

# AI, Authoritarianism, and Democratic Resilience in Cities

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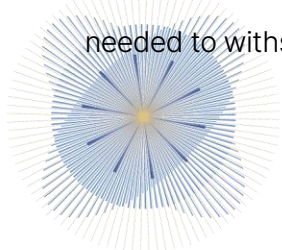
## Background

The digital transformation of cities constitutes one of the most decisive challenges for the future of rights, local democracy, and international cooperation. Artificial Intelligence (AI) has established itself as a central infrastructure of contemporary urban governance. Algorithmic systems increasingly guide territorial planning, public service management, the real estate market, urban security, and resource allocation. Far from being neutral, AI functions as a political technology developed and controlled by a limited number of major economic and technological actors.

Cities are rapidly transitioning from "Smart Cities," which facilitate functions governed by human institutions, to "Autonomous Cities" capable of self-management through AI-driven "City Brains." This transformation profoundly affects governance, transparency, democratic participation, the right to the city, privacy, non-discrimination, and equitable access to services.

Simultaneously, the international context is marked by the crisis of multilateral cooperation, the proliferation of armed conflicts, increasing privatization of digital infrastructures, and the weakening of international bodies in favor of governance architectures shaped by large technology corporations. For human rights cities, the central question is: how can democratic resilience be strengthened so that AI governance remains consistent with human rights, local democracy, and peace—preventing digital transformation from becoming a vector of exclusion, authoritarianism, and conflict?

The session addresses the structural link between Artificial Intelligence, urban authoritarianism, and human rights, moving beyond a technocratic view of digital transformation. Through a resilience lens, it shifts the focus from identifying threats to building the institutional, civic, and normative capacities needed to withstand and recover from the erosion of democratic governance by AI-driven systems.



## Objectives

1. Critically analyze how AI use can undermine fundamental rights—including the right to city housing, participation, privacy, non-discrimination, and access to services—while identifying resilience strategies.
2. Examine the relationship between AI and emerging forms of urban and digital authoritarianism, assessing how democratic institutions can build adaptive resilience.
3. Strengthen human rights as a binding normative framework for AI governance through resilient regulatory and policy approaches.
4. Promote the role of residents as active agents of civic oversight, building community resilience against algorithmic exclusion and data extraction.
5. Highlight the role of cities as key actors in safeguarding local democracy, peace, and multi-polar international cooperation.
6. Share best practices, tools, and strategies for resilient, democratic, and responsible governance of urban AI.

## Main Agenda

1. Examine how AI-driven urban governance models affect democratic institutions, human rights, peace, and multi-polar cooperation.
2. Analyze the transition from Smart Cities to Autonomous Cities and its implications for transparency, participation, and the right to the city.
3. Discuss institutional, regulatory, and civic strategies for strengthening democratic resilience through human-rights-based AI governance.
4. Facilitate a multi-stakeholder dialogue among cities, civil society, academia, and international organizations to develop operational recommendations for resilient and responsible urban AI governance.

