Digital participatory tools for cities: the experiences of Turin and Montevideo
Date: 23 January 2025
Time: 10:00 AM (New York Time)
Register here:
https://us06web.zoom.us/webinar/register/WN_P3_86IRRRbeM_YLBO1tqmA

Topic

The digital transformation of cities is changing how people interact with their local government. Cities are increasingly using new technologies like Artificial Intelligence (AI), blockchain, Virtual and Augmented reality (VR/AR), and the Internet of Things (IoT) to improve public services. Making them more accessible and better fit the community's needs. These technologies also reshape traditional participatory frameworks, enabling citizens to engage and actively co-create solutions for their urban environments, but this change happens while a big part of the population still needs more traditional service delivery and public service still need to make sure that they are not leaving no one behind.

This webinar will examine the cases of Torino in Italy and Montevideo in Uruguay to explore how digital participatory tools are locally driving innovation. We want to identify questions about how cities can include citizens in the design of digital tools, determining which ones

are most effective to guarantee that public services delivered digitally are inclusive and accessible to all residents.

The discussion will also focus on Sustainable Development Goal 17 (SDG 17), highlighting the importance of partnerships to deepen the development of open, collaborative, and inclusive technology that serves the public good.

Case studies

Torino

Torino exemplifies how technology can enhance urban participation. In collaboration with the University of Torino (UNITO), the city has developed **First Life**, a local civic social network that has emerged from several EU projects, including WeGovNow!, Co-city, CO3, NLAB4CIT, and DUT CORPUS. This platform empowers citizens to engage in crowdsourcing through a map that features events, news, and stories. Additionally, it allows users to create groups, conduct surveys, and carry out participation campaigns.

First Life is designed to foster broader citizen engagement and participation in public issues, enabling community members to co-design urban neighborhoods. By ensuring that citizens' voices are heard in shaping policies and initiatives, these platforms help build trust and promote collaborative governance.

Among the innovations from UNITO, **Commonshood** is a blockchain wallet application aimed at promoting transparency and enhancing community engagement. While blockchain is often associated with finance, it is repurposed here as a tool for civic empowerment, demonstrating its adaptability for public benefit.

Montevideo

Montevideo has positioned itself as a pioneer in citizen engagement through its participatory platform, **Montevideo Participa**. This tool allows residents to debate local issues, vote on Participatory Budget proposals, and collaborate on ideas for public spaces. Integral to these efforts is **Montevideo Lab (MVDLab)**, a citizen innovation laboratory established in 2016. MVDLab fosters collaboration between the city government and residents, experimenting with inclusive technologies to tackle urban challenges.

Through initiatives like Montevideo Participa, Montevideo demonstrates how local governments can create spaces for meaningful citizen engagement. This platform underscores the importance of inclusion and collaboration.

Speakers

Guido Boella serves as Vice Chancellor of the University of Turin for Artificial Intelligence and the promotion of business relations. Previously, he was Director of the Department of Computer Science and is currently the scientific lead for the Digital Communities and Territories research group. His extensive research spans artificial intelligence, ethics, legal informatics, geoinformatics, and blockchain, leading to the creation of software like the social network FirstLife and the blockchain wallet app Commonshood. He founded the university spinoff Nomotika, is Vice President of the Competence Center CIM4, and a co-founder of the Italian Society for the Ethics of Artificial Intelligence (SIPEIA). In addition, he coordinates the European Digital Innovation Hub "Circular Health EDIH" (CHEDIH) and other EU projects, along with the public engagement initiative Artificial Intelligence magic.news., aimed at raising awareness of AI's risks and opportunities.

Andrea Apolaro, Master in Social Psychology from the University of the Republic, Uruguay, has extensive experience in academia and citizen innovation. She served as a faculty member in the Social Area and University Extension Practices at the Faculty of Psychology. She was Academic Assistant to the Pro-Rector of Extension and Engagement at the University of the Republic between 2014 and 2016. With over 20 years of expertise in developing and coordinating projects focused on innovation and citizen participation in local governments, Andrea has been the Montevideo Lab (MVDLAB) Coordinator since 2016. MVDLAB, Montevideo's Citizen Lab, promotes collaboration and experimentation to address urban challenges. In 2021, she mentored Latin American municipalities in the Bloomberg Global Mayors Challenge, guiding them through innovative problem-solving and prototyping. As a coach, she helped Hermosillo win a $1 million prize for its environmental employment project, l employment project, Biciclando. Andrea was recognized in 2022 as one of 13 women driving urban innovation by Bloomberg Philanthropies and is certified in innovation practices by Bloomberg, Harvard University, and the Centre for Public Impact.

Moderator

Noor Al Khatib, Product Analyst, Amman Global Mayors Challenge.

Key discussion points

This webinar will explore critical aspects of digital participatory tools:

- How can digital technologies enhance participatory processes and urban decision-making?
- What potential do blockchain, AI and other technologies hold for digital participatory applications?
- What are cities' main challenges in ensuring digital tools are accessible to all citizens, including marginalized groups?
- How can partnerships between research institutions, local governments, and communities foster accessible, open-source civic technologies?
- What strategies can cities adopt to ensure that digital tools address the needs of vulnerable and disadvantaged populations?

AGENDA.

5 min	Introduction of the "SDG Local Solutions" series by Diana Lopez Caramazana, Advisor, Cities and Local Governments, UNDP.
5 min	Moderator's introduction to the session.
15 min	Montevideo experience, followed by a question from Torino
15 min	Torino experience, followed by a question from Montevideo
15 min	Questions and answers from the audience.
5 min	Closing and conclusions by the moderator

The *SDG Local Solutions* series

Organized by UNDP in the framework of its work with cities and local governments, this series of webinars generates a conversation between cities to highlight local solutions to implement Agenda 2030. The lessons learned will be shared globally through UNDP's SDG Local Action networks, webpage https://sdglocalaction.org/ and YouTube channel https://www.youtube.com/@sdglocalaction8192