

DIGITAL DEMOCRACY THE HAGUE

ACADEMIC TRACK: PROGRAMME & ABSTRACTS

Hosted by:

The European Digital Democracy Network (EDDY)



PARTNERS



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Session 1: European Digital Democracy Network (part I)

Thursday Oct 9th, 11h-12h30

Emma Hoes (UZH Zürich): *The Hidden Politics of Social Media: When Non-Political Influencers Shape What We Believe*

Abstract: We often assume political attitudes are shaped by political content, such as news or political campaigns and debates. But what if the most powerful political messages come from more heavily and broadly consumed sources who never explicitly mention politics at all? This talk presents findings from a large-scale experiment exploring how lifestyle influencers affect people's values and beliefs. We asked UK-based participants to follow either "tradwife" influencers—who promote traditional gender roles—or "alphamale" influencers, who emphasize discipline, dominance, and self-reliance. A third group followed entertainment accounts like @birdsonearth and @satisfying.video, which showcase relaxing bird videos and oddly satisfying clips. After six weeks, we assessed how exposure shaped political and personal values, from views on gender and family to conformity and tradition. The results challenge the line between political and apolitical content, showing how everyday social media use—especially through lifestyle content—can influence political thinking in subtle but significant ways. This study is part of a broader project on the hidden politics of social media, and invites reflection on the quiet ways our feeds shape democracy.

Luiza Jardim (People Powered): *Inclusion in Digital Participation: Affordances and Constraints*

Abstract: Digital participation platforms are increasingly central to participatory governance and the design of future digital public spaces. While questions of digital divide and unequal access remain critical, especially in the Global South, less attention has been paid to how platform design shapes who participates and how they engage. This research investigates how design choices in a large-scale digital participation platform influenced participation dynamics in Brazil's 2023 national initiative, which engaged nearly 1.5 million participants. Using Technology Affordance and Constraint Theory (TACT), we conducted a qualitative case study combining platform observation with 10 semi-structured interviews with public officials. We systematically identified perceived affordances, constraints, and their effects on participation. Findings reveal that the process was successful in attracting a large number of participants because of its virtual nature, and its mechanisms enabled participants to express their preferences so the government could analyse them. However, citizens perceived and realized actions that were not intentionally designed by the government, such as the usage of the platform to voice out corporate demands, and other affordances were actually constraining their effective participation.

Anna Mikhaylovskaya (Rijksuniversiteit Groningen): *Nurturing Virtues with Digital Democratic Innovations*

Abstract: Digital democratic innovations (DDIs) have been widely discussed as a promising way of engaging citizens in political decision-making. Extensive research has focused on designing DDIs that are deliberative, inclusive, and representative. However, little attention has been paid to DDIs' potential for nurturing individual democratic virtues. Our paper aims to address this gap. We argue that the cultivation of democratic virtues should play a more central role when it comes to digital



citizen participation. Specifically, we explore how deliberative DDIs can help participants develop virtuous qualities. Beyond providing a more participatory decision-making mechanism, DDIs should be seen as an opportunity for individuals to cultivate virtues and become better citizens. We distinguish between epistemic and moral virtues, and explore how DDIs can nurture them. To this end, we propose practical design features for DDI that could facilitate the cultivation of both epistemic and moral virtues.

Session 2: ERC Project ADDI: Advancing Digital Democratic Innovation

Thursday Oct 9th, 13h30-15h00

(<https://advancingdemocracy.eu>)

Umberto Grandi (Université Toulouse Capitole): *Overview of the ERC ADDI project*

Abstract: The ADDI project pioneers the study of digitally augmented forms of civic participation for preference formation and elicitation. The project is led by Ulle Endriss (Amsterdam, The Netherlands), Umberto Grandi (Toulouse, France), Cesar Hidalgo (Toulouse, France), and Maija Setälä (Turku, Finland), four researchers with expertise in participatory platform design, deliberative democracy, and computational social choice. The project has three core objectives: designing technologies and procedures for citizen deliberation and participation; experimentally testing the impact of digital platforms in deliberative and participatory forums; and understanding the structure of the preferences collected through digitally augmented instances of civic participation and deliberation. At the end of the project, the four researchers will have charted the potential of digital technologies in supporting and improving democratic practices, while also providing a robust suite of scientifically validated open-source tools designed to distribute these capabilities at a global scale.

Jairo Gudiño-Rosero (University of Toulouse): *Large Language Models (LLMs) as Agents for Augmented Democracy*

Abstract: We explore an augmented democracy system built on off-the-shelf large language models (LLMs) finetuned to augment data on citizens' preferences elicited over policies extracted from the government programmes of the two main candidates of Brazil's 2022 presidential election. We use a train-test cross-validation set-up to estimate the accuracy with which the LLMs predict both: a subject's individual political choices and the aggregate preferences of the full sample of participants. At the individual level, we find that LLMs predict out of sample preferences more accurately than a 'bundle rule', which would assume that citizens always vote for the proposals of the candidate aligned with their self-reported political orientation. At the population level, we show that a probabilistic sample augmented by an LLM provides a more accurate estimate of the aggregate preferences of a population than the non-augmented probabilistic sample alone. Together, these results indicate that policy preference data augmented using LLMs can capture nuances that transcend party lines and represents a promising avenue of research for data augmentation. [Joint work with Umberto Grandi and Cesar Hidalgo]



Maija Setälä (University of Turku): *LLMs in Democratic Deliberation: A Pilot Study on AI-assisted Deliberative Processes*

Abstract: Citizens' Assemblies and other deliberative mini-publics are designed to foster democratic deliberation, which means inclusive and informed discourse among equals on political matters. In this paper, we distinguish six different key functions in democratic deliberation, namely representation, perspective-taking, factual learning, co-creation, integration and decision-making. This paper shows how AI could be helpful in these key functions. In the pilot project of Citizens' Assembly on Energy, organized in Finland in winter 2025, we used LLMs to support the functions of factual learning, co-creation and integration to support the production of a written statement. Based on participant and facilitator experiences, we evaluate benefits and pitfalls of AI-assisted mini-publics and reflect on the optimal division of labor between human deliberators, facilitators and AI systems.

Session 3: Horizon Europe Project AI4Deliberation: Artificial Intelligence for Institutionalised, Multimodal, Gamified, Mass Democratic Deliberations

Thursday Oct 9th, 15h30-17h00

(<https://www.ai4dproject.eu/>)

Speakers: Sem Nouws (TU Delft) and Bram Delisse (Dembrane)

Abstract of session: Generative AI offers powerful tools – such as summarization, moderation, and content synthesis – that can help address one of the most pressing challenges in deliberative democracy: scale. But too often, the conversation around AI in democratic deliberation narrowly focuses on technological possibilities, overlooking the difficulties of meaningfully integrating AI tools into democratic practices.

In this interactive session, we focus on the role of public organisations. How can they thoughtfully adopt and institutionalise AI to support deliberation among citizens? How can AI increase participation, reflection, and scale, while staying true to the core democratic values of deliberation?

In this session, we will share early insights from our ongoing research within the AI4Deliberation project. We will focus on the integration of AI-enabled deliberation into public organisations. Most importantly, we will facilitate a deliberation session on the opportunities, challenges, and barriers of using AI in democratic deliberation.



Session 4: European Digital Democracy Network (part II)

Friday Oct 10th, 11h00-12h30

Arianna Novaro, Université Paris-1 (Panthéon-Sorbonne): *Bridging Theory and Practice in Digital Democracy: A COMSOC Perspective*

Abstract: In this talk I will present some digital tools that have been developed within the Computational Social Choice (COMSOC) community to propose desirable solutions for collective decision-making situations, such as voting and participatory budgeting. I will also discuss on some recent experiences of bridging theory and practice in digital democracy from an academic point of view.

Féline Lindeboom (Rijksuniversiteit Groningen): *Diversity in Approval-Based Committee Elections under Incomplete or Inaccurate Information*

Abstract: I will be talking about diversity in approval based committee elections. Given are a set of voters V , a set of candidates C , and a natural number k . Committee elections are elections (e.g. political) where not a single candidate, but k candidates are elected to form a winning committee W . The candidates are elected based on voter's approval votes: each voter v in V submits a ballot expressing, for each candidate c in C , whether they approve of the candidate or not. Most literature on approval based committee elections focusses on representing sets of voters proportional to their size, i.e. large and sufficiently 'cohesive' groups of voters get more representation on the committee. Instead of proportional representation, we will consider diverse representation of voters. One well known definition of diversity (called the Chamberlin-Courant rule) in the approval based committee election literature, requires representing as many voters as possible by at least one candidate in the committee. One could also look at diversity in terms of defining as many sufficiently cohesive groups of voters as possible, in a similar sense as proportional representation does. In the talk, I argue why diverse representation is important, and discuss some ways of defining diversity in approval based committee election settings. We compare the measures by axiomatic analysis and computational (time) complexity.

Jos van Leeuwen (Haagse Hogeschool): *Online deliberation and the opportunities and challenges of generative AI.*

Abstract: *Public Dialogues* is an online platform for deliberation, developed for citizens who take part in participation projects initiated by municipalities, as well as for those involved in citizen-led initiatives, such as addressing challenges in the energy transition or solving local community problems. The platform supports deliberation by offering a range of tools that help participants work productively and creatively. These include a shared library for documents, a chat function for discussion, and tools for brainstorming, analysing topics, exchanging arguments, categorising and prioritising ideas, polling, planning, and co-writing. The platform is already being used in practice, but development continues with a focus on adding smarter forms of support. In this presentation, we discuss the opportunities that generative AI now provides, and the key questions and design challenges that arise when integrating such technology into a process of deliberation that is meant to remain fundamentally human.



Session 5: Horizon Europe Project PERYCLES: Participatory Democracy that Scales

Friday Oct 10th, 13h30-15h00

(<https://perycles-project.eu/>)

Davide Grossi (Rijksuniversiteit Groningen): *Overview of the Perycles project*

Abstract: The PERYCLES project develops methodologies and tools for an evidence-based and normatively principled design of digital democracy solutions to support large-scale democratic deliberation. In this session, we will present an overview of the project and some of its early findings.

Elise Rouméas (Rijksuniversiteit Groningen): *Promoting Compromise through Institutional Design. The Case of Digital Democratic Innovations*

Abstract: Deliberation has been central to the literature on digital democratic innovations (DDIs) and citizen participation, while the ideal of compromise has been largely overlooked. Yet, compromise—understood as a reciprocal exchange of concessions—is crucial for resolving disagreements. This paper argues that institutional design can promote compromise and takes DDIs as an example. Specifically, we contend that DDIs have the potential to enhance both the spirit of compromise and the practice of concession-making. Our argument unfolds as follows: First, we claim that compromise should be seen as a decision-making practice with distinctive procedural qualities. Next, we argue that institutional design can do more than make compromise a necessity; it can foster a compromising mindset, as well as assist concession-making. Finally, we introduce DDIs as novel institutions that can promote compromise in these two ways.

Andreas Nitsche and Axel Kistner (FlexiGuided, Association for Interactive Democracy): *LiquidFeedback: Democratic Self-Governance at Scale*

Abstract: LiquidFeedback has become a widely recognized reference point for digital democracy. This session explores how the platform enables transparent, inclusive, and scalable decision-making through structured online deliberation and transitive proxy empowerment—commonly known as *liquid democracy*. Combining practical insight with a research-based perspective, the talk highlights one of the most advanced implementations of liquid democracy to date.

How can large groups engage in meaningful debate without moderator intervention? How can a platform prevent domination by vocal minorities, hate speech, or low-effort comments—while still ensuring that dissenting voices are heard and minority positions fairly represented? The talk examines how LiquidFeedback addresses these challenges through its process architecture and the use of preference aggregation algorithms.

Grounded in current research, the session will delve into the dynamics of influence in transitive delegation systems and the emergence of adaptive representation patterns. It will explain how delegation power is naturally regulated, preventing the unchecked accumulation of influence while preserving the principle of *one person, one vote*.

The talk will also present LiquidFeedback's perspective on the responsible use of AI in democratic contexts, with a particular focus on process reproducibility and the auditability of AI-assisted mechanisms.

Finally, the talk will outline how organizations can get involved in the PERYCLES project and make use of liquid democracy to empower their members in the governance of their own affairs.



Session 6: Horizon Europe Project Innovade: Innovative Democracy Through Digitalization (INNOVADE Living Labs | INNOVADE)

Friday Oct 10th, 15h30-17h00

Speakers: Fatih Yilmaz (Beyond the Horizon ISSG), Joel Museba (Paderborn University), Laurien Coenen (KU Leuven)

Panel discussion on “Digital Democracy and Policy-Making” with INNOVADE project members, moderated by PERCYCLES project members

Abstract of session: The panel will introduce the INNOVADE – “Innovative Democracy Through Digitalization” (innovade-democracy.eu), a Horizon Europe project that examines how digital technologies can strengthen democratic systems across Europe and beyond. The project has just finalised its Interdisciplinary Knowledge Base on Digital Democracy – a comprehensive resource that synthesises state-of-the-art research, typologies, and case studies on how democracy is mediated through digital technologies (<https://zenodo.org/records/17098355>). The knowledge base does not stop at mapping concepts: every chapter concludes with policy recommendations designed to support more inclusive, transparent, and accountable digital democratic practices.

The session will begin with a general introduction to the INNOVADE project and its newly published knowledge base, highlighting how the report addresses five central aspects of digital democracy: deliberative democracy in the public sphere, online participation, open governance, digital activism, and e-voting. It will also situate these dimensions within broader global trends such as digital exclusion, misinformation, privacy and cybersecurity risks, and the rise of authoritarianism. The discussion will emphasise how digital democracy is not only about technology, but about creating enabling institutions, policy frameworks, and socio-cultural environments that empower citizens.

Following the introduction, each speaker will present insights from their own contribution to the knowledge base, offering a deep dive into specific **dimensions of digital democracy**. Joel Museba (Paderborn University) will focus on online participation, presenting the model of participatory (digital) democracy and outlining its constituent elements: e-ownership, e-activism, e-engagement, and e-communities). Laurien Coenen (KU Leuven) will address open governance, examining how transparency, accountability, and stakeholder collaboration can be embedded in digital-era decision-making processes. Fatih Yilmaz (Beyond the Horizon ISSG) will explore **global trends shaping digital democracy** with a focus on foreign interference and disinformation, and outline corresponding policy responses.

Together, the panel will move from theory to practice: how can these insights help policymakers, institutions, and civil society actors foster resilient digital democracies? What policy and technological innovations are needed to protect citizens’ rights, encourage meaningful participation, and prevent democratic backsliding in the digital age?

By engaging with the report’s findings and recommendations, the session will invite the audience into a broader reflection on the future of digital democracy in Europe and beyond – its promises, risks, and the shared responsibility of ensuring that technology serves democracy, not undermines it.