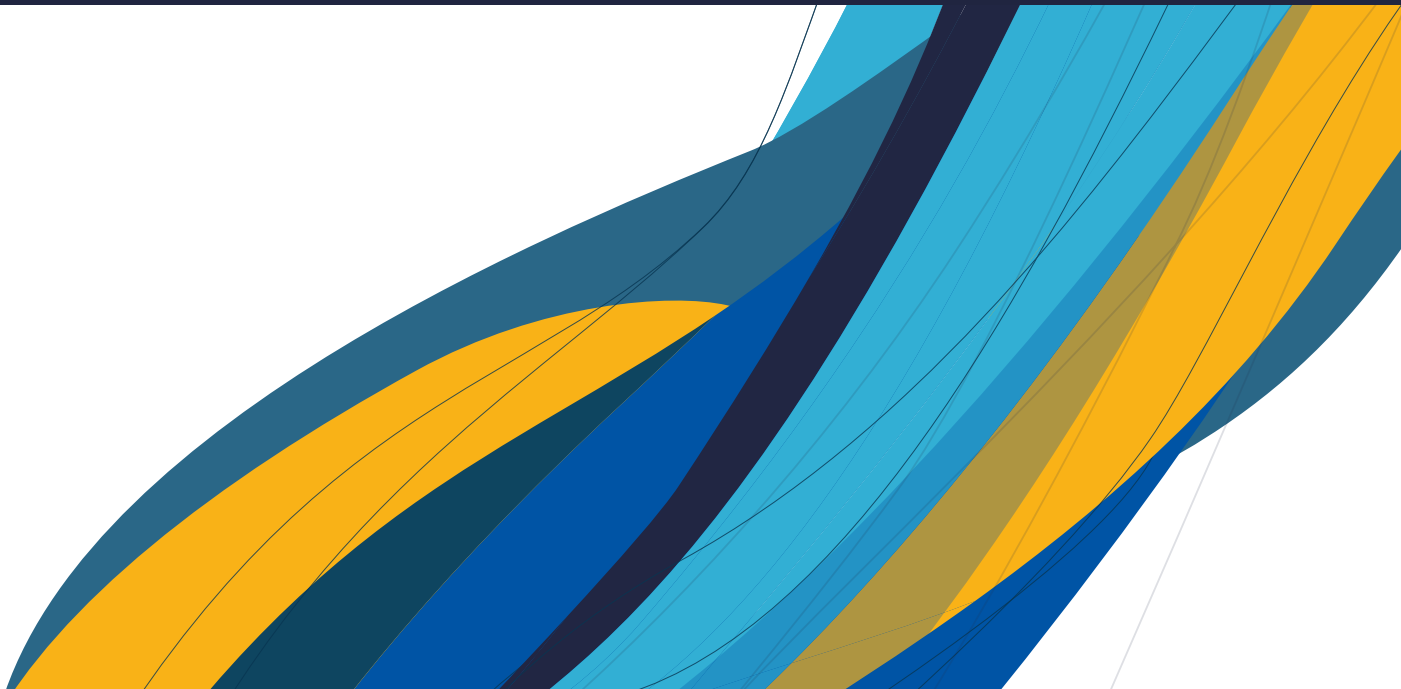




Digital Tools for a Responsive Government:

*A Report for the NYC Civic
Engagement Commission*

March 12, 2021



Authors

Thomas Asher (Director, Research and Engagement, Columbia World Projects)

Hollie Russon Gilman (Huo Family Foundation Fellow, Columbia World Projects)

Abigail Anderson (Program Associate, Research and Engagement, Columbia World Projects)

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

We are grateful to the New York City Civic Engagement Commission for their continued collaboration and commitment to this effort. We also thank Samuel Kraus and Madeleine Toll for conducting valuable research that informed the contents of the report.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

Introduction	p.4
Civic Technology, Equity and Uptake	p.5
Implementation of the Decidim platform	p.9
User Verification	p.10
Spreading Awareness of the Platform	p.11
Topics to Prioritize when Launching the Platform	p.12
Outreach and Inclusiveness	p.13
Setting Clear Expectations for Engagement	p.14
Recommendations	p.15
Technology and Policy Considerations	p.15
Equity Considerations	p.16
Digital Citizenship Considerations	p.17
Policy and Programmatic Recommendations	p.17
Annex	p.22
Working group members	p.22
Participant bios	p.25

INTRODUCTION

Columbia World Projects (CWP), an initiative of Columbia University, in collaboration with the School of International and Public Affairs (SIPA) and the New York City Civic Engagement Commission (CEC), hosted a series of meetings with the goal of providing high-level expert counsel to the CEC on how, if and when digital tools might be employed to better engage New York City's communities and enhance government responsiveness to the needs and concerns of residents. Considerations of equity, responsiveness, and transparency lay at the center of these discussions as well as a keen concern for how other cities have used digital tools, seeking to understand the conditions under which such efforts succeed or fail.

The CEC was established by a ballot initiative to revise the NYC Charter and approved by voters in November 2018. The Commission is charged with the task of advancing participatory governance in four areas: shaping participatory budgeting processes, partnering with community-based organizations and civic leaders, developing a plan to enhance language access at poll sites by the 2020 election, and providing assistance to community boards. This collaborative effort seeks to assess possibilities for using digital platforms to realize this mandate.

Between May and August 2020, CWP convened experts from academia, community-based organizations, government, philanthropy, and the private sector to advise the CEC on uses of digital technologies to strengthen civic engagement over the course of five separate but interrelated meetings. Broadly, each of these discussions sought to provide insights around how the CEC might build digital points of connection between New York City's diverse communities and government with the aim of enhancing the civic power that residents might wield while also cultivating more responsive structures of government. These conversations, taking place in the time of pandemic, attained even greater urgency given limits placed on in-person activities.

The first meeting, held on April 3, 2020, examined the norms and values that undergird civic engagement and how the pandemic might serve as a source of stress on usual practices of civic engagement. The second meeting, hosted on June 15, 2020, gathered experts from Europe to gather learnings from civic engagement initiatives across multiple European cities. A third meeting, held on July 22, 2020, was animated by the CEC's adoption of Decidim, a digital platform built for enhancing participatory democracy, and explored good practices the CEC might adopt to create sustained communication and responsiveness on the platform. In addition to these meetings, CWP formed two additional working groups, each of which met once. The first surveyed the landscape of existing, relevant technologies; the second sought to identify metrics to measure civic engagement.



This report summarizes key insights from these conversations. It is organized into four parts. The first explores fundamental concerns that might guide NYC agencies seeking to enhance digital civic engagement. The second outlines actionable steps and recommendations specific to the CEC's launch and implementation of the Decidim platform, a digital platform used by a number of governments across the world for civic engagement purposes. A third section offers recommendations the CEC might pursue that will complement efforts reliant on Decidim, as resources allow. The fourth section, the annex, contains lists of participants present at each of the discussions followed by biographies of all participants. As the convenings were held under Chatham House Rule, views have not been attributed to individual participants, even as this report aims to express areas of consensus and points of disagreement among participants.

I. CIVIC TECHNOLOGY, EQUITY, AND UPTAKE

The history of civic technology is littered with discarded tools. Too often, well-intentioned city governments establish tools that never gain user attention, tools that obtain attention from select communities but fail to attract a broad user base over time, and tools that do little more than create a theater of civic engagement without actually increasing government responsiveness, thereby leading to a quick demise.

A fundamental goal and significant challenge in the development of civic engagement platforms is resident uptake of digital tools. This successful uptake, and in particular the generation of a stable user base, relies primarily on the saliency of the initiative to its constituents. Communications with the public about the existence of a digital tool, though of vital importance to increased uptake, only fosters sustained engagement when platforms provide residents with opportunities to engage meaningfully, and in ways they perceive effective and of import to their government, with the issues that matter to them.

Effective and meaningful civic engagement begins by identifying a particular problem of particular concern to community members and examines potential solutions to the issue and how they might be institutionalized across government. These concerns ought to drive adoption of a particular solution, whether reliant on technological innovation or another modality of intervention. Within civic technology initiatives, sustained uptake depends on whether or not participants view their participation as likely to be received by a responsive government agency. Without substantive engagement, there runs the risk of a negative feedback loop likely to erode efforts to cultivate a stable user base.

Saliency of issues addressed by civic technology initiatives is crucial but also insufficient. Many successful initiatives in the space of civic technology included dedicated advertising budgets to draw attention to new efforts by city government to draw users into engagement with the tools provided by city government. Conversely, many platforms launched without dedicated advertising fail to attract a stable user base.

Even when launches of new technologies are complemented by an advertising campaign, participants cautioned, city governments frequently undermine efforts to draw attention to new civic technology initiatives by launching too many competing platforms across multiple agencies, rather than creating a single hub. The result is that key information is scattered across multiple sites and users are expected to become conversant with multiple platforms and tools. One participant described the impact as resulting in a crisis of attention, as residents become overwhelmed by the number of online and offline fora available to them, including websites, Apps, and community meetings. As the amount of information increases, but residents' time to engage with government does not, growing numbers of touch points -- especially digital ones that require increasingly advanced technical literacy -- place an excessive burden on residents. In response, some participants suggested that the CEC might aggregate information about existing modes of civic engagement in New York City on any new platform it implements, creating points of connection between these distinct pathways.

An active -- even centralized -- user community is insufficient, participants cautioned. The vast majority of users of civic technology platforms globally represent the wealthiest communities, which have attained the highest education levels and the highest incomes. Even 311, which affords NYC residents a centralized single point of contact for complaints that in the past might have been scattered across a range of departments and agencies, suggests that new channels to engage city government might be unlikely to increase civic engagement by groups with lower rates of political and civic participation. Despite lowering barriers to the issuance of complaints, 311 data offers some evidence that New York City might be at risk of implementing a digital civic technology platform that will be used primarily by the wealthiest, largely white strata of city residents. While census tracts representing high proportions of minority residents, unemployed and underemployed residents, and unmarried residents make up a higher proportion of calls to 311, these rates also show negative correlation with civic and political participation rates.¹ This data suggests that communities making use of 311 might not adopt new technologies that

¹ Ariel White and Kris-Stella Trump, "The Promises and Pitfalls of 311 Data," August 2017, https://arwhite.mit.edu/sites/default/files/documents/promises311data_RR2_unblinded_June2016.pdf.

require greater investments in time, in making demands on other citizens and political elites, and that require greater depths of knowledge about particular issues.

Moreover, any efforts to implement civic technology takes place in the context of a vast digital divide, the gap between those that do and do not have ready-access to hardware and broadband technologies giving residents sufficient internet access. Across the city, according to a recent Comptroller report, nearly one million households and one-third of all residents lack access to broadband internet at home.² One in six households in NYC lack any access to the internet, whether through broadband, cellular data plan, dial-up, or satellite access.³ This digital divide disproportionately affects Black and Hispanic New Yorkers. It also results in geographies of isolation, with limited internet access among households in many of the poorest census tracts, including those in Brownsville, Borough Park, Hunts Point, and Sunset Park.

The pandemic, necessitating a rapid and dramatic shift to virtual engagement, leaves many residents even further isolated, as many of these same households now lack access to key institutions through which they connected to the digital world in the period before Covid-19. Job losses, the partial closure of schools, and the phased closures and reduced hours of libraries and community centers amid the pandemic all have contributed to expanding the digital divide at a moment when households require greater access than before.

Yet multiple participants emphasized a nuanced perspective on the digital divide. Digital access and competencies exist on a spectrum; few residents are always connected just as few residents are always disconnected. Some residents may access the internet at work or school -- at least in the period before the pandemic -- but lack access at home. Within this framework, one should ask how and where the least connected residents are engaging online, just as one should ask whether digital tools are intuitive to navigate for those who are less likely to have comfort and in using them.

It is incumbent on the city and federal government to help bridge this digital divide, participants indicated, through both concrete commitments to enhancing digital literacy among residents and by providing low technology modes of engagement. One step to take toward increasing digital equity, participants suggested, might be to work in active partnership with community-serving organizations such as [NYC Mesh](#), [Silicon Harlem](#), and [the Point](#). Coordinated partnerships that seek to expand access to broadband can complement steps underway during the pandemic in which the city provides hardware to

² New York City Comptroller, "Census and the City: Overcoming NYC's Digital Divide in the 2020 census," July 2019, https://comptroller.nyc.gov/wp-content/uploads/documents/Census_and_The_City_Overcoming_NYC_Digital_Divide_Census.pdf.

³ Citizens' Committee for Children of New York, "NYC's Digital Divide: 500k Households Have No Internet Access When It Is More Important Than Ever Before," April 2020, <https://s3.amazonaws.com/media.cccnewyork.org/2021/01/CCC-COVID-19-Series-NYC-Digital-Divide-Child-Well-being.docx.pdf>.

students and elderly residents. Improving access to LinkNYC offers another opportunity for expanding digital access. These examples suggest that this work will require multiple city agencies to work together toward increasing digital access and bridging the digital divide. Participants noted that the Mayor’s Office, the NYC Chief Technology Officer, the Department of Education, and the CEC ought to work together in coordinated and systematic fashion to build out the City’s capacity for digital engagement.

A second approach, which ought to complement this prior step, is to work more actively with, and reinvest in, institutions that build and provide ongoing social infrastructure. These institutions offer gathering spaces for diverse publics to come together across multiple divides and also to obtain access to vital services, including broadband in instances such as public libraries.⁴ Adequately funding libraries and restoring their operating hours into evenings and weekends, one participant suggested, can help mitigate the problem of the digital divide in the period when the pandemic subsides.

While participants agreed that city government ought to invest in civic technology capacity with a concern for access, participants also emphasized that how city government regarded potential users mattered enormously. Building capacity and then expecting residents to access the tools is insufficient. The goal, stressed several participants, ought to be to enhance civic power wielded by residents, and thus to empower residents to assume the role of agents in their communities. One participant shared that groups often labeled “vulnerable,” particularly refugees, are often those with the fewest available outlets to share their ideas, and so it is especially crucial to communicate with care when referring to New York City’s diverse communities and also to create pathways for access to these technologies. Many participants encouraged the CEC, in order to prevent the systemic exclusion of communities from processes of civic engagement, to allow residents to share their concerns, ideas, and experiences in the language of their choosing, as some of New York City’s many residents who do not speak English fluently, even if they do have the capability to access the internet, may not feel comfortable participating in English.

The topic of civic trust served as a through line across each meeting. In each discussion, multiple participants working with communities across NYC emphasized that many residents already feel distrustful of government broadly, stemming from long histories of policies and interventions that have hurt, among others, non-white, low-income, and immigrant communities. Attendees agreed that these long-standing sentiments may lead

⁴ Eric Klinenberg, *Palaces for the People: How Social Infrastructure Can Help Fight Inequality, Polarization, and the Decline of Civic Life*. New York, Crown Publishing Group, September 2018.

many residents to view any newly launched mode of civic engagement with suspicion. One participant noted that both widespread disenfranchisement, which describes how people are barred from participating in democratic processes, and disaffection, a lack of belief that these processes will meet residents' needs, are distinct and monumental challenges faced by agencies looking to enhance civic engagement.

Participants underscored the importance of creating structures of responsiveness within government to attend to the suggestions, concerns, and ideas that residents voice through both online and offline modes of civic engagement. Many warned that when governments launch new platforms for engagement, but do not address the thoughts shared by residents on these platforms, it further erodes civic trust, which is notably difficult to rebuild. Some participants pointed to the protests that erupted following the murder of George Floyd as evidence of deep distrust in government at a time in which fostering strong civic trust is especially critical, as it is to addressing the COVID-19 pandemic and convincing residents to follow public health guidelines.

II. IMPLEMENTATION OF THE DECIDIM PLATFORM

In summer 2020, the CEC committed to developing a new digital tool to enhance civic engagement in New York City, opting to use the platform [Decidim](#), a digital participatory democracy framework originally developed for the City of Barcelona. Decidim is an open-source platform on which residents can submit proposals, view submissions by others, and vote for proposals they find most compelling, thereby allowing residents to communicate their priorities to city government directly. The platform also enables city government to form online assemblies, conduct processes of participatory budgeting, engage in strategic planning, and highlight legislation in draft form and gather feedback directly from residents, increasing transparency and channels for direct feedback from the residents affected by urban policies and city legislation.

The recommendations that follow arise from participants' efforts to grapple with a select number of pressing questions within the context of the CEC's launch and implementation of a Decidim platform. The recommendations center on three key issues. First, how might the CEC raise awareness of the platform. Second, how might the CEC foster responsiveness across government agencies, and third, how the CEC can create feedback loops for information sharing between the platform and other low-technology and offline forms of engagement.

Participants widely acknowledged that digital tools like Decidim, while they can be useful tools in fostering civic engagement, are not solutions in and of themselves in countering disenfranchisement and disaffection and forming more participatory democracies. Participants cautioned against expecting the tool to accomplish too much, noting that it cannot by itself transform deeply ingrained democratic cultures and inequitable power dynamics. However, if the implementation of the platform is accompanied by widespread efforts by city government to shift these dynamics and rest more power in the hands of residents, the Decidim platform could create forums for people to respond to this shift and meaningfully engage with government and one another.⁵

USER VERIFICATION

Participants debated different possible modes of user verification on the platform, balancing the City's desire to understand who engages with Decidim, risks of fraud, and the importance of respecting users' privacy.

Many attendees agreed that an anonymous system would likely make residents, especially those with little or no experience engaging with government, more comfortable submitting proposals and voting on the platform. Given that proposals submitted to the platform are non-binding, at least at present, some participants agreed that user verification constituted a minor issue. One participant argued that just as voter ID laws in the United States act as a tool of disenfranchisement, more burdensome requirements around user verification create more exclusive processes and platforms.

Other cities have adopted a similar strategy while also modifying it at various stages in order to tighten verification standards for select activities that are deemed closer in spirit to the act of voting. In Barcelona, for instance, anyone can create an account using only their email address, but in order to vote on proposals, their identity must be verified using the citizen census. Once verified, accounts are anonymized so that city government officials cannot view the identity, address, or demographics of those engaging with the platform. Some participants endorsed this strategy while more than one participant indicated that anonymity should be valued above verifiability. In order to secure privacy, participants argued, it is worth taking the risk that people would create multiple accounts and vote several times in part because the impact of fraud is diminished when a large number of users engage with a

⁵ The Democratic Society & The newDemocracy Foundation, "Designing an online public deliberation," May 2020, <https://www.demsoc.org/blog/creating-online-spaces-for-deliberation-what-we-re-thinking>.



platform.⁶ Other participants raised questions about who should be afforded access to the platform. They asked whether only residents of New York City should be allowed to participate on the platform, given that huge numbers of people commute into the city for work or play and bring valuable insights to a participatory platform. Another suggested that the CEC might encourage these individuals to join Decidim, but restrict “voting” privileges on resolutions to residents. In short, commuters might comment on the platform but not “vote,” -- that is, commuters might express support or concerns for resolutions but not propose new resolutions nor click on a resolution to indicate their preferences, a form of virtual voting distinct from that which takes place in elections.⁷

Responding to these concerns about who should access the platform, comment on resolutions, and express preferences by “voting” on resolutions published to the platform, participants discussed a number of data sources specific to New York City that the CEC might access to enable user verification. One participant suggested that the CEC might use data from campaign registrations, much of which has been collected through lower technology means like door knocking and texting. Another participant proposed that when residents apply for benefits, the city might ask if they would like to opt into joining Decidim as a verified user, which may encourage traditionally underrepresented groups to participate.

SPREADING AWARENESS OF THE PLATFORM

There was consensus among participants that a fundamental challenge to the success of Decidim centered on raising awareness of the platform throughout New York City’s diverse communities. Participants recommended that the CEC reach out to trusted community organizations to inform them about the platform and instruct members on how to create accounts, submit proposals, and vote for initiatives. The CEC might also provide Decidim trainings at community board meetings, both to spread awareness of its existence and create connections between topics raised in these offline settings and online engagement.

Participants also urged that an advertising budget and campaign support these efforts, especially aimed at reaching residents of color and in less privileged neighborhoods. Many encouraged the CEC to actively market their platform, with one participant stating that their own work has revealed that many of the most successful digital tools across both the public

⁶ Yves Cabannes. “Participatory Budgeting in Paris: Act, Reflect, Grow.” In: Cabannes, Y. (ed.) *Another city is possible with Participatory Budgeting*. Montréal/New York/London: Black Rose Books, pp. 179 – 203, April 2017, https://budgetparticipatif.paris.fr/bp/plugins/download/PB_in_Paris.pdf.

⁷ Tiago Peixoto and Tom Steinberg, “Citizen Engagement: Emerging Digital Technologies Create New Risks and Value,” October 2019, <https://openknowledge.worldbank.org/bitstream/handle/10986/32495/Citizen-Engagement-Emerging-Digital-Technologies-Create-New-Risks-and-Value.pdf>.



and private sector devote significant portions of their budget to marketing their applications. Some participants raised support for spreading awareness of Decidim on other social media platforms where many residents already engage actively, but noted that questions still remain about how to convince residents to favor using Decidim over existing online communities, like mutual aid groups on Facebook. One participant expressed interest in developing a comprehensive marketing strategy, suggesting that this may be an opportunity for city government to learn from the private sector, and that some private companies may be willing and eager to share their expertise and advise the CEC on creating a robust marketing strategy. Participants also reminded the CEC to think about their marketing strategy as one that does not exclusively rely on paid advertisements, instead expanding outreach at existing points of interaction between local government and New York City residents.

TOPICS TO PRIORITIZE WHEN LAUNCHING THE PLATFORM

Participants debated whether the CEC, when launching Decidim, might invite people to submit proposals focused on particular topics, and if so which topics might they pursue. One participant encouraged the CEC to first focus on a lower profile policy area, like use of green space, as it could serve as a test case which would enhance familiarity with the platform among residents, CEC staff, and employees of other city agencies. They noted that this might provide more leeway for the CEC to experiment with the platform before it sought to tackle high-profile issues. Another participant cautioned that if the CEC chooses to first explore a lower profile policy area, they should expect relatively low uptake, as the salience of issues addressed is one of the most significant predictors of engagement. Others suggested that the CEC might first deploy Decidim to gather proposals on participatory budgeting, as this process is measured using established qualitative and quantitative metrics, and could thus provide the CEC with information on how residents and actors in city government engage with the platform.

Another bloc of participants suggested that considering the magnitude of the COVID-19 crisis, and the police violence targeting of color that propelled many into the streets to protest in support of the Black Lives Matter movement, the CEC might at the launch of the platform encourage residents to submit proposals about the issues that matter most to them, like evictions, safety, and lack of food access. Other participants cautioned the CEC against this approach, suggesting that if residents engaged on high-profile topics, but their posts were not systematically and meaningfully acknowledged, fragile notions of civic trust may further erode. In short, there was no consensus on initial issues to address.



Regardless of whether or not the CEC chooses to focus on specific issues when launching the platform, many participants agreed that in order for the Decidim platform to be meaningful and effective, the CEC should at some point encourage people to express their concerns about the issues that matter most to them. One participant advised the CEC not to focus just on what issues seemed viable to address, but instead focus on the issues that are of the greatest consequence and significance to communities. They said that if agencies focused primarily on what seemed achievable, these efforts to innovate within the field of civic technology will be niche and safe. They encouraged the CEC to center difficult issues on their platform to demonstrate their commitment to creating an impactful model of civic engagement for New York City residents.

OUTREACH AND INCLUSIVENESS

Throughout each of the discussions, participants highlighted the importance of sharing knowledge across both digital platforms and low technology forms of engagement. Participants agreed that those most affected by the digital divide deserve to have their voices heard, and that a participatory infrastructure could accompany a Decidim platform to enhance the accessibility of proposals submitted on the platform for all residents.

Multiple participants pointed out that in the context of the COVID-19 pandemic, many low technology interventions have proven most effective at responding to residents' needs. Members of multiple city governments highlighted how government hotlines, or efforts by local agencies to reach out to elderly residents via phone, have served as particularly effective tools in addressing the needs of residents that have arisen as a result of the pandemic. One participant suggested that operators of these phone calls might inform residents of the existence of a new platform and encourage residents to join Decidim. Another participant suggested that the CEC might deploy "translators" who could station themselves at physical locations, like in-person community board meetings, and discuss with residents the ideas and proposals gaining most traction online, or speak to them about submissions relevant to their specific concerns or interests. These "translators" might also upload proposals discussed by residents at community board meetings to the platform to enhance communication between residents who primarily engage online and those who engage offline. This model was used in Mexico City and in parts of Scotland.



ENHANCING GOVERNMENT RESPONSIVENESS & SETTING CLEAR EXPECTATIONS FOR ENGAGEMENT

There was a consensus among participants that strengthening civic trust and resident engagement depends heavily on government agencies' capacity to respond thoughtfully to ideas raised on digital platforms, and that governments need to show residents that participation is worthwhile.⁸ Based on their experiences with Decidim and other digital tools in various cities, many participants encouraged the CEC to anticipate the possibility of large numbers of proposals, given that many residents want to communicate meaningfully with city government and substantively engage in efforts to improve city services.

Many stressed the importance of cross agency collaboration to address proposals submitted on the platform. Participants advised the CEC to engage relevant stakeholders, including community leaders and those from within government, at early stages of the development process. One participant suggested the CEC speak to representatives of 311, the Public Advocate, and Council Members, and look for mutually beneficial methods of addressing resident proposals. The participant advised the CEC not to try to replicate the constituency service problem-solving embedded in programs like 311, but to position Decidim as a complementary tool that informs the CEC's efforts and allows residents to advocate and vote for policies and initiatives that address matters they care deeply about. Another participant urged the CEC to ensure that the back-end of the platform be intuitive and user-friendly, and encouraged the CEC to share the back-end of the program across city government so that all agencies have the opportunity to incorporate findings to improve outcomes in their own work.

Participants agreed that setting clear expectations for how the city will respond to proposals raised on the platform is essential to demonstrating the value of Decidim as a platform for two-way conversation to both residents and government agencies. Many advised the CEC to create clear guidelines that define what criteria, number of votes for example, will determine when the government responds, which agencies are responsible for addressing resident proposals on particular topics, and who residents should contact for help using the platform. Clear guidelines around government responsiveness can foster civic trust both within and outside of government, increase transparency, and encourage further engagement with the platform.

⁸ Alex Parsons, Rebecca Rumbul, and Michelle Brook, "Digital tools for democratic participation," September 2019, https://research.mysociety.org/media/outputs/digital-tools-participation-report_gVeFDFR.pdf.

III. RECOMMENDATIONS

TECHNOLOGY AND POLICY CONSIDERATIONS

Effective digital tools, especially those used in decision-making and governance, should be accessible to and inclusive of all NYC residents. Income and education are strongly correlated with broadband use at home.⁹ Compounding the challenges of digital access is a lack of digital literacy among many New York City residents. To account for the digital divide, the best and most effective tools are multi-modal, empowering people with varying levels of access, literacy, and training. One participant shared that in Barcelona, ideas brought up in community meetings are transformed into policy proposals via the Decidim platform, so that insights gained through various channels are congregated and made available to residents. In Paris, where residents could only access the Participatory Budgeting platform online, the government set up points of connection around the city where those without digital access could dictate their ideas to a government official, who would add the proposal to the city’s Participatory Budgeting platform. In an effort to enhance inclusivity, such multi-modal strategies should be accompanied by substantial commitments to expand broadband access throughout the New York City, especially as the pandemic has even further necessitated that residents have access to the internet.

Digital tools should make interacting with the government easier, rather than more complicated, by embracing a user centered design and approach. Tools should be as clear and simple as possible, so that users will return to a digital tool when a new need arises, rather than selecting a different approach. Including real-time data visibility which sends out information, rather than requiring residents to seek information themselves, can increase transparency and awareness. Participants of the CEC convenings warned against offering too many touchpoints, as it might overwhelm citizens.

Measure accessibility and trust in digital tools to increase equity. Digital tools can collect data detailing what groups are and are not engaging with the tool, how often, and to what effect to determine levels of engagement across the city. Users could opt into sharing this information through in-app features and city-wide surveys to foster regular and open communication with city agencies involved in relevant decision-making. These efforts should strive to track meaningful metrics, rather than surface level forms of engagement like clicks or views. To further increase trust, the CEC might make this data open-source, and

⁹ National Telecommunications and Information Administration, “New Commerce Department Report Shows Broadband Adoption Rises While ‘Gap’ Persists,” November 2010, <https://www.ntia.doc.gov/press-release/2010/new-commerce-department-report-shows-broadband-adoption-rises-while-gap-persists>.

prominently indicate on the Decidim website the availability of this data to residents who would like access.

EQUITY CONSIDERATIONS

Cities should anticipate that their calls for engagement may be viewed with suspicion by some communities of residents. Some local agencies have historically acted in ways which further marginalize specific communities, and the distrust resulting from these actions should be acknowledged and addressed during efforts to draw attention to the new digital platform.

Research shows that white, wealthy residents still tend to be overrepresented among complaints registered with the system. These residents tend to stay civically engaged via tools like 311 and also through more traditional modes of engagement, such as attending local governance meetings and voting in local elections.

In determining metrics for data collection, the City could prioritize the inclusion and engagement of structurally disenfranchised communities, including Black and Brown residents, homeless people, non-English speakers, and those with disabilities. Attendees agreed that particular attention should be paid to those groups who participate the least on the platform, considering that their voices are often the ones that need to be heard the most even as they are systematically excluded. The City could empower members of these communities to consult on and help design community identified metrics to increase accessibility and guide thoughtful implementation.

When leveraging tools like Decidim, the City could accurately communicate the level of decision-making authority residents will be granted by engaging with the platform and city officials. By using clear communication, city actors and residents alike can develop mutual, clear, and equitable expectations for engagement.

The City can work with existing groups, such as Code for America, to develop new narratives about engagement and highlight the work of young people and Black and Brown communities. A core message brought up by convening participants is the lack of recognition for grassroots civics work, and a lacking pipeline to formal positions of leadership.

DIGITAL CITIZENSHIP CONSIDERATIONS

Decidim might be marketed as a central hub of information relevant to NYC residents, rather than an additional tool to be used in resident-to-government communication. Participants agreed that new technologies compete against both existing tools and a crisis of attention that users experience as more tools become available. Cities are seeing backlash against the number of digital touch points provided to citizens. By positioning Decidim as the central civic information hub for NYC, the CEC could save residents the frustration of a technology overload and create a more sustainable model of civic engagement.

The most impactful tools ask not just for feedback but create opportunities for collaboration between residents and those in government. One participant suggested, “There aren’t opportunities for residents to help shape the government’s response in terms of COVID-19 recovery and beyond. What would it mean to have built in user engagement that goes beyond information and complaining, to active voice and participation? How can we see visible proof in our policies that the government has been responsive to its residents? How can we think about the different vulnerable populations who are not being represented on these platforms, and how do we use tech to do that?” By treating residents as partners, rather than recipients of government services, they will be more likely to participate. Participants stressed the importance of careful communication, with one noting that labeling people as “vulnerable” dissuades them from reaching out for help, or when they want to mobilize or participate.

POLICY AND PROGRAMMATIC RECOMMENDATIONS

Provide opportunities for communities to take part in co-designing decision-making processes in order to reimagine possibilities for co-governance models. In order to expand opportunities, the CEC might expand outreach to a wide-variety of community stakeholders, from community boards to local grassroots organizations. Community stakeholders can help identify local priorities, existing pre-existing digital infrastructure, and gaps in service. The CEC could create opportunities for community members to share their input and experiences throughout various stages of law and policy-making cycles.

1. To identify constituents’ most pressing needs, the CEC could spread information about Decidim via its CBO partners and request feedback from the organizations and their members by phone, email, or online survey.



2. Use CBO partners to communicate concrete goals and set clear expectations for engagement. Participants discussed how previous civic engagement tools failed to capture communities' interest, or worse, further eroded civic trust, when government agencies did not communicate clearly how submissions would be reviewed and acted upon. The CEC could explain to Decidim users upon registration if and how government actors will respond to their proposals to enhance trust in the platform.
3. Determine how voting will take place on the platform by balancing residents' privacy concerns with a desire to prevent any one individual from creating multiple accounts and casting multiple votes. In Barcelona, users need only an email address to create an account on the platform, but must be a resident of the city to vote. This residency is verified using anonymized census data. Alternatively, the CEC can opt to grant voting privileges to city visitors, including commuters and tourists. While some participants argued that this would dilute resident voices, others argued that those who live outside the city, but regularly work or recreate in NYC, may have useful perspectives and particular concerns and project ideas.
4. Explicitly state which individuals and organizations have been involved in any CEC-led or CEC-funded, community-based projects to garner additional trust.
5. Showcase community-based projects via highlighted stories on the Decidim platform.

The CEC can create a strong foundation for understanding and working with diverse communities. This includes promoting trust and collaboration between communities and city agencies in the development and launch of digital tools by collecting community input through both online and offline channels.

1. Allocate a significant budget towards marketing the platform, especially to those communities with historically low levels of digital engagement with government, so as to encourage a constituency more representative of the city as a whole to engage with Decidim. Strategies might include digital advertising, such as those created by the app, [Neighborland](#), and outreach to already active online fora, such as Facebook mutual aid groups. The CEC might prioritize strategies that go beyond self-selection mechanisms in an effort to increase participation among groups with historically low levels of engagement. Methods to recruit participants of hard-to-reach profiles include "random domain intercept technology" and random digit dialing. Cross-selling and up-selling participation from existing points of interaction, like use of social services, can also be extremely effective.



2. Help people create an account on the platform, and provide information on digital civic engagement to residents when they fill out service applications like those to qualify for low-income housing and food stamps.
3. The CEC could consider designing a fellowship - funded by philanthropic resources - focused on increasing engagement and building public sector civic technology capacity, with particular emphasis on reaching the city's diverse communities. Fellows could aid the CEC in building the infrastructure needed to meaningfully engage communities and meet expressed needs. Administering a fellowship would enable the city to create new connections between institutions and individuals city-wide, strengthening the public sector technology infrastructure and further involving diverse stakeholders.

Third, develop infrastructure for sustained collaboration and partnerships that prioritizes ease of use for both residents and city employees, allowing both parties to usefully and meaningfully contribute. Online polls, conversations, and project submissions by community leaders and local organizations can inform decision-making by government actors, who based on community submissions might provide more support to existing projects or develop new programs.

1. Conduct user testing of the platform with potential target audiences, both within and outside of government. This user testing will help the CEC understand whether certain customizations are required to enhance ease of use for residents and government actors alike.
2. Work with community groups and city officials to provide live and recorded trainings for both residents and government actors that demonstrate use of the Decidim platform. Though the pandemic necessitates that many of these training be conducted online, the CEC could work with local organizations, like Silicon Harlem, and could scale up these trainings by offering funding and infrastructure support.
3. Position the Decidim platform as complementary to 311, creating feedback loops between these channels that encourage user uptake and information sharing across platforms. Practices for institutionalizing touchpoints between these modes of



engagement may include, in situations where someone calls 311 on an issue related to CEC consultation,

- a. the operator might ask for that person’s suggestions and create an entry on the Decidim platform on the caller’s behalf, and/or
 - b. where appropriate and feasible, redirect the caller to the platform by sending them an SMS with the URL.
4. Serve as a partner to help facilitate ideas and efforts via Mayor de Blasio’s COVID-19 task forces. Mayor de Blasio announced several cross-sector task forces to guide the City’s reopening in the aftermath of the pandemic.¹⁰ The administration’s task force on police reform has announced changes to community policing, including initiatives that aim to improve community relations and solicit resident input in decision making processes. These groups focus on sectors like small business, large business, transportation, manufacturing, and tourism. The CEC could partner with them to facilitate community engagement in the development and implementation of measures proposed by the task forces. The CEC might use their digital platform to inform residents of the task forces’ work and display progress made in implementing their initiatives.
 5. Work closely with external partners such as [BetaNYC](#) , [Open NY](#), and the [NYC Department of Information Technology and Telecommunications](#) to facilitate improved coordination with other agencies. Much of the data that NYC collects about its residents is siloed for the protection and safety of these residents. However, some suggested that this data could be shared with specific departments like the CEC.
 6. Engage multi-sector partnerships and anchor institutions. The CEC can continue to form partnerships with other government agencies, universities, philanthropic organizations, and the private sector to increase their capacity to develop and implement initiatives around civic engagement. Partner organizations can provide technical assistance, aid in data collection and analysis, and may help fund the CEC’s initiatives.
 7. A longer-term goal might be to work with local organizations to ensure that a greater number of New Yorkers have access to both broadband internet and devices. While

¹⁰ The Official Website of the City of New York, “Mayor de Blasio Appoints Members to Sector Advisory Councils,” May 2020, <https://www1.nyc.gov/office-of-the-mayor/news/332-20/mayor-de-blasio-appoints-members-sector-advisory-councils>.

over eighty percent of New Yorkers have smartphones,¹¹ engagement on these devices can be more difficult than on computers. With libraries currently less accessible due to COVID-19, the CEC could work across the city ensuring each household has access to at least a tablet, if not a laptop or desktop computer.

Finally, create an iterative process, identifying new ways to involve and empower communities. This includes creating and maintaining feedback loops to build meaningful, trusting relationships with residents and creating regular opportunities for groups to share their experiences, which the CEC can learn from to fine-tune their efforts and pivot when necessary.

1. When data about resident engagement is collected, make anonymized data available to the public on the CEC website. Transparency of work, methodology and outcomes can increase trust among users.
2. At regular intervals following the launch of the platform, create and conduct a satisfaction survey to request resident feedback about their experience with Decidim, including topics like trust in the platform, ease of use, and government responsiveness.
3. A longer-term goal for the CEC might be to create a Civic Health Index. High Civic Health Index scores are correlated with additional positive outcomes, including higher employment rates, more responsive governments, and better health outcomes.¹² A Civic Health Index could inform policy to create a civic engagement infrastructure, enhance two-way dialogues between local government and residents, and create cross sector partnerships, all strengthening civic institutions.
 - a. New York City could partner with the National Conference on Citizenship (NCoC) to develop a Civic Health Index for help. The NCoC helps provide capacity to facilitate civic movements bringing together key stakeholders in the community to identify and address the issues they care about.

¹¹ Laura Nahmias, “Vast majority of New York City residents own a cell phone,” Politico, November 2015, <https://www.politico.com/states/new-york/city-hall/story/2015/11/vast-majority-of-new-york-city-residents-own-a-cell-phone-028121>.

¹² National Conference on Citizenship, “Civic Health Index,” <https://ncoc.org/chi/>.

IV. ANNEX A: WORKING GROUP PARTICIPANT LISTS

April 3, 2020 Inclusive Civic Tech Working Group Members

Thomas Asher (Director of Research and Engagement, Columbia World Projects)

Alice Barbe (CEO, SINGA Global; Former Obama Foundation Scholar, Columbia World Projects)

Leslie Brown (Chief of Staff, NYC Civic Engagement Commission)

Lilian Coral (Director of National Strategy, Knight Foundation)

Shari Davis (Executive Director, Participatory Budgeting Project)

Keesha Gaskins-Nathan (Director for the Democratic Practice–United States program, the Rockefeller Brothers Fund)

Alaina Harkness (Executive Director, Current)

Edna Ishayik (Knowledge & Insights Manager, Obama Foundation)

Merit Janow (Dean, School of International and Public Affairs; Professor of Professional Practice in International Economic Law and International Affairs, Columbia University)

Ariel Kennan (Director of Civic Innovation, Sidewalk Labs)

Eric Klinenberg (Helen Gould Shepard Professor of Social Science and Director of the Institute for Public Knowledge, New York University)

Bruce Lincoln (Co-Founder, Silicon Harlem)

Justin Garrett Moore (Executive Director, New York City Public Design Commission)

Maggie Ollove (Service Designer + Civic Researcher, Center for Civic Design)

Kathryn Ott Lovell (Commissioner, Philadelphia Parks & Recreation)

David Park (Dean of Strategic Initiatives, Arts & Sciences, Columbia University; Member, Committee on Global Thought; Faculty Director, MA in Global Thought)

Desmond U. Patton (Associate Professor of Social Work, Columbia University; Director, SAFE lab at Columbia University)

Whitney Quesenbery (Managing Director, Center for Civic Design)

Jason Rhody (Program Director of the Digital Culture program, Social Data Initiative, the MediaWell project, and the Media & Democracy program, Social Science Research Council)

Oscar J. Romero Jr. (Program Director, The NYC Mayor's Office of the Chief Technology Officer)

Hollie Russon Gilman (Fellow, Columbia World Projects; Fellow and Adjunct Associate Research Scholar in Technology and Policy, Columbia University)

Sarah Sayeed (Chair and Executive Director of the Civic Engagement Commission)

Adrienne Schmoeker (Deputy Chief Analytics Officer, City of New York; Director of Civic Engagement and Strategy, NYC Mayor's Office of Data Analytics)

Jose Serrano-McClain (Director, Urban Tech & Innovation, Inclusive Cities, HR&A Advisors)

Micah Sifry (President, Civic Hall)

Christian Vanizette (Co-Founder, Makesense.org; Obama Foundation Scholar, Columbia World Projects)

Stephanie Wade (Lead for Innovation and Design, Bloomberg Philanthropies)

Clarence Wardell (Former Director of City Solutions, Results for America)

Alexis Wichowski (Deputy Chief Technology Officer for Innovation, Mayor's Office of the CTO for the City of New York)

Laura Wood (Special Counsel, DemocracyNYC, Office of the Mayor of New York City)

May 6, 2020 Inventories of Civic Engagement Technologies Working Group Members

Melissa Appleton (Former Program Director, Participatory Budgeting Project)

Thomas Asher (Director of Research and Engagement, Columbia World Projects)

Alice Barbe (CEO, SINGA Global; Former Obama Foundation Scholar, Columbia World Projects)

Bruce Lincoln (Co-Founder, Silicon Harlem)

Justin Garrett Moore (Executive Director, New York City Public Design Commission)

Desmond U. Patton (Associate Professor of Social Work, Columbia University; Director, SAFE lab at Columbia University)

Oscar J. Romero Jr. (Program Director, The NYC Mayor's Office of the Chief Technology Officer)

Hollie Russon Gilman (Fellow, Columbia World Projects; Fellow and Adjunct Associate Research Scholar in Technology and Policy, Columbia University)

Adrienne Schmoeker (Deputy Chief Analytics Officer, City of New York; Director of Civic Engagement and Strategy, NYC Mayor's Office of Data Analytics)

Maia Woluchem (Technology Fellow, Ford Foundation)

May 13, 2020 - Metrics for Civic Engagement Working Group Members

Thomas Asher (Director of Research and Engagement, Columbia World Projects)

Edna Ishayik (Knowledge & Insights Manager, Obama Foundation)

Hollie Russon Gilman (Fellow, Columbia World Projects; Fellow and Adjunct Associate Research Scholar in Technology and Policy, Columbia University)

David Park (Dean of Strategic Initiatives, Arts & Sciences, Columbia University; Member, Committee on Global Thought; Faculty Director, MA in Global Thought)

Jason Rhody (Program Director of the Digital Culture program, Social Data Initiative, the MediaWell project, and the Media & Democracy program, Social Science Research Council)

Neelam Sakaria (Chief of Staff, New_Public)

June 15, 2020 - Civic Tech in Europe Working Group Members

Victòria Alsina (Academic Director of the Center for Urban Science and Progress, New York University)

Thomas Asher (Director of Research and Engagement, Columbia World Projects)

Alice Barbe (CEO, SINGA Global; Former Obama Foundation Scholar, Columbia World Projects)

Kirsten Brosbøl (Obama Foundation Scholar, Columbia World Projects)

Tiago C. Peixoto (Senior Public Sector Specialist, The World Bank Group)

Judit Carrera (Director, Centre for Contemporary Culture of Barcelona (CCCB))

Marian Cramers (Director of Development, The Democratic Society (Demsoc))

Michaël V. Dandrieux (Sociologist, Eranos & Sciences Po Paris (SMI))



Anne Vest Hansen (Head, ITK Lab, CFIA, Aarhus Municipality, Denmark)

Ekrem İmamoğlu (Mayor of Istanbul)

Gayatri Kawlra (Doctoral Candidate, Columbia University; Program Analyst, Columbia World Projects)

Maya Kornberg (Researcher, InterParliamentary Union)

Thomas Landrain (Co-founder and President, Just One Giant Lab)

Pier Luca Marzo (Researcher and Sociology Teacher, Università di Messina)

July 22, 2020 Decidim and NYC Civic Engagement Working Group Members

Victòria Alsina (Academic Director of the Center for Urban Science and Progress, New York University)

Julien Antelin (Director of Innovation of the Department of Neighborhood Empowerment, the City of Los Angeles)

Melissa Appleton (Former Program Director, Participatory Budgeting Project)

Pablo Aragón (Research Scientist, Eurecat & Universitat Pompeu Fabra)

Thomas Asher (Director of Research and Engagement, Columbia World Projects)

Joseph Bateman (Associate, Luminate)

Leslie Brown (Chief of Staff, NYC Civic Engagement Commission)

Lilian Coral (Director of National Strategy, Knight Foundation)

Michaël V. Dandrieux (Sociologist, Eranos & Sciences Po Paris (SMI))

Shari Davis (Executive Director, Participatory Budgeting Project)

Daniella Eras (Advisor, NYC Civic Engagement Commission)

Ester Fuchs (Professor International and Public Affairs and Political Science, Columbia University)

Keesha Gaskins-Nathan (Director for the Democratic Practice–United States program, the Rockefeller Brothers Fund)

Alejandra González (Director of Open Government at the Digital Agency for Public Innovation, Mexico City)

Noel Hidalgo (Executive Director, BetaNYC)

Edna Ishayik (Knowledge & Insights Manager, Obama Foundation)

Ariel Kennan (Director of Civic Innovation, Sidewalk Labs)

Miguel Lago (Co-founder and President-director, Nossas; Lecturer of International and Public Affairs, Columbia University)

Panthea Lee (Executive Director, Reboot)

Bruce Lincoln (Co-Founder, Silicon Harlem)

Desmond U. Patton (Associate Professor of Social Work, Columbia University; Director, SAFE lab at Columbia University)

Tiago C. Peixoto (Senior Public Sector Specialist, The World Bank)

Hollie Russon Gilman (Fellow, Columbia World Projects)

Sarah Sayeed (Chair and Executive Director of the Civic Engagement Commission)

Rajiv Sethi (Professor of Economics, Barnard College)

Micah Sifry (President, Civic Hall)

Matt Stempeck (Senior Researcher, Civic Hall)

Alistair Stoddart (Senior Participation Specialist, Committee Engagement Unit, The Scottish Parliament)

Wendy Trull (Senior Advisor, NYC Civic Engagement Commission)



ANNEX B: BIOGRAPHIES OF PARTICIPANTS



Victòria Alsina

Academic Director of the Center for Urban Science and Progress, New York University

Victòria Alsina is an Industry Assistant Professor and Academic Director at the NYU Center for Urban Science and Progress and Senior Fellow at The GovLab. Alsina’s current research and teaching focus on finding innovative solutions to rethink public institutions, exploring how collaborative governance and civic engagement can change the way we govern, solving some of society’s most pressing problems at the intersection of the public and private sectors and helping communities and institutions to work together to solve public problems more effectively and legitimately.

She advises numerous governments, organizations and private institutions on issues related to public sector reform and democratic innovation. At the Harvard Kennedy School, she is a Fellow at the Mossavar-Rahmani Center for Business and Government, a Democracy Fellow at the Ash Center for Democratic Governance and Innovation and an Associate at the Belfer Center for Science and International Affairs.

She holds a B.A. in Political Science and Public Administration from Universitat Pompeu Fabra; an MPA from Universitat Autònoma de Barcelona; an M.A. in Public Leadership from ESADE Business School; and a Ph.D. in Political and Social Sciences from Universitat Pompeu Fabra. She has been recipient of the prestigious Marie Skłodowska-Curie Individual Fellowship.



Julien Antelin

Director of Innovation of the Department of Neighborhood Empowerment, the City of Los Angeles

Julien Antelin is currently Director of Innovation of the Department of Neighborhood Empowerment in the City of Los Angeles. Among other projects, he develops the Office of Community Engagement of the City of Los Angeles. Prior to joining the City of Los Angeles, Antelin worked for the City of Paris, France as Chief of Staff at the Mayor’s office. He spearheaded the implementation of various policies including one of the world’s most significant participatory budgeting programs. Under Mayor Hidalgo’s leadership, he led the implementation of several digital tools fostering public participation and civic engagement. Before working for Local Governments, Antelin worked in a microfinance institution dedicated to delivering financial services to vulnerable people living in the rural sector in Colombia and in a global asset management company as the head of risk management. Antelin has a master’s degree in applied mathematics and lives in South Los Angeles with his wife and his two kids.



Melissa Appleton

Former Program Director, Participatory Budgeting Project

Melissa oversaw training and consulting for PB processes across the U.S. and Canada, and headed the Participation Lab, which develops tools and resources to support PB advocacy and implementation. She has led major advocacy efforts around PB and civic engagement, including helping establish the NYC Civic Engagement Commission, the first body of its kind approved by voters in North America. Melissa has trained hundreds of volunteers, civic leaders, elected officials, educators, and city staff on PB implementation in cities and schools. She brings a passion for collective decision-making to PB, with a Masters degree in Peace Education from Columbia University and over eight years of experience supporting group and interpersonal dialogue at the largest community mediation organization in the U.S., New York Peace Institute. Melissa is a proud Canadian and worked internationally in Israel, Kosovo, and East Timor before settling in NYC.



Pablo Aragón

Research Scientist, Eurecat & Universitat Pompeu Fabra

Pablo Aragón is a research scientist at the Big Data & Data Science unit at Eurecat, Centre Tecnològic de Catalunya. His research focuses on understanding social and political phenomena through the analysis of data from the Internet. He is particularly interested in characterizing online participation in civic technologies, the online network structures of grassroots movements and political parties, and the technopolitical dimension of networked democracy. These interests have led him to participate in EU funded research projects like DECODE, focusing on free open-source infrastructures to increase data sovereignty of European citizens, or D-CENT, aimed at transforming everyday democratic decision making through free open-source digital technologies. The results of his research have been published in top-tier journals and conferences in computational social science, where he also serves as reviewer (e.g. *PLOS ONE*, *EPJ Data Science*) and member of the program committee (e.g., TheWebConf, ICWSM, IC2S2). He has also given numerous talks and tutorials to academic and industrial audiences at international conferences, universities and research institutions.

Pablo was a doctoral researcher of the Artificial Intelligence and Machine Learning research group at Universitat Pompeu Fabra (2015-2019), where he currently works as an adjunct professor for the Web Intelligence course and the Participatory Platforms and Social Network Analysis course. He was a visiting scholar at the Oxford Internet Institute – University of Oxford and actively collaborates with public institutions for projects on data, technology and democracy. Pablo is a board member of Decidim, the free open-source platform for participatory democracy, and co-founded the Democratic Innovation Lab of Barcelona, an open space to address citizen challenges in an intelligent, participatory and democratic manner.



Thomas Asher

Director of Research and Engagement, Columbia World Projects

Thomas Asher joined Columbia World Projects in 2018 and leads work that brings together scholarly communities with practitioners to identify fresh thinking around long-standing problem areas especially related to questions around democratic futures, inclusive urbanism, and scaling for implementation. Prior to CWP, Tom worked at the Social Science Research Council for a decade where he directed grant and fellowship programs to strengthen social science research capacity and networks across the world, including in Africa, Asia, the Middle East and the United States. He serves as board chair to the Reagent Project, sits on advisory boards for the International Institute of Asian Studies in Leiden and the African Centre for Cities MPhil programme at the University of Cape Town, and most recently served as a visiting fellow at the University of Western Cape in 2019. He holds a Ph.D. in anthropology from the University of Chicago.



Alice Barbe

CEO, SINGA Global; Former Obama Foundation Scholar, Columbia World Projects

Alice Barbe is the co-founder and global CEO of SINGA, a global movement connecting migrants and host societies and supporting migration led entrepreneurship. SINGA exists in 10 countries, involving 40 000 members, and running 8 incubators supporting 200 entrepreneurs each year. SINGA is today an award-winning organization, having received many distinctions, such as Ashoka Fellowship, Forbes 30-under-30 Social, the Global Pluralism Award by the Aga Khan network, the medal of honor of the City of Paris, the Intercultural Award of the UNAOC, or the German Integration Prize. In 2018, Alice was part of the first cohort of the Obama Foundation Scholar program at Columbia University supporting civic leaders. She graduated in law and political sciences at the Universities of Montpellier and Siena. Before SINGA, Alice has worked as a CSR consultant and was collaborating with the United Nations, Save the Children, or Central School of Paris. She has co-founded other nonprofits related to civic engagement, such as #StopStreetHarassment in France or the Crazy Toad Initiative that has led her to work with the Dalai Lama in 2018 on migration and its links to artificial intelligence.



Joseph Bateman

Associate, Luminate

As an Associate at Luminate, Joe Bateman focuses on growing and supporting Luminate's portfolio across the US through grants and investments in the areas of civic empowerment and data & digital rights. Globally, Luminate funds and supports non-profit and for-profit organizations and advocate for policies and actions that can drive change. We prioritize delivering impact in four connected areas that underpin strong societies: Civic Empowerment, Data & Digital Rights, Financial Transparency, and Independent Media.

Prior to joining Luminate, he was a Senior Consultant at Summit Consulting, LLC, where he worked as part of the mission-oriented finance team. He supported investors in evaluating credit risk of potential investments, designing portfolio monitoring strategies, and developing reports on portfolio impact.

Previously, Joe was a Strategy and Marketing Consultant at Simon-Kucher & Partners. He advised global businesses in a variety of industries on how to achieve measurable revenue and profit growth. Joe spent three years as a Program Officer at the Washington Office on Latin America (WOLA), where he worked with partner organizations in Mexico, Central America, and Brazil to increase civic empowerment and government accountability.



Kirsten Brosbøl

Obama Foundation Scholar, Columbia World Projects

Kirsten Brosbøl is an Obama Scholar at Columbia University (2019-2020). She is a former MP and Minister of Environment of Denmark. She founded and chaired the Danish Parliament's All-Party Group on the Sustainable Development Goals (SDG's). In this capacity she has worked on national implementation of SDG's, founded the Multistakeholder Forum on SDG's, the 2030 Panel and initiated the Danish baseline for SDG's as well as the Danish SDG Awards.



Leslie Brown

Chief of Staff, NYC Civic Engagement Commission

Leslie A. Brown is Chief of Staff of the NYC Civic Engagement Commission. She most recently served as Director of Development with the NYC Department of Citywide Administrative Services, Bureau of Learning and Development. Leslie also served as Senior Program Manager for Growth Businesses at the NYC Department of Small Business Services. She is experienced in program design and management, strategic communications, and stakeholder relations gained from her municipal service, consultancy projects, and federal leadership staff positions in the United States Senate, as a presidential appointee in the Clinton Administration and in national political/public policy initiatives. Leslie earned a master of divinity degree with a concurrent graduate certificate in International Security Studies from Yale, and a bachelor of arts from NYU with studies in Florence, Italy.



Judit Carrera

Director, Centre for Contemporary Culture of Barcelona (CCCB)

Judit Carrera is the director of the Centre for Contemporary Culture of Barcelona (CCCB), a multidisciplinary cultural centre devoted to cities, public space and other key aspects of contemporary societies. The CCCB organises thematic exhibitions, film, music and literary festivals, as well as series of lectures, readings and seminars, and is deeply rooted in Barcelona and open to the world. Prior to her role as director at the CCCB, she led the debates and conferences department with the participation of academics and writers from all over the world. She also directed the European Prize for Urban Public Space, an architecture award to recognize and promote the best interventions to improve public spaces in European cities. With more than twenty years' experience in the areas of culture and international relations, she has been a columnist for the newspapers *El País* and the Barcelona-based *Ara*. Judit Carrera has a degree in Political Science from the Autonomous University of Barcelona (CCCB) and a Diplôme d'Études Approfondies from the Institut d'Études Politiques – Sciences Po in Paris. Before joining the CCCB, she worked at UNESCO (Paris) and in the International Relations Department of the Barcelona City Council. She is currently a member of the Social Council of the Pompeu Fabra University and of the Editorial Board of the magazines *Barcelona Metropolis* and *Public Culture*.



Lilian Coral

Director of National Strategy, Knight Foundation

Lilian Coral joined Knight Foundation in September 2017. Coral is Knight's director of national strategy, where she manages the national portfolio and focuses on the development of the foundation's Smart Cities strategy. She came to Knight from the City of Los Angeles, where she served as chief data officer for Mayor Eric Garcetti. In this role, she led the mayor's directive on Open Data beyond the lens of transparency and towards his vision of a data-driven Los Angeles through the management of the City's Open Data program, the expansion of the use of data science and analytics and the development of user-centered digital services. Coral led the development of the GeoHub, a first-of-its kind data management solution for integrating geospatial information across the City of Los Angeles' 41 departments, and oversaw the publishing of 1,100 city datasets and APIs, the management of five portals of operational and financial data and the roll-out of 15+ digital services, applications and public facing dashboards.

Prior to joining Mayor Garcetti, Coral spent 15 years working on a wide range of health and human services issues as an advocate and executive leader, having had the opportunity to work with labor unions, NGOs, foundations and human service agencies at all levels of government to transform the way government uses data and technology to serve its citizens.

Coral has a bachelor's degree in international studies from the University of California, Irvine and a master's degree in public policy from the University of California, Los Angeles. She is a native of Colombia, a place from where much of her inspiration for innovation and social justice emerged.



Marian Cramers

Director of Development, The Democratic Society (Demsoc)

Marian Cramers is the Director of Development at The Democratic Society (Demsoc), a European NGO that works for more and better democracy through citizen participation in change management projects. Current projects include the Climate KIC Deep Demonstrations, urban regeneration in Sicily and Populism and Civic Engagement (PaCE). Demsoc also developed a strand of work on digital democratic spaces, through thought leadership, training and facilitation. Marian is based in Brussels and supports the Demsoc presences in Milan, Edinburgh, Manchester and Berlin.

Marian is an MA graduate in Political Science and in Business Economics. She has worked at London-based technology companies for 7 years, specialising in consulting and partnerships around social media insights and digital transformation. This has included work with the NHS, UK Foreign and Commonwealth Office, NATO and a range of corporate clients, as well as an EMEA and APAC network of partners. She is also an active member of the BMW Foundation Responsible Leaders Network, a former board member of the Lewisham Refugee and Migrant network and the Producer of 'The Hidden', a documentary on hidden homelessness in Germany and the UK.



Michaël V. Dandrieux

Sociologist, Eranos & Sciences Po Paris (SMI)

Michaël V. Dandrieux Ph.D. is a French sociologist, from the tradition of sociology of imagination (G.Bachelard, G.Durand). As a founding partner of Eranos, a research consultancy based in Paris and Seoul, and operating in 10 countries, he is committed to reconciling companies and society via the means of humanities and consulting. He teaches at Sciences Po Paris (School of Management and Innovation), and serves as the executive editor of the French humanities review *Les Cahiers Européens de l'Imaginaire* (CNRS Editions). His work revolves around the seemingly irrational rationalities that structure life in society: myths, dreams, trust, hope.



Shari Davis

Executive Director, Participatory Budgeting Project

Shari Davis oversees PBP's advocacy work, technical assistance, and operations. She joined PBP staff after nearly 15 years of service and leadership in local government. As Director of Youth Engagement and Employment for the City of Boston she launched Youth Lead the Change, the first youth participatory budgeting process in the US, which won the US Conference of Mayors' City Livability Award. Shari first got involved in city government in high school, serving as the Citywide Neighborhood Safety Coordinator on the Boston Mayor's Youth Council and working at the Mayor's Youthline. Shari is a graduate of Boston University's Sargent College for Health and Rehabilitation Sciences and holds a master's degree in anatomy and physiology.



Daniella Eras

Advisor, NYC Civic Engagement Commission

Daniella Eras is an Advisor at the NYC Civic Engagement Commission charged with working on the implementation of a citywide Participatory Budgeting program. Before joining the CEC, she served as Budget Director for a New York City Council Member overseeing the representative's capital and expense discretionary budgets and advocacy campaigns.

Daniella was also an analyst in the Health Task Force at the Mayor's Office of Management and Budget (OMB). The taskforce oversaw the city's billion-dollar public health budgets and capital investments. Before OMB, she worked as Council Member Rosenthal's District Office Manager and Participatory Budgeting Coordinator establishing the district's first cycle of the program. She has also held previous positions in political campaigns, nonprofits and with the NYC Commission on Human Rights. She holds an MPA in Health Policy with a concentration in Public Finance from NYU and was a Finance and Administration Fellow for the South American Institute for Governance in Health in Rio de Janeiro, Brazil from 2017 to 2018.



Ester Fuchs

Professor International and Public Affairs and Political Science, Columbia University

Ester R. Fuchs is Professor of International and Public Affairs and Political Science and Director of the Urban and Social Policy Program at Columbia University's School of International and Public Affairs. She previously chaired Urban Studies for Barnard and Columbia Colleges. Fuchs serves as Director of WhosOntheBallot.org, an online voter engagement initiative. She is an executive committee member of Columbia's Data Science Institute, a member of the advisory committee of its Smart Cities Center and a faculty member of the Earth Institute. Fuchs is also a member of the Faculty Steering Committee of the Eric Holder Initiative for Civil and Political Rights and the Provost's Just Societies Task Force. She is currently a co-Principal Investigator on CovidWatcher, a research, policy and advocacy project working with community organizations to better understand the health effects and secondary impacts of COVID-19 on New Yorkers, so that resources and policy can be targeted to high needs communities. She is also a pro bono consultant to the New Pride Agenda's civic engagement project.

Fuchs served as Special Advisor to the Mayor for Governance and Strategic Planning under New York City Mayor Michael R. Bloomberg from 2001 to 2005. While at City Hall, she coordinated the restructuring of the City's Out-of-School Time programs, streamlined access to social services across 13 agencies by developing an online application through the Integrated Human Services Project (Access New York); and merged the Department of Employment with the Department of Small Business Services to align the City's workforce development programs with the growing sectors of the economy.

Fuchs is the author of numerous academic works and opinion pieces. She recently published "[Smart Cities, Stupid Cities, and How Data Can be Used to Solve Urban Policy Problems](#)," for Tech at Bloomberg, Data Science, "and "[It's Time for Women to Take Back the Vote](#)," PowHerNYC, September 25, 2018. Her major research includes [Mayors and Money: Fiscal Policy in New York and Chicago](#) (University of Chicago Press); "[Evaluating Global Digital Education: Student Outcomes Framework](#)" (OECD) "[Promoting a Cleaner and Healthier Harlem: Reducing Street Litter in the 125th Street Business Improvement District](#)," and "[Governing the Twenty-First Century City](#)," (Journal of International Affairs).



Fuchs was the first woman to serve as chair of the NYC Charter Revision Commission in 2005. She has served on many government and not-for-profit boards. She currently serves on the boards of Fund for the City of New York, Citizens Union, and the Museum at Eldridge Street. She has been the recipient of many grants, including from Bloomberg Philanthropies, the NYC Department of Environmental Protection, the Laurie M. Tisch Illumination Fund, the New York Community Trust, the NYC Economic Development Corporation, the Social Science Research Council, the Wallace Foundation, the Guggenheim Foundation, and the Ford Foundation.

Fuchs received the Bella Abzug Leadership Award; the City & State Above & Beyond Exceptional New York Women of 2017 Award for Education; NASPAA Public Service Matters Spotlight Award for WhosOnTheBallot.org; an Award for Outstanding Teaching at SIPA; the City of New York Excellence in Technology Award for Best IT Collaboration among Agencies for Access NYC; and the Distinguished Alumna Award from Queens College.

Fuchs consults for governments, NGOs, business and political campaigns. She is a frequent political commentator in print, broadcast and new media and lectures internationally. Fuchs received a BA from Queens College, CUNY; an MA from Brown University; and a PhD in Political Science from the University of Chicago.



Justin Garrett Moore

Executive Director, New York City Public Design Commission

Justin Garrett Moore is an urban designer and the executive director of the New York City Public Design Commission. He has extensive experience in urban design and city planning—from large-scale urban systems, policies, and projects to grassroots and community-focused planning, design, and arts initiatives. At the Public Design Commission, his work is focused on prioritizing the quality and excellence of the public realm, and fostering accessibility, diversity, and inclusion in the City's public buildings, spaces and art. As the former Senior Urban Designer for the NYC Department of City Planning for over a decade, Justin was responsible for conducting complex urban design plans and studies of the physical design and utilization of sites including infrastructure, public spaces, land use patterns and neighborhood character. His projects included the Greenpoint and Williamsburg Waterfront, Hunter's Point South, and the Brooklyn Cultural District. He received degrees in both architecture and urban design from Columbia University where he is now an Adjunct Associate Professor of Architecture, Planning, and Preservation. He is the co-founder of Urban Patch, a social enterprise focused on community improvement and development, and a member of the urbanist collective BlackSpace. His professional affiliations include the American Planning Association, the Urban Design Forum, the Van Alen Institute and Next City's Vanguard. He also serves as a member of the American Planning Association's AICP Commission, on the boards of ioby.org and Made in Brownsville, and on advisory boards for the Van Alen Institute, MoMA and Dumbarton Oaks.



Keesha Gaskins-Nathan

Director for the Democratic Practice–United States program, the Rockefeller Brothers Fund

Keesha Gaskins-Nathan is the director for the Democratic Practice–United States program at the Rockefeller Brothers Fund. Ms. Gaskins-Nathan is dedicated to advancing measures and ideas that improve democratic systems and engage democratic culture in the United States to support full and fair democratic and economic opportunity for all residents.

Ms. Gaskins-Nathan is a long-time organizer, lobbyist and trial attorney. Prior to joining the Rockefeller Brothers Fund, she was senior counsel with the Brennan Center for Justice, serving as the director of the Redistricting and Representation program. Her portfolio included redistricting reform, voting rights, and elections, with a focus on voter suppression issues. Ms. Gaskins-Nathan is a frequent lecturer and writer on issues related to women and politics, movement building and democratic reform. She is the author of numerous articles and publications related to voter suppression, voting rights and redistricting.

Ms. Gaskins-Nathan served as executive director for the League of Women Voters Minnesota and the executive director for the Minnesota Women’s Political Caucus. She worked for several years as a civil trial attorney, and also served as a special assistant appellate public defender for the State of Minnesota. Following law school, Ms. Gaskins-Nathan served as a shared judicial clerk for the Honorable Alan Page and the Honorable Joan Ericksen at the Minnesota Supreme Court. She was also a 2008 Feminist Leadership Fellow with the University of Minnesota, Hubert H. Humphrey Institute of Public Affairs - Center on Women and Public Policy. She is a frequent commentator on voting rights and redistricting reform and regularly appears on numerous news and public affairs programming, including past appearances on PBS’s NewsHour, MSNBC and Bill Moyers.

Alejandra González

Director of Open Government at the Digital Agency for Public Innovation, Mexico City



Anne Vest Hansen

Head, ITK Lab, CFIA, Aarhus Municipality, Denmark

Anne Vest Hansen is the Head of Department at ITK lab and Center Innovation in Aarhus, an internal cross-sectoral innovation and design unit working to support the whole municipality. In Aarhus Anne together with her team leads several project to accelerate civic tech and digital citizenship in Aarhus. They inspire and design solutions where new technology connects and strengthens the citizens, promotes their commitment to the city’s development as active citizens.

Anne holds a Master of Arts in Aesthetics and Culture from Aarhus University. Hansen is an innovation leader, project manager and certified facilitator with years of experience in leading digital innovation projects and programs for both private and public sector organizations.



Alaina Harkness

Executive Director, Current

As Executive Director for Current, Chicago's water innovation hub, Alaina Harkness leads collaborations that advance innovative solutions to water challenges. She most recently served as managing director for the economic development firm RW Ventures, where she helped launch and lead the New Growth Innovation Network and developed inclusive growth strategies for cities and metropolitan regions. Prior, she held a research fellowship in urban governance at the Brookings Institution, led urban development strategy for the John D. And Catherine T. MacArthur Foundation and staffed civic collaboratives: The Partnership for New Communities and 2016 Fund for Chicago Neighborhoods. Alaina is a nonresident fellow in the Global Cities program at the Chicago Council on Global Affairs and has published research and commentary for the Brookings Institution, Crain's Chicago Business, the San Francisco Federal Reserve Bank and CityLab. She holds a B.A. in Political Science and Art History from the University of Rochester, and Masters degrees in Public Policy and Latin American Studies from the University of Chicago. Alaina is a longtime resident of Chicago's Hyde Park neighborhood and serves on the boards of the CityTech Collaborative, Urban Initiatives and Margaret's Village. She is a 2014 fellow of Leadership Greater Chicago.



Noel Hidalgo

Executive Director, BetaNYC

Mr. Hidalgo stands at the crossroads of technology, government, community and impact. He believes in participatory communities and uses technology to improve people's lives. His work has been achieved through patience and organizing problem-solving teams. Mr. Hidalgo is known as an effective organizer who can walk between worlds.

Since 2009, he has organized BetaNYC to be a driving force to improve New York City's use of technology and share its data. BetaNYC has advocated for a suite of government transparency laws, including the city's transformative open data law and city record online law. BetaNYC runs the New York City Civic Innovation Lab/ Fellows program, in partnership with Manhattan Borough President Gale A. Brewer, and curates the NYC School of Data community conference.

Mr. Hidalgo is an Eagle Scout. He was a Technology and Democracy fellow at Harvard Kennedy School's Ash Center for Democratic Governance and Innovation; served as an inaugural member of Code for America's National Advisory Council, and is a former fellow and current affiliate at the Data & Society Research Institution.



Ekrem İmamoğlu

Mayor of Istanbul

Ekrem İmamoğlu has been the Mayor of Istanbul since 2019. His work focuses on promoting social justice and environmentally-friendly urban development. He joined the Republican People’s Party (CHP) in 2009 as a member of the CHP’s Beylikdüzü District Organization. He has served as the Mayor of Beylikdüzü between 2014 and 2019, and realized a wide range of projects that transformed the district’s appearance and elevated its living standards. On March 31, 2019, Mr. İmamoğlu was elected Mayor of Istanbul with 48.8% of the votes. This was the highest percentage of votes that any Mayor of Istanbul had received in over 30 years. The vote was annulled following the objections made by the ruling party. In a re-do election on June 23, 2019 however, Mr. İmamoğlu was elected Mayor of Istanbul once again—this time with 54.2% of the votes. Ekrem İmamoğlu has been living in Istanbul since 1988, and his academic background is in economics and human resources.



Edna Ishayik

Knowledge & Insights Manager, Obama Foundation

Edna Ishayik conducts strategic research and strategy development primarily in the field of civic engagement. She was the Director of Civic Engagement Initiatives at Civic Nation where she founded the Action Civics Initiative which promoted experiential civic learning; as well as #VoteTogether, which increases voter participation through community celebrations at polling locations. She holds a Master’s degree in journalism from New York University and was a freelance writer for New York Magazine, Conde Nast Traveler, The New York Times, Vice Magazine, and other publications. Prior to that, Ishayik began her career in campaigns and elections in 2000 and later served as the Executive Director of the New York State Democratic Party. Currently, she is the Knowledge and Insights Manager at the Obama Foundation.



Merit Janow

Dean, School of International and Public Affairs; Professor of Professional Practice in International Economic Law and International Affairs, Columbia University

Merit E. Janow is an internationally recognized expert in international trade and investment. She has extensive experience in academia, government and business, and has been deeply involved with the Asia-Pacific region for her entire life.



Janow became Dean of the faculty of Columbia University's School of International and Public Affairs (SIPA) in July 2013. SIPA is a leading school of international and public affairs in the United States, with more than 1,300 graduate students and 75 full time faculty. As Dean, she has strengthened the school by launching new programs and initiatives in the areas of technology and public policy—with a focus on cyber security and the digital economy—and central banking and financial policy. She also has grown SIPA's faculty; supported the creation of new research centers; and completed a capital campaign and inaugurated SIPA's second and most ambitious capital campaign.

For the past 25 years, Dean Janow has been a professor at both SIPA and Columbia Law School. She teaches graduate courses in the digital economy, international trade and investment law and policy, comparative antitrust law and China in the global economy. She has held a number of leadership positions at the University. She is co-director of the APEC Study Center at Columbia Business School and previously served as Chair of the Committee for Socially Responsible Investing which oversees the proxy voting of shares owned by the Columbia University endowment. Janow has written three books and numerous articles and frequently speaks before business, policy and academic audiences around the world.

Professor Janow has had three periods of government service. In December 2003, while at Columbia University, she was elected as one of the seven Members of the World Trade Organization's (WTO) Appellate Body, which is the court of final appeal for adjudicating trade disputes between the 154 member nations of the WTO. She was the only North American member and the first female to serve on the Appellate Body. In the course of her four years of service, she reviewed more than 30 appeals covering a diverse range of trade disputes, including technology, subsidies, agriculture, investment and trade remedies. From 1997-2000, Janow served as the Executive Director of the first international antitrust advisory committee to the Attorney General and Assistant Attorney General for Antitrust of the US Justice Department. The key recommendations were implemented on an international basis and led to the establishment of the International Competition Network (ICN). From 1989 to 1993, prior to joining Columbia, Janow served as Deputy Assistant USTR for Japan and China in the Executive Office of the President. In this capacity she was responsible for developing, coordinating, and implementing U.S. trade policies; devising the U.S. negotiating strategies towards Japan and China; and leading the negotiations for a dozen trade agreements.



Gayatri Kawlra

Doctoral Candidate, Columbia University;
Program Analyst, Columbia World Projects

Gayatri Kawlra is a doctoral candidate in Urban Planning at Columbia University's Graduate School of Architecture, Planning and Preservation (GSAPP). Her research explores the ways in which digital technologies are restructuring urban space and examines its implications for civic justice. She has particular interests in topics related to smart cities, e-governance, surveillance, privacy, data justice and data ethics, and uses both data science methods and critical data studies frameworks to design studies that inform urban policy and planning practice.

Gayatri is currently a researcher at Columbia World Projects where she works alongside the cybersecurity project teams. She has professional experience working in international development organizations in India, U.K., and the U.S, most recently as Strategy Analyst at the Rockefeller Foundation in New York, where she worked prior to joining the PhD program. She holds a Masters degree in Global Thought (Global Political Economy) from Columbia University's Graduate School of Arts and Sciences and a Bachelor of Arts degree in Economics and Politics from the University of York (UK).



Ariel Kennan

Director of Civic Innovation, Sidewalk Labs

Ariel Kennan is the Director of Civic Innovation at Sidewalk Labs, where she draws upon her experience in multidisciplinary design and technology to collaborate with community, government and industry partners to design service experiences, craft strategy and create and source digital tools.

Before Sidewalk, Ariel served the New York City Mayor's Office for Economic Opportunity as Director of Design and Product. In that role, she led the design and development of a portfolio of digital products and founded the nation's first municipal service design studio dedicated to making public services for low-income residents as effective and accessible as possible. Her time in government was inspired through fellowships with Code for America and the Center for Urban Pedagogy, where she discovered the potential for design in the public sector. Ariel previously designed and produced experiences for the built environment, ranging from intimate immersive media to expansive buildings. She holds a BFA in Integrated Design from Parsons School of Design. Originally from Arizona, she lives in Brooklyn with her husband. She loves riding bikes and cooking delicious meals.



Eric Klinenberg

Helen Gould Shepard Professor of Social Science and Director of the Institute for Public Knowledge, New York University

Eric Klinenberg is Helen Gould Shepard Professor of Social Science and Director of the Institute for Public Knowledge at New York University. He is the author of [Palaces for the People: How Social Infrastructure Can Help Fight Inequality, Polarization, and the Decline of Civic Life](#) (Crown, 2018), [Going Solo: The Extraordinary Rise and Surprising Appeal of Living Alone](#) (The Penguin Press, 2012), [Fighting for Air: The Battle to Control America's Media](#) (Metropolitan Books, 2007), and [Heat Wave: A Social Autopsy of Disaster in Chicago](#) (University of Chicago Press, 2002), as well as the editor of [Cultural Production in a Digital Age](#), co-editor of [Antidemocracy in America](#) (Columbia University Press, 2019), and co-author, with Aziz Ansari, of the New York Times #1 bestseller [Modern Romance](#) (The Penguin Press, 2015). His scholarly work has been published in journals including the *American Sociological Review*, *Theory and Society*, and *Ethnography*, and he has contributed to *The New Yorker*, *The New York Times Magazine*, *Rolling Stone*, and "This American Life".



Maya Kornberg

Researcher, InterParliamentary Union

Maya Kornberg's professional focus is legislative politics. Currently, she is designing research for the IPU and UNDP for a report on public engagement in the work of parliament. She also consults for the non-profit Public Agenda, assisting in their projects on governmental response and public engagement in the era of Covid-19. Previously, she was a postdoctoral fellow at NYU's Govlab, working on the use of digital technologies in public sector decision making. She holds a PhD in politics from Oxford, where her doctoral research focused on legislative committees as a tool for parliamentary specialization.



Miguel Lago

Co-founder and President-director, Nossas; Lecturer of International and Public Affairs, Columbia University

Miguel Lago is the co-founder and president-director of Nossas. Nossas is a non-profit, non-partisan organization that works as a system of civic mobilization infrastructures and a laboratory for activism and civic engagement. Nossas was born out of Meu Rio, a city-focused activist group that uses technology to make it easier for citizens of Rio de Janeiro to pressure their local government and keep it accountable. Meu Rio is today one of the largest civic engagement groups in the country, with over 300.000 registered members.

Miguel developed and teaches the course Social Innovation, Technology and Public Policy in the Global South at Columbia University's School of International and Public Affairs (SIPA). He is also a lecturer at Sciences Po Paris, where he teaches a class on technology and democracy. His research interests include public policy, technology, participatory politics and citizen-led city development. Miguel holds a bachelor degree in Political Science and a Master's degree in Public Administration, both from Sciences Po Paris.

Thomas Landrain

Co-founder and President, Just One Giant Lab



Panthea Lee

Executive Director, Reboot

Panthea Lee is the co-founder and Executive Director of Reboot. She is passionate about facilitating unlikely but effective collaborations between communities, activists, movements, and institutions to tackle structural inequity—and working with cultural institutions to build momentum for courageous change.

Panthea is a pioneer in designing and guiding multi-stakeholder processes to address complex social challenges, with experience doing so in 30+ countries, with partners including UNDP, World Bank, Open Government Partnership, CIVICUS, Luminate, Ford Foundation, and MacArthur Foundation, and governments at the national, state and local levels. Her practice blends her backgrounds as an ethnographer, organizer, designer and facilitator. The global co-design processes she's led have resulted in the launch of bold new efforts to protect human rights defenders, tackle public sector corruption, strengthen participatory democracy, advance equity in the open knowledge movement, reform leading international agencies and drive innovation in independent media. She frequently speaks and writes on practices for social transformation, and is the lead author of "Implementing Innovation: A User's Manual for Open Government Programs."

Her contributions to the field of social design have been recognized by Fast Company, Core77 and others. Her work has been featured by Al Jazeera, Aspen Institute, The Atlantic, New York Times, MIT Innovations Journal and the Stanford Social Innovation Review. She has served on the faculty of PopTech Social Innovation and Singularity University, and has lectured at Columbia, Harvard and New York Universities. Panthea mentors several social entrepreneurs; advises the OECD Network on Innovation Citizen Participation and Green-peace; and serves on the boards of AIGA Design for Democracy, Development Gateway and People Powered: The Global Hub for Participatory Democracy.



Bruce Lincoln

Co-Founder, Silicon Harlem

Bruce Lincoln is the Co-Founder of Silicon Harlem. The mission of Silicon Harlem is to transform Harlem and Upper Manhattan into a technology and innovation hub and to then use this model as a means to stimulate sustainable technology-driven socio-economic advancement in other urban centers.

Bruce is a Senior Fellow at the Columbia Institute for Tele-Information at the Graduate School of Business and from May 2008 until June 2011, he was the Entrepreneur-in-Residence at the Center for Technology, Innovation and Community Engagement (CTICE), Fu Foundation School of Engineering and Applied Science.



Pier Luca Marzo

Researcher and Sociology Teacher, Università di Messina

Pier Luca Marzo is an Assistant Professor of Sociology in the Department of Cognitive Science, Psychology, Education and Cultural Studies of the University of Messina. He holds a PhD degree in Analysis and Theory of Social Change from the University of Messina. His research interests include science and technology studies, social morphology, post-humanism and social imaginaries. He has participated in various seminars, conferences and congresses in Italy and abroad, and has published two books, three edited books and several articles.

Marzo is a Board Member of the Centro di Ricerca Internazionale Immaginari degli Universi teatrali e degli immaginari sociali of University of Messina, of the Italian Association of Sociology AIS – Immaginario and the PhD course in Global Culture, Digital Society, Diversity Inclusion and Social Innovation for Development at the University of Reggio Calabria. He is the Director of the editorial series *Im@goBooks* and Associate Director of The Centre for Philosophy and Every Day Life in the Department of Arts and Humanities at Nottingham Trent University.



Maggie Ollove

Service Designer + Civic Researcher, Center for Civic Design

Maggie designs innovative services with a human-centered approach. Whether she is designing a training program for farmers in Uganda or solving the challenge of child care for low-income families, she brings her skills in design-led research, workshop facilitation, and prototyping to find innovative solutions to social challenges. Before joining the Center, she worked on projects for Tipping Point, Earth Day Network, World Bank, Concern Worldwide, and Memorial Sloan Kettering to make the world a better place. Most recently, she co-founded the Gma Village, a service that connects low-income parents who need child care support with a group of loving grandmas to care for their children. She and her collaborators received the Sylvia Harris Citizen Design Award for this project. She holds an MFA from the Transdisciplinary Design program at Parsons The New School for Design and a BA in social history and photography from Oberlin College.



Kathryn Ott Lovell

Commissioner, Philadelphia Parks & Recreation

Kathryn Ott Lovell was appointed commissioner of Philadelphia Parks & Recreation by Mayor Jim Kenney in January 2016. In this position, Kathryn oversees 700 full-time employees, more than 2,700 part-time and seasonal employees, over 10,200 acres of land, 500 buildings, 166 miles of trail, 250 playgrounds, and thousands of programs and events throughout Philadelphia’s parks and recreation system. In 2017, Kathryn commissioned the first strategic plan for Philadelphia Parks & Recreation. The plan, Our Path to 2020, established a renewed vision for the department and set in motion a powerful trajectory toward an equitable and exceptional parks and recreation system that connects people to each other, to enriching experiences, and to the natural world. The plan emphasizes citizen-centric service; high quality, relevant, and accessible programs; and a commitment to well-maintained assets. Kathryn has presented widely on topics ranging from urban forestry, to climate change, to why parks are crucial to our future. Notable speaking and panel appearances include the South by Southwest Conference (SXSW), National Recreation and Park Association (NRPA) Conference, the City Parks Alliance’s Greater & Greener Conference, and the One Water Summit. In 2018, Kathryn served as the 2018 NRPA Robert W. Crawford Lecturer. Currently, Kathryn serves on the Board of Directors for the Please Touch Museum, Schuylkill River Development Corporation, Parkway Council, Free Library of Philadelphia, and the Philadelphia Sports Congress.



David Park

Dean of Strategic Initiatives, Arts & Sciences, Columbia University; Member, Committee on Global Thought; Faculty Director, MA in Global Thought

David K. Park is Dean of Strategic Initiatives for the Faculty of the Arts and Sciences at Columbia University. Dr. Park is a member of Columbia University’s Institute for Data Sciences and Engineering New Media Center, Director of Special Projects at the Applied Statistics Center and Fellow at the Center for the Management of Systemic Risk at Columbia University. Dr. Park is also a founding member of Columbia University’s Digital Storytelling Lab. Dr. Park has co-founded several New York-based technology companies. Dr. Park is currently exploring the historical arc of universities, limitations and possibilities of “big data”, how failure and vulnerability are the foundations of innovation and creativity across organizations as well as the electoral origins of congressional polarization. Dr. Park is also working on several manuscripts including, “The Twentieth Century Sectional Reversal: How did the Republican States Switch to the Democrats and Vice Versa?” and “Is History Repeating Itself? Comparing 1875 to 1928 and 1971 to 2008”.

Dr. Park received his B.S. in Aerospace Engineering from the University of Maryland and his Ph.D. in political science at Columbia where he focused on historical comparative institutional analyses of societal change. He was an Assistant Professor of Political Science and Applied Statistics at Washington University, Assistant Professor at George Washington University, Visiting Professor at Columbia University and Visiting Scholar at the Russell Sage Foundation. He has written numerous articles and co-authored [Red State Blue State Rich State Poor State: Why American Vote the Way They Do](#) (Princeton University Press, 2008).



Desmond U. Patton

Associate Professor of Social Work, Columbia University; Director, SAFE lab at Columbia University

Associate Professor Desmond Upton Patton is a Public Interest Technologist who uses qualitative and computational data collection methods to examine the relationship between youth and gang violence and social media; how and why violence, grief, and identity are expressed on social media; and the real world impact these expressions have on wellbeing for low-income youth of color. Dr. Patton is the founding Director of the SAFE lab, a member of the Data Science Institute, a faculty affiliate of the Social Intervention Group (SIG) and holds a courtesy appointment in the department of Sociology. He is the recipient of the 2018 Deborah K. Padgett Early Career Achievement Award from the Society for Social Work Research (SSWR), and was named a 2017- 2018 Fellow at Harvard's Berkman Klein Center for Internet and Society.

Dr. Patton studies the ways in which gang-involved youth conceptualize threats on social media, and the extent to which social media shapes and facilitates youth and gang violence. In partnership with the Data Science Institute, he is developing an online tool for detecting aggression in social media posts. Dr. Patton's research on "internet banging" has been featured in the *New York Times*, *Chicago Tribune*, *USA Today*, *NPR*, *Boston Magazine*, *ABC News*, and *Vice*. It was cited in an Amici Curiae Brief submitted to the United States Supreme Court in *Elonis v. United States*, which examined the interpretation of threats on social media.



Tiago C. Peixoto

Senior Public Sector Specialist, The World Bank Group

Tiago C. Peixoto is a Senior Governance Specialist at The World Bank Group. Since joining the World Bank in 2010, Tiago has been working with governments to develop digital solutions for better public policies and services. Prior to joining the World Bank, he managed projects and consulted for a number of organizations, such as the European Commission, OECD, United Nations, Bertelsmann Foundation and the Brazilian and UK governments. Tiago has been honored by TechCrunch as one of the [20 Most Innovative People in Democracy](#), and by Apolitical as one of the [100 Most Influential People in Digital Government](#). His work has been featured in both mainstream and specialized media, such as *The Economist*, *The Wall Street Journal*, *The Washington Post*, *Nature*, *New Scientist*, *Quartz*, *Vox* and *Mashable*. Tiago has published in *The British Journal of Political Science*, *UCLA Law Review*, *Journal of Information Technology and Politics*, and *European Journal of eParticipation*, among others. In 2017 he and his co-authors received the Louis Brownlow Award (American Society of Public Administration) for the best article of the year written by a practitioner. Tiago holds a PhD and a Masters in Political Science from the European University Institute, as well as a Masters in Organized Collective Action from Sciences-Po Paris.



Clémence Pène

Innovation officer, DITP (French government)

Clémence Pène is a former advisor to the Mayor of Paris, in charge of her digital strategy and open government. As a PhD candidate researching campaigns and activism in France and in the United States, she started to build an international network in the field of civic innovation and digital advocacy. She has been awarded with a Fulbright Fellowship and two Google fellowships for young innovators.

Pursuing her passion for urban and civic tech, she spent two years at C40 Cities, a network of 96 megacities tackling Climate Change, as the Head of Digital and Citizen Engagement. Clémence is now part of the French Government Innovation team at DITP (Public Transformation Direction) where she is in charge of communities, knowledge, experimentation and anticipation. Her current projects include the French Government Public Innovation Lab, Post-Covid Government Resilience with OECD and 27e Region, Anticipatory Design for Crisis.



Eve Plenel

Executive Director, Vers Paris sans sida

Eve Plenel's commitment to the fight against HIV, social and racial exclusion started in the activist group Act Up-Paris in the early 2000s. After graduating in political science and urban sociology in 2004, she joined the City of Paris cultural affairs division to open the "104", a 40'000 sqm art center in Paris' most deprived neighborhood. She was in charge of community-organizing to create a space that could be shared by families, multicultural youth, migrant workers as well as avant-garde artists. Ten years later, the '104' cultural center is still cited as an example of successful social mix.

In 2010, Eve Plenel returned to her initial engagement to improve access to healthcare for migrants and detainees. She ran two Paris-based NGOs which develop services for people living with or affected by HIV (testing facilities, outreach health promotion, medical, social and psychological support, including housing, occupational integration, legal support, and quality of life programs).

In 2016 she joined the City of Paris again as Project Manager of the Fast Track Cities Initiative to end HIV transmission and HIV-related stigma. She is now the Executive Director of the non-profit organization leading the Paris metropolitan response to end the HIV epidemic, improve health service delivery and foster community empowerment in deprived neighborhoods and key affected populations. Working as a public-private laboratory for innovative public health and social inclusion policies, it aims at reducing social, territorial and racial health inequities, and making Paris a safer place for people living with or most affected by HIV.

Eve works with grassroot activist organizations led by people living with HIV, men who have sex with men, transgender women, sex workers, African diaspora leaders. Her goal is to create the conditions for sustainable community-led solutions, by using the AIDS response as a social game-changer and an innovation enhancer.



Whitney Quesenbery

Managing Director, Center for Civic Design

As the Managing Director for the Center for Civic Design, Whitney is passionate about improving the voter experience. Sixteen years after her appointment to the EAC's federal advisory committee, writing national voting system guidelines, she is still grappling with the opportunities to approach democracy as a design problem. She is proud of the Center's work to introduce best practices for election design across the country through the Field Guides To Ensuring Voter Intent. Whitney's work on projects from modernizing voter registration to designing usable vote-by-mail envelopes, makes it easier for people across the country to vote. From marking the ballot to auditing the vote, we can make elections usable, accessible and secure for voters, election workers, and officials.



Jason Rhody

Program Director of the Digital Culture program, Social Data Initiative, the MediaWell project, and the Media & Democracy program, Social Science Research Council

Jason Rhody directs the Digital Culture program, Social Data Initiative, the MediaWell project, and the Media & Democracy program at the Social Science Research Council (SSRC). Previously, he served as senior program officer at the National Endowment for the Humanities (NEH), where he helped create the Office of Digital Humanities (ODH). In that role, he developed and managed multiple grant programs that enabled scholars, librarians, and archivists to harness emerging technologies to advance research, encourage scholarly inquiry of digital culture, and foster collaboration across international and disciplinary boundaries. He created and directed joint grant programs with Jisc in the UK and the Deutsche Forschungsgemeinschaft (DFG) in Germany, and contributed to collaborations with the Research Councils UK, FAPESP in Brazil, the National Science Foundation (NSF), the National Endowment for the Arts (NEA), the Institute of Museum and Library Services (IMLS), and the Department of Energy (DOE). He received his PhD in English from the University of Maryland where, prior to joining NEH in 2003, he managed and advised digital humanities projects at the Maryland Institute for Technology in the Humanities (MITH) and taught courses in literature and digital media.



Oscar J. Romero Jr.

Program Director, The NYC Mayor’s Office of the Chief Technology Officer

Oscar Romero leads the inclusive innovation efforts of the NYC Mayor’s Office of the Chief Technology Officer (MOCTO). His work focuses on Digital Equity, Participatory Development and Smart City Public Policy. Before joining MOCTO, Oscar worked for The New School’s Digital Equity Laboratory where he researched how broadband access and privacy protection policies affect vulnerable populations across New York City. Oscar has worked on international cooperation for universities and international development organizations. He has designed experiential learning initiatives for large student communities (+100,000) in the US and Latin America. Oscar holds a M.A. in International Affairs from The New School and a B.S. in International Studies from the University of Guadalajara. He is an active member of the Research Network on Autonomous Integration in Latin America and the Caribbean (REDIALC). Currently he is researching how to leverage innovation to challenge inequality, and is interested in collaborating with development organizations to promote dialogue and research on digital equity, cyber-geopolitics, tech public policy and international cooperation.



Hollie Russon Gilman

Fellow, Columbia World Projects; Fellow and Adjunct Associate Research Scholar in Technology and Policy, Columbia University

Hollie Russon Gilman is a Fellow at Columbia World Projects and Adjunct Associate Research Scholar in Technology and Policy at SIPA where she teaches “Technology and the Future of Public Policy and Governance.” She is a Fellow at New America. Her first book is *Democracy Reinvented: Participatory Budgeting and Civic Innovation in America* as part of the Harvard Kennedy School’s series on governance innovation in the 21st century. Her recent book with Sabeel Rahman is *Civic Power: Rebuilding American Democracy in an Era of Crisis* (2019). Her first book is *Democracy Reinvented: Participatory Budgeting in America* (2016).

She served in the Obama White House as the Open Government and Innovation Advisor in the Office of Science and Technology Policy and worked as a field organizer in New Hampshire. Gilman was a founding researcher and organizer for the Transparency and Accountability Initiative and Harvard’s Gettysburg Project to revitalize 21st century civic engagement. She has worked as an advisor, researcher, and consultant to numerous nonprofits and foundations including the Case Foundation, Center for Global Development, Gates Foundation, Knight Foundation, and the World Bank.

She holds a PhD and MA from the Department of Government at Harvard University and AB from the University of Chicago with highest honors in Political Science. She has published in numerous academic journals including in 2017 serving as the symposium editor on civic engagement and civic tech for PS: Political Science & Politics. She has several popular audience publications including the *Boston Globe*, *Foreign Affairs*, *Slate*, *Stanford Social Innovation Review*, *The Washington Post* and *Vox*. Gilman is a recipient of numerous awards, including: AAAS Big Data and Analytics Fellowship, Fulbright Scholarship, Environmental Working Group’s Excellence for Technology and Innovation, the Center for the American Presidency and Congress Presidential Fellowship and Harvard Kennedy School’s Democracy Fellow program at the Ash Center for Democratic Governance and Innovation.



Neelam Sakaria

Chief of Staff, New_Public

Neelam Sakaria is Chief of Staff at New_Public, an initiative dedicated to moving beyond the necessary critiques of our current online spaces and to encourage thinking like digital urban planners about the spaces we want to inhabit in the future. At New_Public, she manages strategy and operation underpinning the team's research, community building, and creative projects. Prior to joining the team, she supported early-stage social entrepreneurs at Echoing Green working on the challenges in racial equity and the climate crisis and working in support of a more inclusive entrepreneurial ecosystem. Neelam is a graduate of NYU's Global Liberal Studies program, where she concentrated on politics, human rights, and international development, as well as Middle Eastern and Islamic Studies. After a year spent in Israel and the Occupied Palestinian Territories, she wrote her undergraduate thesis to better understand the critical political and urban sociological processes that influenced the experience of physical space, specifically within cities at the center of territorial conflict.



Sarah Sayeed

Chair and Executive Director of the Civic Engagement Commission

Dr. Sarah Sayeed, Chair and Executive Director of the Civic Engagement Commission, is a Bronx resident and has been dedicated to building an inclusive public square for almost two decades. In 2015, Sayeed was appointed by Mayor de Blasio to serve as a Senior Advisor in the Mayor's Community Affairs Unit, to expand outreach to Muslim communities across the five boroughs. Prior to attaining this position, Sayeed was a trailblazer in interfaith work and activism at the Interfaith Center of New York, bringing together New York's diverse grassroots religious leaders with secular and city agencies, and implementing an extended collaboration between Catholic and Muslim social service providers. Sayeed taught Communications to graduates and undergraduates at Baruch's School of Public Affairs for five years. Through her years of volunteer work with diverse Muslim organizations, including Women in Islam, Inc., she has been an avid promoter of interfaith relations and Muslim women's public engagement. Sarah holds a B.A. in Sociology and Near East Studies from Princeton University and an M.A. and Ph.D. in Communications from the Annenberg School for Communication, University of Pennsylvania. She also holds a certificate in Reconciliation Leadership through the Institute for Global Leadership and is an alumna of the American Muslim Civic Leadership Institute (AMCLI) Fellows program.



Adrienne Schmoeker

**Deputy Chief Analytics Officer, City of New York;
Director of Civic Engagement and Strategy, NYC
Mayor's Office of Data Analytics**

Adrienne Schmoeker is currently the Deputy Chief Analytics Officer for the City of New York and Director of Civic Engagement and Strategy at the NYC Mayor's Office of Data Analytics. She currently advises New York City's Chief Analytics Officer, and directly leads a team of managers, strategists and data scientists, overseeing the City's Open Data Program, internal strategic data coordination efforts and directing a portfolio of analytics projects serving various city agencies and fulfilling legal mandates. Prior to her current role, she managed the City's Open Data Program for two years, increasing the datasets on the platform by more than 30% and led Open Data Week, a citywide community engagement initiative around public data. Adrienne originally joined the City of New York via the Mayor's Office of Technology and Innovation in 2015, a new office led by the City's first Chief Technology Officer, where Adrienne led a variety of open innovation initiatives in partnership with New York City's urban tech, civic tech and startup communities. Before her time in public service, Adrienne worked at the social enterprise Catchafire and as an analyst in corporate retail. She holds a degree from the University of Chicago and is from a French-American family, brought up in St. Louis, Missouri.



Jose Serrano-McClain

**Director, Urban Tech & Innovation, Inclusive
Cities, HR&A Advisors**

Jose Serrano-McClain brings expertise in urban innovation policy, community economic development, and stakeholder and community engagement to public and private sector projects.

As a leader in the firm's Inclusive Cities and Urban Tech & Innovation practices, Jose's work focuses on crafting strategies that address issues of equity and inclusion in the design of next-generation urban services and places, and support re-imagined forms of civic participation. He serves as project manager overseeing development of equitable economic development strategies for a first-of-a-kind urban innovation company, and is supporting design of stakeholder engagement strategies and research around innovative civic engagement models for OneNYC, the city's master plan of strategic initiatives focused on equity, resiliency, and sustainability.

Prior to joining HR&A, Jose was Program Director of NYCx Co-Labs for the NYC Mayor's Office of the Chief Technology Officer, where he led the creation of an urban innovation R&D program that represented an entirely new approach to 21st century city-making. A transdisciplinary practitioner, his other professional experiences include leading creative community development at the Queens Museum, co-founding two tech startups, and economic policy analysis at the Federal Reserve Bank of New York. Jose earned his Master of Fine arts from Queens College and a Bachelor of Arts in English from the University of Pennsylvania.



Rajiv Sethi

Professor of Economics, Barnard College

Rajiv Sethi is a Professor of Economics at Barnard College, Columbia University and an External Professor at the Santa Fe Institute. He is a co-author, with Brendan O’Flaherty, of [Shadows of Doubt: Stereotypes, Crime, and the Pursuit of Justice](#), published by Harvard University Press in 2019. His primary area of research is in microeconomic theory, with applications to communication, crime, policing, and inequality.

Rajiv is currently working on the geography of lethal force. The use of deadly force by law enforcement officers in the United States is extremely high by international standards, and involves significant disparities by race and ethnicity. Both the scale and the disparities vary sharply across states, cities, and law enforcement agencies. The main goal of the proposed research is to understand why such geographic variations in scale and disparities exist, and to identify effective policy remedies.

Rajiv has previously held visiting positions at Microsoft Research and the Institute for Advanced Study in Princeton, and has served on the editorial boards of several journals including the *American Economic Review* and *Economics and Philosophy*.



Micah Sifry

President, Civic Hall

Micah L. Sifry is co-founder and president of Civic Hall, NYC’s community center for civic tech, launched in 2015. He curates the annual Personal Democracy Forum, and also is the editor of Civicist, Civic Hall’s news site. From 2006-16 he was a senior adviser to the Sunlight Foundation, which he helped found, and currently serves on the boards of Consumer Reports and the Public Laboratory for Open Technology and Science. He is the author or editor of nine books, most recently [Civic Tech in the Global South](#) (co-edited with Tiago Peixoto) (World Bank, 2017); [A Lever and a Place to Stand: How Civic Tech Can Move the World](#) (Personal Democracy Media, 2015) and [The Big Disconnect: Why the Internet Hasn’t Transformed Politics \(Yet\)](#) (OR Books, 2014). In the spring of 2012 he was a visiting lecturer taught at Harvard’s Kennedy School where he taught “The Politics of the Internet.”

From 1997-2006, he worked closely with Public Campaign, a non-profit, non-partisan organization focused on comprehensive campaign finance reform, as its senior analyst. Prior to that, Sifry was an editor and writer with *The Nation* magazine for thirteen years. He is the author of [Wikileaks and the Age of Transparency](#) (OR Books, 2011), [Spoiling for a Fight: Third-Party Politics in America](#) (Routledge, 2002) and co-edited [The Iraq War Reader](#) (Touchstone, 2003) and [The Gulf War Reader](#) (Times Books, 1991). He also co-authored, with Nancy Watzman, [Is That a Politician in Your Pocket? Washington on \\$2 Million a Day](#) (John Wiley & Sons, 2004), on how money in politics affects people in their everyday lives. In the past he was also an adjunct professor at the Political Science Department of the City University of New York/Graduate Center, where he taught a course called “Writing Politics.” His Twitter handle is @mlsif.



Matt Stempeck

Senior Researcher, Civic Hall

Matt Stempeck is a freelancer based in Berlin. He's Senior Researcher at Civic Hall, where he curates the Civic Tech Field Guide. Matt's also a Corporate Overlord in the appropriately-named Bad Idea Factory, where he builds engagement technology for the Boston Globe and STAT News.

Previously, Matt served as Director of Civic Technology at Microsoft in New York City. In 2016, Matt led the Digital Mobilization team at Hillary for America, which included the campaign's voter registration, peer organizing, and SMS technologies and programs.

Matt became and earned a Master of Science at MIT Media Lab's Center for Civic Media. While at the Media Lab, Matt quantified global media attention to stories like Trayvon Martin's, designed a peer-to-peer humanitarian aid marketplace, and built an award-winning product to fight misinformation online. Matt also holds a BA with high honors from the University of Maryland College Park, where he wrote a thesis on the disruptive role of participatory media on political journalism.

Alistair Stoddart

Senior Participation Specialist, Committee Engagement Unit, The Scottish Parliament

Wendy Trull

Senior Advisor, NYC Civic Engagement

As Senior Advisor for the Civic Engagement Commission, Wendy Trull brings her years of experience in operations, strategic planning and budgeting to support the development and implementation of New York City's Civic Engagement Commission's (CEC) Participatory Budgeting program. She has previously worked on the roll-out of large-scale city-wide initiatives, including the expansion of Universal Pre-K and served as a Senior Advisor for the Deputy Mayor of Health and Human Services and staff member of the Young Men's Initiative, launched to address racial disparities in the educational and criminal justice systems. Prior to joining city government, she worked in the non-profit supportive housing and community development sectors. She holds a Master's Degree in Urban Policy from the New School for Social Research, and is currently completing a Disability Studies program through the City University of New York (CUNY). She lives in Bay Ridge, Brooklyn.



Christian Vanizette

Co-Founder, Makesense.org; Obama Foundation Scholar, Columbia World Projects

Christian is the Co-Founder of Makesense.org, a global network of 100,000 citizens and entrepreneurs committed to solving social and environmental issues through skilled volunteerism and rapid innovation workshops. Makesense citizens support 3,200 local initiatives tackling the Global Goals in 100 cities and 45 countries. The 80 employees of Makesense work in seven cities across five continents to scale those local initiatives by partnering with forward looking companies and governments around the world. In 2015, Makesense was a finalist in the Google Impact Challenge, an award for innovative high-potential social non-profits.

By 2030, Makesense aims to scale its global engagement to 180 million citizens; to launch a “citizen engagement pledge” where corporations, global leaders, and citizens commit to reaching the Global Goals; and to increase the impact of Makesense’s investment fund which supports community-based businesses.

Christian received his bachelor’s and master’s degrees in business innovation from the Kedge Business School in France. In 2016, Christian was named one of Forbes’ Top 30 Social Entrepreneurs Under 30 in Europe. He is also a member of the French Government’s Digital Council and an advisory board member of the Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation’s Goalkeeper Initiative.



Kitty Von Bertele

Associate, Luminate

Kitty focuses on policy, advocacy, and related grants and investments in Europe. Prior to joining Luminate, Kitty was at the UK Department for International Development, where she developed and implemented their digital strategy. Before that she worked at the Open Government Partnership. Kitty has also served in various other roles in the UK government, including Senior Policy Adviser for transparency and open data in the Cabinet Office, where she managed the team responsible for open data policy across government.



Stephanie Wade

Lead for Innovation and Design, Bloomberg Philanthropies

Stephanie Wade leads multiple innovation programs at Bloomberg Philanthropies. In this role she helps cities around the world develop and implement innovative approaches that have measurable impact on people's lives. This includes using design, data analytics, and behavioral economics to deeply understand complex problems and experiences and quickly develop and implement innovative solutions. Stephanie holds a Master's in Public Policy from Harvard University's Kennedy School of Government, a Practitioner's Certificate in Design, Design Thinking, Coaching and Facilitation from the Austin Center for Design, and a Bachelors from Boston College where she received an honors degree in Sociology and Studio Arts. She is also a contemporary photographer and artist and lives in Manhattan.



Clarence Wardell

Former Director of City Solutions, Results for America

Dr. Clarence Wardell III was formerly the Director of City Solutions at Results for America where he supported Bloomberg Philanthropies' What Works Cities Initiative. In that role, he worked with cities across the country to scale innovative solutions to their most pressing challenges and build their capacity to use data and evidence to improve outcomes for residents. Prior to joining Results for America, he was a member of the U.S. Digital Service at the Obama White House where he led strategy and product management across several of the team's projects, including those focused on criminal justice reform and human services. In that role he also designed and co-led the White House Police Data Initiative, an effort of over 130 U.S. jurisdictions aimed at using open data as a means to increase trust and engagement between law enforcement and the communities they serve. Prior to joining the U.S. Digital Service, Clarence served as a Presidential Innovation Fellow from 2014-2015. Clarence is a researcher and social entrepreneur who is passionate about using technology to increase and enhance civic engagement. Previously, Clarence was a Research Scientist with CNA Corporation's Safety & Security group, where he provided analytical support to emergency management and law enforcement organizations to improve response outcomes. Alongside his work at CNA, Clarence has developed several civic-focused software products and conducted research in the online charitable giving space. In 2012, he co-founded tinyGive, a social media-based micro-philanthropy platform that was acquired in 2016. Clarence holds a B.S.E. in Computer Engineering from the University of Michigan and a Ph.D. in Industrial and Systems Engineering from the Georgia Institute of Technology.



Alexis Wichowski

Deputy Chief Technology Officer for Innovation,
Mayor's Office of the CTO for the City of New York

Alexis Wichowski serves as Deputy Chief Technology Officer for Innovation for the City of New York and teaches on government, media, and technology at Columbia University's School of International and Public Affairs. Prior work includes the American Red Cross, the US Department of State's Office of eDiplomacy, and the Permanent Mission of the United States to the United Nations. Outside government, Wichowski has worked in media impact research, information architecture development, academic book indexing, web coding, theater production, foreign sitcoms, and pretzel vending. Her recent book, [The Information Trade: How Big Tech Conquers Countries, Challenges Our Rights & Transforms Our World](#) (Harper Collins) explores how tech companies act like countries, expanding into areas formerly the sole domain of the nation-state, such as defense, diplomacy, public infrastructure and citizen services. Wichowski holds a PhD in Information Science from the University at Albany's College of Engineering and Applied Sciences and a BA in Chinese from Connecticut College, completed in three years cum laude. She lives in Brooklyn with her family and reads science fiction voraciously.



Maia Woluchem

Technology Fellow, Civic Engagement and
Government, Ford Foundation

Maia Woluchem is a technology fellow, focusing on the intersection of technology and civil society and working in collaboration with the Civic Engagement and Government team. She recently completed her master's degree in city planning at the Massachusetts Institute of Technology. Prior to her graduate work at MIT, Maia was a researcher at the Urban Institute, where she focused on how data and technology could democratize opportunity in support of social change, with a particular emphasis on ensuring community engagement and leadership with respect to how data is used, analyzed, and collected. While at Urban, Maia also helped foster the National Neighborhood Indicators Partnership, a network working to advance the effective and equitable use of data across government, civil society groups, and academia.



Laura Wood

Special Counsel, DemocracyNYC, Office of the Mayor of New York City

Laura Wood serves as Senior Advisor and General Counsel to the Mayor's DemocracyNYC initiative, advising on election law and voting reforms. DemocracyNYC's mission is to increase voter registration and participation in New York City. Prior to this position, she spent five years as Senior Advisor and Special Counsel to the New York State Attorney General. Before that, Laura was Chief Counsel to the Democratic Conference of the New York State Senate and Policy Director to State Senator Daniel Squadron. Laura clerked for the Honorable Rebecca Pallmeyer of the U.S. District Court for the Northern District of Illinois and Julio M. Fuentes of the U.S. Court of Appeals for the Third Circuit. After clerking, she was an associate at Patterson Belknap Webb & Tyler LLP. She received her J.D. from Northwestern and her A.B. from Brown University.