr

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