

Agonistic engagement spaces: towards democratising the smart city

This workshop invites participants to engage and reflect on a methodological framework based on 'agonistic engagement spaces' (Mouffe, 2000) in the context of human-technology-city interactions in smart cities. Acknowledging the limitations of consensus-oriented approaches in enhancing urban democracy, participants will explore the role of 'agonistic engagement spaces' for diverse stakeholders to freely share conflictual values and viewpoints related to smart technology, temporarily come together and define common goals through shared struggle.

The proposed agonistic engagement space will focus on the mediating role of smart technologies in exposing practices taken for granted and hidden values. Using concrete cases of technologies (e.g., digital twin, urban sensors, so-called Corona apps/dashboards, etc), the methodological framework comprises four main elements: 1) individual awareness, to highlight individual values and viewpoints associated with a specific technology; 2) collective struggle, to tease out contrasting perspectives and frame future scenarios in which specific values and viewpoints predominate; 3) shared meaning-making, to identify key issues and opportunities related to these scenarios; and 4) collective action, to imagine ways of addressing the identified issues and realise the existing opportunities.

Participants will be invited to reflect on how agonistic engagement spaces could help to reimagine the relationships between citizens, smart technologies and the city, potentially leading to new 'social imaginaries' (Bendor, 2018) that contribute to responsible smart city practices.

We invite participants from various disciplines and fields of practice with an affinity or interest in ethical, political and societal issues associated with smart technology applications in cities.