



Summary – Webinar cycle

RESPONSIBLE AND INCLUSIVE DIGITAL TERRITORIES

2024

Cooperation project for responsible and inclusive digital territories.
Completed as part of the call for turnkey projects, launched by the Delegation for Local Authorities and Civil Society (DCTCIV) of the French Ministry of Europe and Foreign Affairs.



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 Égalité
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Editorial

Digital technology has deeply changed our relationship with the world and redefined our societies. The COVID-19 pandemic highlighted how much our daily lives and habits rely on digital tools. This digital shift offers considerable opportunities, notably digital rights, facilitating access to education, employment, and services, and enabling to integrate into an increasingly connected society. It also paves the way for promising economic innovations. However, this transformation also comes with new divides and exclusions. Inequalities are widening between those who have access to networks and affordable equipment, and those who don't. People's ability to use and master digital tools varies, creating disparities not only between individuals but also between men and women, urban and rural areas, and between the Global North and South

In Europe and France, a criticism has been raised of the concept of the smart city, which is often approached from a technology-focused perspective. The real challenges of digital technology in cities and regions are cultural, social, and political, and technology needs to find its "rightful place" within these contexts. The new guidelines offer a chance to create common frameworks for more responsible digital tech, which is chosen rather than imposed, supports ecological transitions, and builds trust.

These guidelines give new meaning to the idea of the smart city. Inclusion and ecological transition are local issues, and local authorities, whether cities or regions, play a crucial role in the digital transformation. Being close to the citizens, they handle everyday urban policies. To do this effectively, local authorities need legitimacy and resources, and they must rely on strong national digital strategies and legislation. In our globalized world, digital transition, data protection, data governance, regulation, and economic innovation are international issues. These require clear benchmarks and frameworks to ensure fair rules.

Through these discussions, we want to explore and question multi-level and multi-stakeholder digital governance. Everyone has a role to play in making digital technologies a real driver of empowerment and well-being for all.

Brigitte Bariol-Mathais

General Delegate of the French Network of Urban Planning Agencies (Fnau)

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Introduction

The French Ministry of Europe and Foreign Affairs launched a turnkey projects call for proposals, to which the Fnau answered with a "Inclusive and Responsible Digital" project, aimed at supporting decentralized cooperation for French local authorities and their international partners interested in promoting a more inclusive and responsible digital environment.

Fnau, with support from French and African local authorities, has launched an exchange program as a platform for peer-to-peer learning, cross-perspectives, and recommendations on the role of local authorities in implementing digital policies.

This initiative involves four French local authorities (Eurometropole of Strasbourg, Grand Est Region, Bordeaux Metropole, Urban Community of Dunkirk) and three African local authorities (the cities of Sèmè-Podji in Benin, of Bizerte in Tunisia, and L'Oriental region in Morocco), in partnership with the association "The interconnected".

The project aims to:

- Foster exchanges and cooperation between French and African authorities on issues related to inclusive and responsible digital practices.
- Identify needs and seek contributions from local authorities towards the "people-centered smart cities" guidelines proposed by France at the UN-Habitat General Assembly in June 2023.

The project builds upon the ASToN (Africa Smart Towns Network) initiative, supported financially by the AFD, which convened ten francophone and anglophone African cities for South-South peer collaborations on concrete digital projects (mobility, consultation, taxation, etc.) It also extends the efforts initiated during the Strasbourg Conference in February 2022, organized by the Ministry of Europe and Foreign Affairs, the Grand Est Region, and the Fnau, contributing to the UN-Habitat flagship program "People-focused smart-cities" program launched at the Abu Dhabi FUM in 2020.

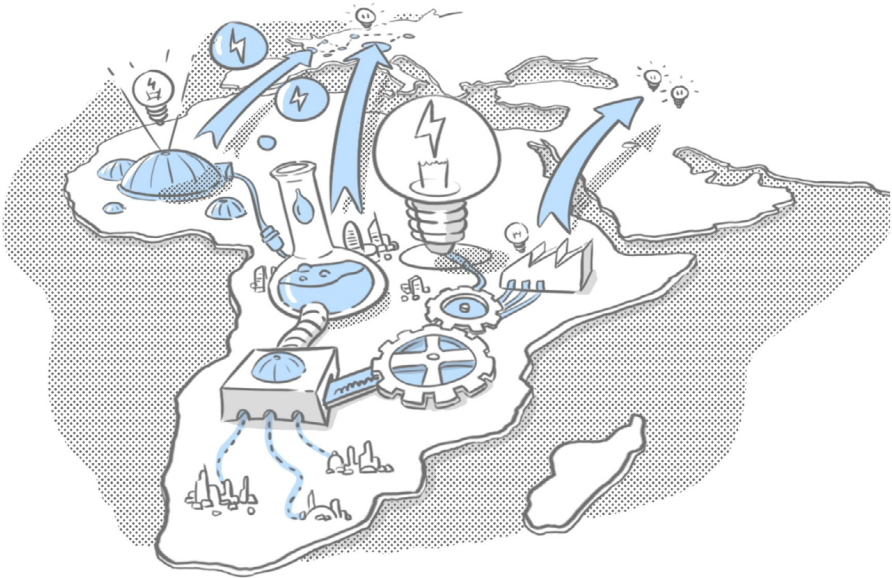
"People-Centered Smart Cities" Guidelines

During the UN-Habitat General Assembly in June 2023, France proposed a resolution to create "people-centered smart cities" guidelines, with support from other member states. These guidelines, which will be presented at the UN-Habitat General Assembly in June 2025, are intended as a non-binding legal framework to help the implementation of the New Urban Agenda and the Sustainable Development Goals.

To assist UN-Habitat in drafting these guidelines, a group of about thirty experts nominated by member states has been appointed. Among them are two French experts: Caroline Zorn, Vice-President of the Eurometropolis of Strasbourg, and Brigitte Bariol-Mathais, General Delegate of the Fnau.

The expert group meets monthly to work on the guidelines, with additional regional consultations taking place.

On March 17-18, 2024, France hosted the first in-person meeting of the expert group. This event was organized in partnership with UN-Habitat and hosted by the Eurometropolis of Strasbourg, the Grand Est Region, and the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, with help from the Fnau.

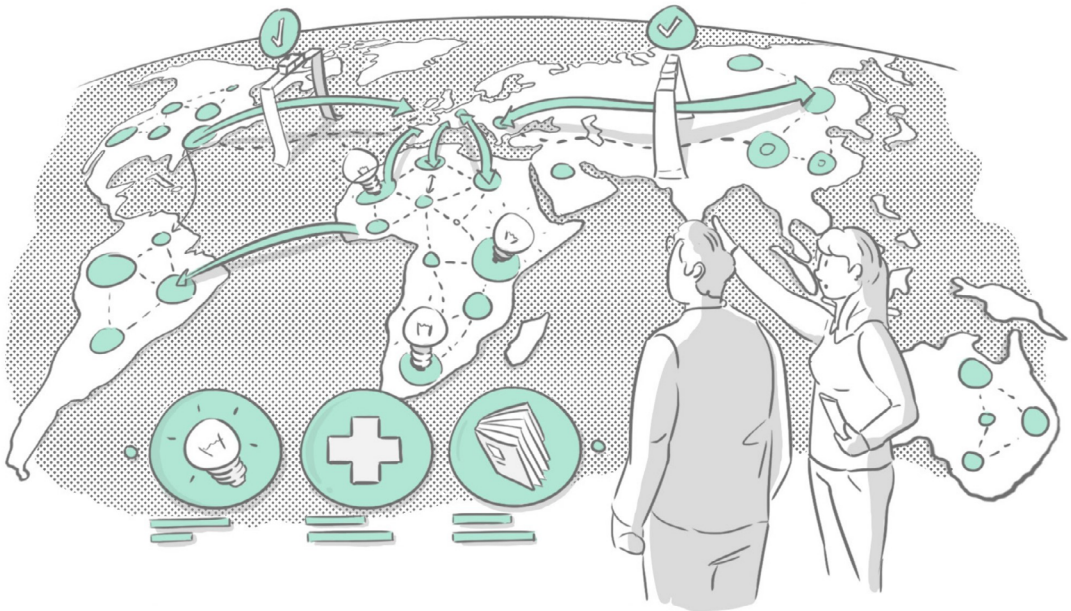


The Contribution of This Group

This project, designed as a "mirror group," aims to highlight the crucial role of local authorities in promoting digital inclusion and sustainable development. It stands out for its commitment to starting from local needs, analyzing demands, and finding tailored digital solutions to provide simple, accessible responses for all territories

The Delegation for Local Authorities and Civil Society (DCTCIV) of the French Ministry of Europe and Foreign Affairs

The DCTCIV defines and implements the strategy to support decentralized cooperation through project calls and geographic parity funds. This strategy is carried out in coordination with various partners: facilitating dialogue with local authorities and their associations, organizing working groups to promote a shared approach, and developing partnerships, particularly with operators.



Fnau (Project Coordinator)

The French Network of Urban Planning Agencies (Fnau) is an association that oversees a network of 51 public urban planning agencies across France. Fnau constitutes both a network of elected officials, who govern these urban planning agencies, and a network of urban policy professionals. Its mission is to promote, capitalize on, and disseminate innovative territorial policies while actively contributing to national and international debates.

Internationally, Fnau participates in advocacy at global events and discussions on urban issues and fosters exchanges and decentralized cooperation on urban and territorial strategies.

Fnau coordinates the project by organizing the work program, webinars, and events, as well as handling methodology, synthesizing expertise, and contributions.

French Local Authorities Involved in the Project

- The Eurometropole of Strasbourg
- The Grand Est Region
- Bordeaux Metropole
- The Urban Community of Dunkirk

These local authorities engage elected officials and/or technicians to participate in webinars and events, share their expertise, contribute to advocacy efforts, and involve their decentralized cooperation partners.

African Local Authorities Involved in the Project

- The city of Sèmè-Podji in Benin
- The city of Bizerte in Tunisia
- The Oriental Region in Morocco

These authorities mobilize elected officials and/or technicians from the ASToN network to participate in webinars and events, share their expertise, contribute to advocacy efforts, and strengthen or establish cooperation with French local authorities.

The Interconnected, the Network of Innovative Territories

Founded in 2009, The Interconnected is the first French association of local authorities dedicated to digital issues. It embodies an expertise platform and a toolbox for digital innovation in territories. Its activities include working groups and publishing studies or advocacy pieces. The association collaborates with the Fnau to produce expertise and prepare events and contributions.

THEME 1 - PHYSICAL ACCESS TO DIGITAL TECHNOLOGY AND BASIC SERVICES

Universal access to digital technologies has become a crucial resource for bridging social and territorial divides. The potential of digital technology is vast, particularly in essential areas such as access to public, administrative, financial, and remote medical services, online education, and telework. The increased use of digital tools paves the way for instant urban management, transcending geographical and administrative boundaries by enabling real-time information dissemination and reducing response times.

However, the COVID-19 pandemic has highlighted existing social and territorial divides, exacerbating persistent inequalities. Socio-economic barriers prevent some individuals from accessing digital equipment (computers, smartphones), reinforcing existing inequalities and limiting their full participation in the benefits of digital technology. Similarly, inequalities in access to both fixed and mobile internet connections hinder many communities from fully leveraging online services. A reliable and affordable connection is essential for integrating all populations into current digital dynamics, especially in Africa, where mobile phones are key drivers of digital engagement. As many physical services become increasingly digitized, there is a rise in associated costs and a widening gap in digital skills. The elimination of physical services has thus highlighted the challenges some populations face in using digital tools due to digital illiteracy.

Some territories, particularly informal settlements, are often excluded from urban strategies due to their specific characteristics. Digital tools can enable these areas to participate in urban dynamics by providing a more comprehensive representation of urban planning, facilitating decision-making. Digital technology offers tools to overcome obstacles in essential sectors (water, sanitation, energy, transport, waste management). From the necessity of accessing urban infrastructure and services (energy and digital) to the availability of affordable digital equipment, including in informal areas, and the emergence of shared spaces and Fablabs, digital technology is a powerful lever for promoting social inclusion and enhancing equal access for all.

Digital Portraits


France




Tunisia


 **7%** of the population have neither a smartphone nor an internet connection at home

 **22%** of the population do not have a computer at home.

 **48%** of the population experience some form of difficulty that prevents them from making full use of digital tools and the Internet

 **52%** of the population have a computer, and 70% have a smartphone

 **21%** of the population do not use the internet at all

 **72%** of people who don't use the internet do so because they are unfamiliar with these tools

Collective challenges

1) **Affordable and accessible infrastructures:** Establishing high-quality, accessible, reliable, and affordable infrastructures is crucial for integrating all populations, especially in underserved regions. The key prerequisite, however, is energy independence

2) **Interoperable and neutral technologies:** Promoting interoperable and neutral technologies is essential for ensuring universal access to digital tools. This approach prevents technological dependencies and ensures that systems and services can operate seamlessly together, eliminating new barriers to access.

3) **Local resource spaces:** Creating accessible resource spaces, such as community hubs and fab labs, is vital. These spaces should offer more than just digital access; they should support the development of applications tailored to local needs, designed by and for the communities they serve.

4) **Local authorities as essential players in digital projects:** Local authorities, being close to citizens, can develop initiatives that address local specificities and diverse needs. They must have the necessary resources and legitimacy to lead these projects, supported by robust national digital strategies.

Recommendations

1) **Make sure digital infrastructure is reliable and available** at an affordable cost, enabling as many people as possible to benefit from connectivity and digital services.

2) **Keep and promote physical access** to public and essential services alongside digital solutions, ensuring that persons who have difficulties with digital technologies can still access the services they need.

3) **Set up and maintain dedicated spaces** for digital access and support, such as resource centers and digital hubs, to assist citizens in using technology and developing their digital skills.

4) **Promote access to second-hand digital equipment**, like computers and smartphones, to provide affordable and sustainable solutions for persons and communities with limited resources.

5) **Establish rigorous monitoring** and evaluation processes for digital services to ensure their effectiveness, equity, and ability to meet the needs of all users, identifying and addressing any gaps.

Localized action

Dunkirk and its "numériguide" as an universal tool dedicated to inhabitants

Frederic Tourneur, Open data and Smart City manager, Urban Community of Dunkirk

"Digital technology is not a magic wand; developed by taking into account the needs of local residents and local projects, it can be a tool for emancipation and fostering social cohesion."

Context

The city of Dunkirk, with its 86,000 inhabitants, is distinguished by its industrial-port character and has a good digital infrastructure, in particular the widespread use of fibre optics. The majority of the population is made up of blue-collar and white-collar workers.

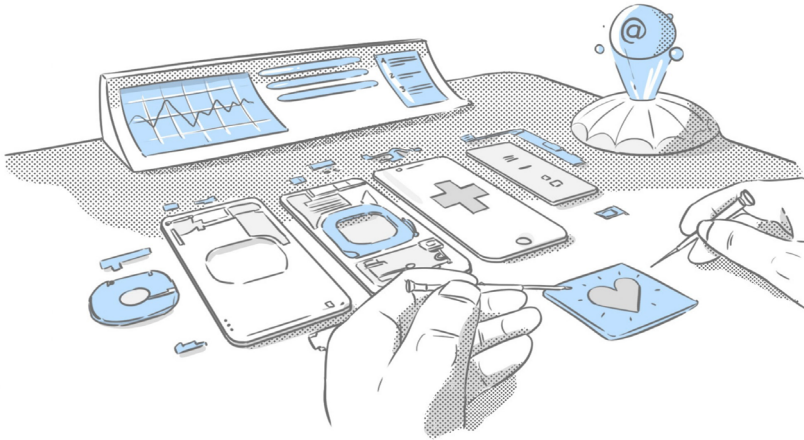
In order to meet the needs of local residents and support dematerialization, the Communal Center of Social Action of Dunkirk created a questionnaire in 2022 to gather users needs. The results showed that the people were not aware of the digital support available, but also that people felt powerless in the face of dematerialization, a phenomenon accelerated by the COVID crisis. Faced with this common observation of a lack of clarity in the local digital offer, the Communal Center of Social Action has mobilised all the local partners involved in digital inclusion (Urban Community of Dunkirk, associations, connected social centers, etc.), to co-build a response to this feeling of abandonment.

The Numériguide, a universal tool for local residents

By focusing on the needs of the population, the partners have tried to plug the gaps in the knowledge of local residents. To reach as many residents as possible, it is essential to identify the most appropriate communication channels (one-week events with the town's associations and neighbourhood centres, reception desks in town halls, senior citizens' centres) with, if necessary, awareness-raising opportunities in popular public spaces (markets, school exits). The result is a document, based on the needs of local residents, that answers their questions.

Framework and strategy

In France, the 2018 ELAN law (Evolution of Housing, Urban Planning and Digital) has worked to facilitate the deployment of networks with local authorities, property owners and operators. In addition, the multi-annual digital accessibility plan, which has been made compulsory for public entities, aims to plan the gradual compliance of their websites and mobile applications with accessibility standards. This plan, drawn up over three years, details the actions to be taken to improve the accessibility of digital services, forming a structured framework to ensure that citizens, including those with disabilities, can fully access online services.



Emmaüs Connect's initiative for access to reconditioned equipment

Emmaüs Connect responded to a call for expressions of interest from the Dunkirk Urban Community for digital equipment reuse schemes to address the issues of digital inclusion and affordable access to equipment for vulnerable groups.

Structuring a regional digital re-use network, with a triple impact:

1. Raising awareness among businesses and local authorities of the importance of solidarity-based re-use by seeking out sources of equipment from local players.
2. Working with social integration organizations to recondition devices and help them develop their business.
3. Distribute the devices through local solidarity networks at solidarity prices to target the public in need.

How can local authorities be involved?

1. Develop a solidarity equipment offer in your area (identify needs to get the area into action)
2. Contribute to the solidarity sector by donating digital equipment (raise awareness of good practice among staff, etc.)
3. Develop equipment processing activities (strengthen actions: collection methods, support for the creation of companies, etc.)

E-payment in Bizerte: between e-construction, virtual citizen space and budget resource management

Wiem Amri, IS Manager, Bizerte municipality

Framework and strategy

In Tunisia, the Tunisia Digital National Strategic Plan 2021-2025 (worth around €9 billion euros) has been developed along 3 lines: Guaranteeing social inclusion and reducing the digital divide (democratization of equipment, dissemination of information, etc.); Strengthening digital culture by generalizing the use of digital tools in school curricula; Moving towards transparent, efficient, equitable e-Administration at the service of citizens. Although this is a national strategy, it also proposes digital solutions for local authorities.

Contexte

Bizerte is a municipality in the far north of Tunisia (140,000 inhabitants on 40,000 hectares). The population is concentrated in the north, with expanding rural areas in the south. Citizens are not using online payment solutions for public services (lack of digitalized public services, accessible payment methods and public confidence in e-payment).

The three main components of the e-payment project

1) Change management

Supporting local authorities by working with administrative staff (training, support with digital transformation, testing and co-design workshops, etc.)

2) Citizen and business approach

Understanding the needs and behaviour of civil society in order to better inform, raise awareness and train them.

3) Technical development of 3 services

- Citizen Spaces (EC 2.0): carry out and monitor municipal administrative procedures online. However, face-to-face counters will still be available for training and support in using the platform.
- Electronic payment of municipal taxes (e-payment) enables individuals to pay municipal taxes electronically.
- Management of Budgetary Resources (GRB 2.0): digitising all processes relating to the management of local authority budgetary resources.

To ensure the security of user data, the platform is hosted in a state-approved public center.

Perspective on Third Places

The HubCités Project (Togo) by Senamé Koffi Agbodjinou, architect

The "HubCités" project does not aim to create new cities; rather, it seeks to infuse existing urban areas with technology, enabling the population to reclaim their space and promote awareness of the common good and collective action. This is achieved through the establishment of a network of small, local agora-factories that span the city.

These open spaces invite residents to leverage digital technologies and existing data to develop projects addressing local issues. Ideas and proposals generated are cataloged by HubCités and made available to municipalities for their use.

This adaptable system, which began as a maker-space for technological democracy, has evolved into an open space that functions as a community center, coworking space, incubator for innovative enterprises, and startup hub for young Togolese entrepreneurs.

New Places and New Connections Program (France) by ANCT

The "New Places, New Connections" program by ANCT (French National Agency for Territorial Cohesion) aims to stimulate the creation and development of third places across France. The program's goal is to weave a network of these multifunctional spaces throughout the country, helping them diversify their revenue streams by addressing local needs with public interest services, promoting the professionalization and organization of third place networks, and involving public and private partners by providing them with common tools and frameworks for intervention.

La Quincaillerie in Guéret, Creuse, serves as an example of a digital third place—an accessible space between home and work where everyone can utilize the available tools. Located in one of France's least populated departments with the highest average age, La Quincaillerie might seem atypical, but it could be a model to follow. In these low-density regions, digital solidarity spaces are multiplying, playing a crucial role in revitalizing local areas.

Testimonies

Making data accessible for better access to basic services

Bri le Anderson, Environmental Economist at the OECD's Sahel and West Africa Club

Given the lack of digital access in African contexts, identifying existing data that can be accessed free of charge is a first lever for local authorities. The MAPTA-Climate project combines spatial data on green spaces, pollution, infrastructure networks and urban forms for almost 7,200 urban areas in 54 countries. This data is helping to improve understanding of functional environmental realities, and to identify current and future vulnerabilities as well as levers for action to bring about transformative change in African urban areas.

How can urban expansion be monitored?

To help you make informed decisions and facilitate access to essential services, there are tools (Africapolis, GHS Built up surface, World Settlement Footprint) that allow you to visualise the evolution of urbanisation.

Where are the buildings located?

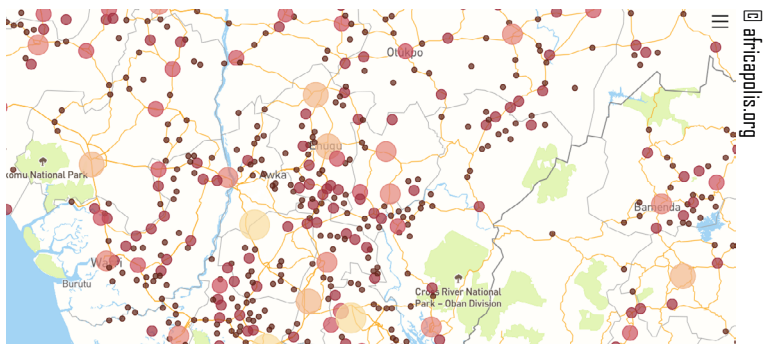
For an objective representation of urban planning, Google has teamed up with Artificial Intelligence (Open Buildings, Building Footprints) to map the coordinates of each building with its footprint and the size of the building.

Are services accessible to the public on foot?

Specific tools, such as City Access Map, use data from Open Street Map to estimate walking times to services, particularly health facilities.

Which areas will be flooded?

There are other free tools (Coastal Risk Screening Tool) that show which areas will be flooded by looking at the number of metres or by year in the future. The aim is to understand which services could become difficult to access and which areas will be at risk as a result of climate change.



Innovation and Inclusion at the service of informal Neighborhoods: using digital technology as a lever for social transformation, Médard Agbayazon's approach.

Luc Gnacadja, (GPS-Dev) former Minister of the Environment and Urban Planning of Benin

Urban informalities play a central role in the dynamics of urbanisation in Africa, profoundly influencing the configuration and functioning of the continent's cities. Yet these essential contributions are often overlooked or underestimated, primarily due to a persistent stigma and a lack of in-depth data and research on informal settlements. This lack of knowledge hampers the development of inclusive policies and limits public investments, thereby compromising the sustainable development of African cities.

For urbanisation in Africa to bear its fruit, it is necessary to recognise and make the most of the benefits of urban informality, by adopting a co-construction approach with local stakeholders and residents. Having access to digital technology can play a crucial role in this transformation, an objective that Médard Agbayazon is striving to achieve through his various initiatives.

I discovered Mr Agbayazon through his many ventures into the use of digital technology to enhance territorial intelligence and promote participatory urban planning and governance. This Beninese social entrepreneur gave concrete shape to his commitment by founding BloLab in 2015, a technological innovation hub that brings together a FabLab, a code school (École 229), and a support centre for innovative entrepreneurship.

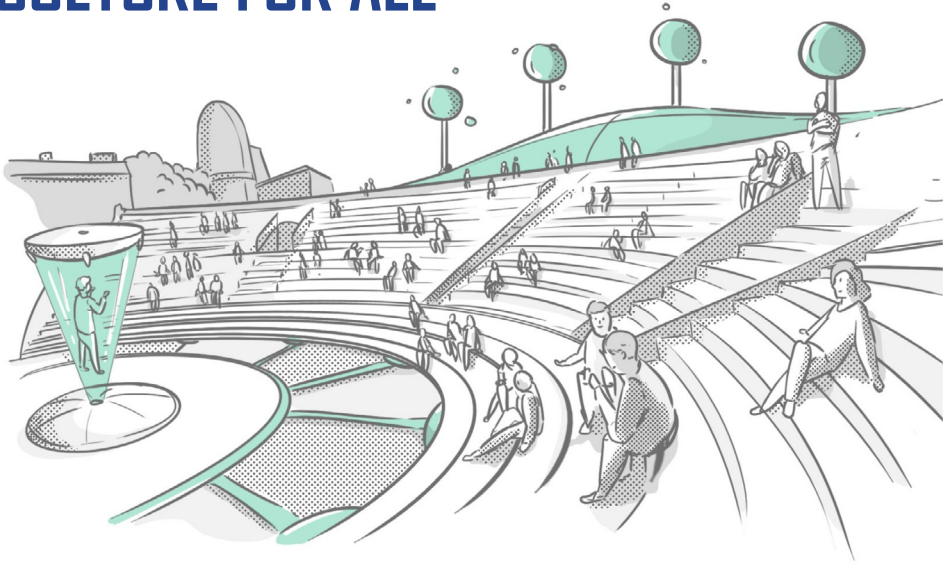
One of BloLab's flagship projects, MAP & Jerry, was developed in the then marginalized Ladji district of Cotonou. The project aimed to resolve two major concerns: insalubrity caused by poor waste management, and the neighborhood's lack of representation on official maps. Thanks to a participatory approach, residents were able to map their neighborhood, improve waste management and reclaim public space. Today, Ladji is one of Cotonou's best-mapped neighborhoods, with residents now digitally literate and actively involved in transforming their environment.

The Precious Plastic project is another commendable initiative that focuses on recycling plastic waste into filaments for 3D printing. It enables young people from informal settlements to enhance their digital manufacturing skills while contributing to the reduction of plastic waste. Precious Plastic is a perfect example of how digital technology can transform an environmental issue into an opportunity.

Last but not least, the BloChallenge is a national hackathon organized annually by BloLab. This event has enabled a wide range of talents to develop innovative responses to urban challenges, such as a citizen platform for reporting infrastructure malfunctions to municipal authorities, and an app for ensuring that construction is carried out within aedificandi boundaries.

Médard Agbayazon's experience with BloLab demonstrates that digital technology is much more than just a tool for innovation. It can be used as a catalyst for social transformation, enhancing the value of urban informalities, and improving the living conditions of local residents in the long run.

THEME 2 - DIGITAL RIGHTS AND CULTURE FOR ALL



In an increasingly connected and ever-evolving world, digital inclusion has become a critical priority to ensure equal opportunities and enable all citizens to participate in shaping our cities. This session is dedicated to promoting a citizen-centered digital transition, with a focus on digital inclusion, education, and training to foster a shared digital culture.

This transition involves more than just access to digital infrastructure; it encompasses new rights for individuals and the rethinking of policies to guarantee equitable access to digital resources and opportunities for everyone. The objective is clear: digital inclusion is a collective responsibility aimed at bridging social and territorial divides by ensuring digital rights, providing support through education and training, and combating digital illiteracy.

Citizens must be empowered to understand and control their personal data and the mechanisms that govern the digital world. Cultivating a digital culture is essential to ensure responsible and informed use of technology, while also promoting the autonomy and empowerment of individuals in an increasingly digitalized environment.

The citizen-centered digital transition aims to create an environment where everyone, regardless of their social or geographical background, can fully participate in shaping their city and secure their digital rights.

Keynote Statement : Fundamental Digital Rights and Rights in the Digital Age

Digital rights are vital in ensuring access to traditional fundamental rights, such as freedom of expression and the right to privacy, which are protected by the European Convention on Human Rights. The digital realm transforms our perception of humanity, particularly using personal data and technologies like digital twins, which are utilized for both cities and individuals.

However, there are no universal data sets that apply to everyone, and narratives around smart cities are often biased, reflecting visions from developed countries with limited perspectives. This non-inclusive and sometimes ableist narrative underscores the need for better representation and broader inclusion in the digital sector.

1. Digital Technology as a Means of Accessing Fundamental Rights

To fully exercise rights like freedom of expression, internet access is indispensable. This requires functional digital devices, access to a reliable and neutral network, and accessible information tailored to varying skill levels and people with disabilities.

2. Protecting Digital Entities Emanating from Individuals

Online rights and obligations should be equivalent to those in the physical world. Personal data deserve stringent protection, comparable to the protection of individuals' physical, bodily, and psychological integrity. These digital entities, reflecting people's lives, highlight the urgency of establishing a right to digital integrity: the right to a secure online existence, the right to live offline, the right to refuse automated algorithm-based decisions, and the right to access systems that process our data, always respecting the primacy of consent.

The General Data Protection Regulation (GDPR) safeguards personal data, but everything that impacts the construction of territories must also be auditable.

There is a true paradox in recognizing "digital rights." The creation of laws requires time and reflection, while the digital realm evolves at a rapid pace. In this context, it is imperative that the law be responsive and quickly adapt to changes in the digital society to ensure user protection. The key lies in drafting rules that safeguard enduring values and objectives, rather than regulations based on rapidly obsolete technologies.

Caroline Zorn
Vice-president of the Strasbourg Eurometropolis

Digital Portraits

France



15% of the over-15s (excluding Mayotte) are in situation of illectronism

33h is the average number of hours French people spend in front of a screen every week

50M is the number of French people who use social networks, i.e. 3 out of 4 French people

50% of French workers say they feel 'over-connected'

Benin



34% of Benin's population used the internet in 2024, i.e. 4.3M

60% of Beninese over the age of 15 have basic digital skills

60% of Benin's population is covered by the 3G network

72% of Benin's population (27 million) use social networks.

Morocco

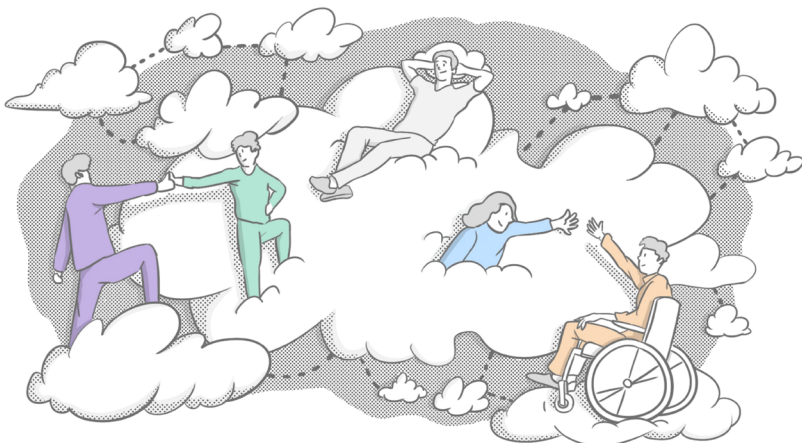


84% of the Moroccan population will use the internet by 2023, i.e. 31M

1MM (billion) of dollars has been invested in the Maroc Digital 2025 strategy

98% of Morocco's surface is covered by the 4G network

80% of the Moroccan population uses social networks, i.e. 30M



Collective Challenges

1) **Equitable Access to Digital Infrastructure:** Populations, particularly those in rural or marginalized areas, do not have equal access to quality digital services, exacerbating disparities in access to information and online services.

2) **Digital Illiteracy and Skill Development:** Digital illiteracy, characterized by difficulties or inability to use digital tools, affects a significant portion of the population, particularly the most vulnerable groups. Initiatives are needed to provide tailored training to enhance digital skills and promote digital inclusion for all.

3) **Protection of Citizens' Digital Rights:** Just as in the physical realm, it is crucial to protect personal data, ensure online privacy, and guarantee the respect of citizens' rights in the digital sphere.

4) **Adapted Political Framework and Regulation for Digital Issues:** In the face of ongoing digital transformation, it is essential to develop public policies and regulations that are adapted to these changes. These should not only encourage innovation but also ensure citizen protection and establish a digital environment that is ethical, equitable, and secure.

Recommendations

1) **Take inspiration from models** such as "42 school," which promotes autonomous, accessible, and collaborative learning for all users.

2) **Preserve data integrity** by adopting stringent security standards, raising user awareness of best practices in digital security, and reinforcing regulations.

3) **Ensure that digital rights access is guaranteed** for every individual as a universal service.

4) **Integrate digital education into school** curricula from an early age and raise citizen awareness about the importance of ethical digital practices.

5) **Implement digital initiatives** like the ASToN network to share best practices, encourage local innovation, and create synergies among stakeholders.

Localized action

Sèmè Podji in Benin: the ASToN project as a lever for digital inclusion through changes to the land tenure system

Farid Salako, Digital Projects Coordinator for the town of Sèmè Podji

"Let's Work Together for Accessible, Equitable, and Sustainable Technologies."

National Framework and Strategy

In Benin, the 2018 Digital Act is part of the broader framework of the 2016 Sectoral Policy Declaration on the Digital Economy, which defines 6 priority projects to stimulate digital development. The government has launched concrete initiatives, such as the Universal Access to ICT project, with the installation of digital centres in 4 under-equipped rural areas. On the legal front, 2 major laws have been passed to unify the operations of the digital sector in Benin.

Context

Implementation of the National Public Services Portal for online requests, citizen participation (platform for interaction with the authorities), addressing, land ownership, extension of broadband and ultra-broadband (2000 km of fiber optic cable).

Initially, the ASToN project in Sèmè Podji tackled the issue of illectronism by modernising land tenure systems. The municipality had set itself the objective of guaranteeing title to property 'to whom it may concern' in order to reassure citizens and thus reduce conflicts, using digital technology. A communication strategy was developed through public sessions and radio broadcasts to explain to stakeholders the advantages that digital technology offers in processing and securing land applications. Today, the local authority has collected 80% of the data directly from citizens.

In order to improve the uptake of Sèmè-Podji's land e-services platform, the municipality plans to develop training and awareness-raising programs (demonstration workshops and technical assistance) dedicated to the proper use of land e-services for stakeholders. In addition, it intends to extend the community digital points (PNC) to provide more Internet access. Faced with economic barriers, in particular a limited municipal budget, Sèmè Podji is putting in place appropriate pricing policies, including reduced rates and even free subscriptions for disadvantaged groups.

© Sèmè-Podji, Benin



© ASToN, Kigali (Rwanda)



The Urban Planning Agency of Oujda (AUO) in the Oriental Region of Morocco and its Strategy for Digitizing Urban Services for the Benefit of Citizens and Local Stakeholders

Said EL HEBIL, Director of the Urban Agency of Oujda

"Moving from digitally invasive to digitally inclusive services"

National Framework and Strategy

The Morocco Digital 2025 plan aims to combine infrastructure development, digital skills enhancement, and the digitization of public services. Its goal is to democratize access to digital technology and its benefits for the entire Moroccan population. The legal framework is also evolving to protect fundamental citizen rights in the digital sphere, such as privacy, human dignity, and security, while ensuring access to information and non-discrimination.

Today, our fight for inclusive digital access mirrors the battle against illiteracy. It is our duty to embrace this digital culture, instill it in our mindset, and impart it to our collaborators while implementing appropriate change management. Thus, the Oriental region supports the digitization of services to facilitate administrative processes, utilize data effectively, and aim to reduce digital disparities and consolidate the principle of equal opportunities, particularly through training.

- **Rokhas Platform:** End-to-end processing of urban and economic authorization requests through a smooth, traceable, and transparent digital management system, from the submission and online processing of the request to its electronic signature by the relevant municipality's president.
- **Urban Planning Geoportal:** The official entry point for accessing open-source urban planning data for citizens, professionals, administrations, and investors, as well as for online requests for information notes.
- **AUO E-services:** Implementation of a range of online services by the Urban Agency of Oujda for the benefit of citizens and investors, including information notes, inquiries, project pre-assessment, electronic payments, and appointment scheduling.

Bienvenue sur le portail

Rokhas Analytics

La plateforme nationale de référence en matière de données ouvertes et données partagées relatives aux autorisations à caractères territoriale, Rokhas Analytics vous permet d'accéder à un large panel de données statistiques, indicateurs de performance et tableaux de bords riches et interactifs.



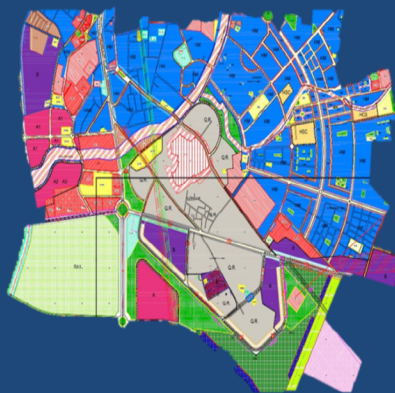
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Géoportail national

Point d'accès unique à toute la donnée urbanistique

Mot clé

En quelques clics, accédez instantanément à l'ensemble des documents d'urbanisme de tout le Royaume !



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The Eurometropolis of Strasbourg and its Week of Responsible Digital Education

Jacqueline Haessig, Head of the Innovation and Digital Transformation Department
Djelali Hedjerassi, Director of Digital and Information Systems for the Strasbourg Eurometropolis

National Framework and Strategy

In France, the REEN law (Reducing the Environmental Footprint of Digital Technology) and the "France Digital Together" roadmap represent significant improvements. The REEN law, adopted in November 2021, introduces several measures aimed at balancing digital access with environmental responsibility. It mandates incorporating awareness of the environmental impact of digital tools and promoting digital sobriety within school curricula. The "France Digital Together" roadmap outlines a renewed collective ambition for inclusive, accessible, and sustainable digital technology, by mobilizing all public and private stakeholders around operational commitments at the territorial level.

Context

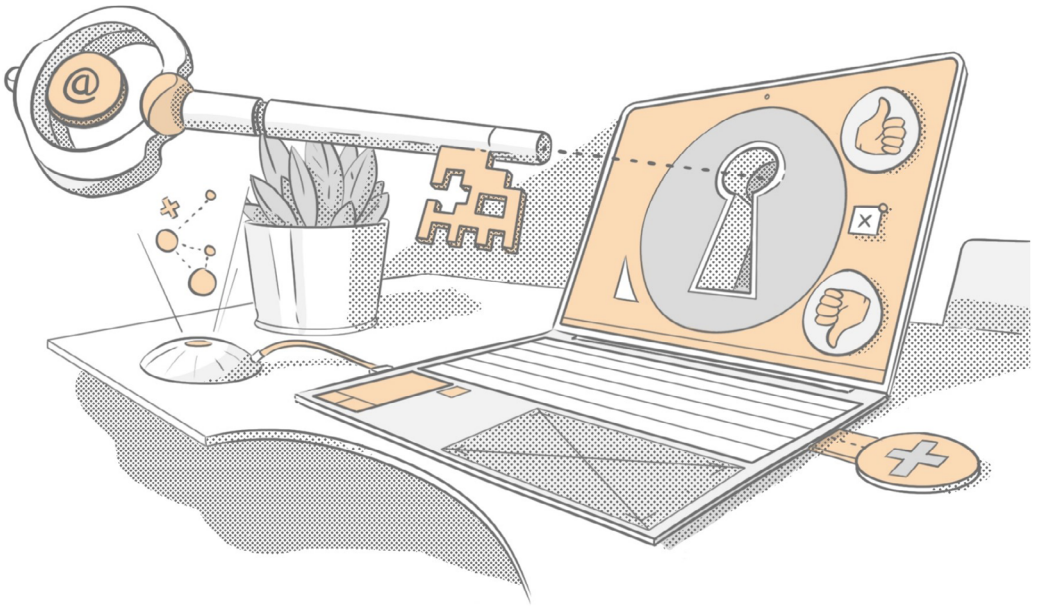
The European Week of Responsible Digital Technology is aimed to educate citizens on digital issues and to highlight the commitments of the city of Strasbourg and the Eurometropolis across three key areas:

- **Digital Sobriety:** Transform digital services to minimize their environmental impact and support ecological transition.
- **Digital Solidarity:** Foster a supportive, inclusive, adaptable, and accessible digital environment that enhances users' digital autonomy.
- **Digital Freedoms:** Establish a secure digital environment that prioritizes the quality and responsible use of data.

Through various interventions and workshops, the aim is to address access inequalities and issues related to the disclosure of personal information, thereby recognizing the risks associated with improper digital usage.

The GDPR

The General Data Protection Regulation (GDPR) has profoundly transformed the way in which Europe's local and regional authorities manage and protect citizens' personal data. To comply, French town halls, departments and regions have had to review their internal procedures, train their staff and appoint a data protection officer. In particular, the GDPR requires them to keep a detailed register of their data processing, to put in place appropriate security measures and to respect the rights of the people concerned, such as the right of access or the right to erasure. Beyond compliance with the law, the protection of personal data has become a major factor in building trust between local authorities and their citizens as local public services become increasingly digitised.



Testimonies

Breaking Boundaries with 42 Mulhouse: Empowering Access to Digital Skills

Caroline Porot, Director of 42 Mulhouse Grand Est

"No transformation without training"

In 2013, with a vision of inclusivity, the founders of 42 Mulhouse foresaw a future that would require extensive digital skills beyond traditional education, particularly aiming to increase female representation in digital professions, where they are underrepresented. Today, 42 Mulhouse is part of a network of 54 campuses worldwide dedicated to facilitating access to computer science education for everyone.

The initiative aims to remove barriers, notably financial, as the education is tuition-free, funded by public or private sources. Open to individuals of all educational backgrounds and ages, it welcomes beginners and provides round-the-clock access. The pedagogy emphasizes autonomy and peer-to-peer learning, supported by 160 computer stations. This environment brings together students and professionals seeking career transitions, fostering a dynamic and collaborative atmosphere. The goal is to ensure maximum employability through globally recognized, high-quality training that promotes rapid skill development focused on collaboration, adaptability, and resilience.

In collaboration with 42 Paris, Benguéir hosts Ecole 1337, applying the same principles but catering specifically to young Moroccans and Sub-Saharan Africans, offering an environment conducive to innovation and peer learning for future-proof careers.



The Interconnected Manifesto, to tackle the urgent problem of illectronism

Céline Colucci, General Delegate of The Interconnected

The manifesto aims to highlight the collective urgency of bridging the digital divide and combating illectronism, particularly in relation to the challenges of access to rights for those who are not digitally literate. It stresses the crucial importance of popular digital education in ensuring that everyone can benefit from digital advances. By promoting an overhaul of public service, this manifesto proposes to strengthen the digital skills of people across the territory, with a particular emphasis on promoting digital democracy.

To correct the shortcomings of the national digital inclusion policy, it identifies three major lines of action:

- A precise diagnosis and mapping of the players involved to coordinate efforts at all levels
- Sustainable local funding to enable the development of long-term programmes and ensure greater continuity in initiatives
- Collaborative governance between the various stakeholders at local level.

A crucial concept to consider is that of 'chosen digital'. Today, the injunction to use digital technology is omnipresent in all aspects of daily life. This compulsory use of digital technology can exacerbate existing inequalities. However, it can also offer emancipating opportunities.

les
interconnectés

MANIFESTE

**AGIR FACE A L'URGENCE
DE L'ILLETRONISME**

© The Interconnected

THEME 3 - MASTERING YOUR TERRITORY'S DATA

Controlling territorial data is a major challenge for local authorities, where the management and use of information are essential to optimising public policies and sustainable territorial development. The data collected, whether environmental, demographic or infrastructure-related, has become a strategic resource for local authorities. Not only can they be used to manage and monitor public services, they can also be used to understand and anticipate regional dynamics, to organise and develop spatial planning, and to communicate transparently with citizens.

Technological tools such as digital twins and Building Information Modeling (BIM) offer advanced possibilities for the visualisation and simulation of local data, although their high cost remains an obstacle for many local authorities. These technologies make it possible to model structures or entire territories in 3D, facilitating the planning and management of urban development projects. However, these tools may be superfluous given the needs of developers, who could rely on existing frugal solutions such as 2D maps, which are adapted to their needs and often under-exploited.

Collaboration between public and private stakeholders, and the introduction of digital charters, are essential to establish a climate of trust and ensure transparent, shared governance of data. In addition, exemplary initiatives such as the use of artificial intelligence in Nantes to reduce food waste in school canteens demonstrate the positive impact that intelligent, forward-looking data management can have on public policy.

Managing local and regional data requires an integrated and collaborative approach, involving a wide range of stakeholders and technologies. The aim is not only to improve the management of existing data, but also to develop a long-term vision for the use of this information to promote sustainable development and citizens' quality of life.

France



716

local authorities have opened their data to the public, out of the 4,500 obliged to do so



3/5

3 out of 5 companies say they use advanced analytical processing techniques



60%

of intermunicipal authorities with more than 100,000 inhabitants have opened up their data to the public



54M

is the the number of visits to the data.gouv.fr platform in one year, representing 153 million downloaded resources

Collective challenges

1) **Data availability:** The availability of data is often limited by issues of ownership and access rights, hampering its sharing and use by different stakeholders. Categorisation (open source, public, private, crowdsourcing) is not identical in all territories, bringing the open-data culture to the fore.

2) **Structuring and relevance of data:** data is often heterogeneous, poorly updated and used in a variety of ways, making it difficult and ineffective to use it to support informed decision-making. However, data quality alone is not enough; it is interpretation that is the keystone of a data culture.

3) **Data security and reliability:** not always guaranteed, the significant risks in terms of confidentiality, integrity and availability can undermine confidence in data and lead to misuse.

4) **Internal Data Culture:** the internal data culture is often underdeveloped in many organisations, limiting the ability to add value to data and integrate it into decision-making processes.

5) **Availability of tools for stakeholders:** the tools available for analysing and managing data are not always accessible or adapted to the needs of the various stakeholders, thus limiting their ability to make effective use of the data.

Recommendations

1) **Ensure data management** that prioritises reliability, traceability and transparency in order to strengthen the confidence of users and decision-makers in the information used for decision-making.

2) **Establish precise objectives** for the use of data, adapting technological and methodological tools according to specific needs and expected results.

3) **Promote and provide a framework** for local data resulting from public contracts, using soft law such as charters or specific data clauses to provide a framework for the use of data and guarantee its ethical and responsible management.

4) **Encourage cross-disciplinary cooperation** between public services, private companies and citizens to improve the management and use of data.

Localized action

French national framework and strategy

In France, the Law for a Digital Republic, adopted in 2016, laid the foundations for a public data service focused on making reference data available. Many territories have also committed to developing local public data services, illustrating their desire to play an active role in this field. In the field of geographic information, the 2015 NOTRe law strengthened the powers of the regions, recognising them as being appropriate for effectively pooling and disseminating this data.

Bordeaux Métropole and its 'data' card game as a communication tool

The aim within the city's departments is to promote the dissemination and enhancement of data by giving it a shared purpose. To achieve this, an card game has been designed in-house to assess the digital maturity of the various departments and enable each participant to position themselves in relation to their digital skills. The principle of this card game is simple: participants have to associate a 'digital skills' card with a 'level of acquisition' card.

During meetings between department heads, the game creates interaction between partners and raises awareness on the importance of data sharing, as well as the use of tools designed for that purpose. The eventual aim is to improve the organization of services, diversify internal roles and ensure that data is of high quality, reusable and easily disseminated. Through this approach, participants are invited to go beyond the confines of their department and take on an active role in building a public data heritage.



© Gabriel Dos Santos - Bordeaux Metropolis

RésO Villes, gaining a better understanding of the challenges facing underprivileged neighbourhoods, 'Data & Neighbourhoods' Civiéo 2022

Observation: when analyzing the high-priority districts in the city (QPV) it is difficult to access quality data to represent the reality on the ground.

The 'Data and Neighbourhood' experiment being conducted from 2019 to 2022 has highlighted this problem. The report 'For an Act II of sensible neighborhood policy' by the Ministry responsible for cities, published in April 2022, denounced the lack of necessary data and stressed the need to 'lift the veil of ignorance' that hangs over knowledge of neighbourhoods. The main issues identified include the scale of public data, access to private data, and the skills and tools available to stakeholders.

Proposals: In addition to the recommendations arising from the experiment, the commission is proposing 'to make data science a tool for territorial knowledge and the territorialisation of public policies for the benefit of neighbourhoods' and recommending 'to include data clauses in future city contracts'.

The aim is to make data accessible and operating at local level, enabling urban policy players to gain a better understanding of local situations, monitor them more effectively and objectify them on a neighbourhood-by-neighbourhood basis,

A governance challenge: data clauses must be added to each city contract in order to build genuine 'data partnerships' and ensure that the data produced is relevant. Particular attention must be paid to 'private data of general interest', which is often held by companies, from production to availability, right from the initial clause.

European Data Act

The European Data Act, which came into effect on 11 January 2024, provides a legislative framework that introduces new concepts likely to influence local and regional data management strategies in the future. This regulation, which complements the Data Governance Act, includes data altruism, where individuals and organisations voluntarily share their data for public interest purposes. The Act places particular emphasis on the fair distribution of the value of data, thereby promoting the creation of a single data market. Although the European text is mainly aimed at the field of industrial data, the mission notes that some local authorities are interested in positioning themselves as data intermediaries (link between producers and users), particularly in connection with data-sharing platform initiatives or even common data spaces. Finally, the Data Act allows public authorities to access certain private sector data for purposes of general interest, subject to specific terms and conditions. These include responding to public emergencies such as natural disasters. It will be fully applicable from September 2025, marking a key stage in Europe's digital transformation.

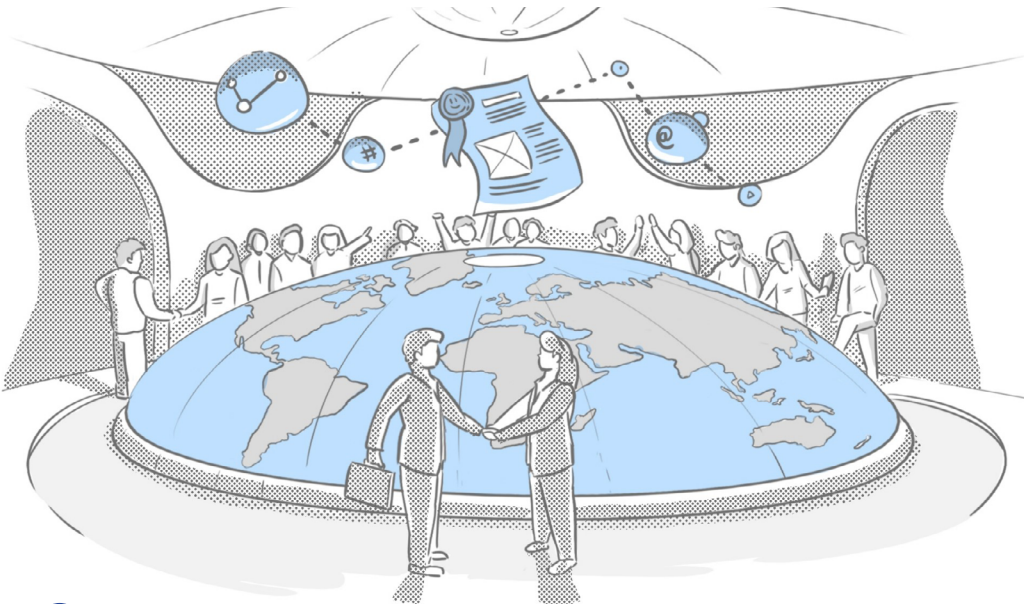
Testimonies

The Guide to Territorial Data Charters - AIMF / The Interconnected

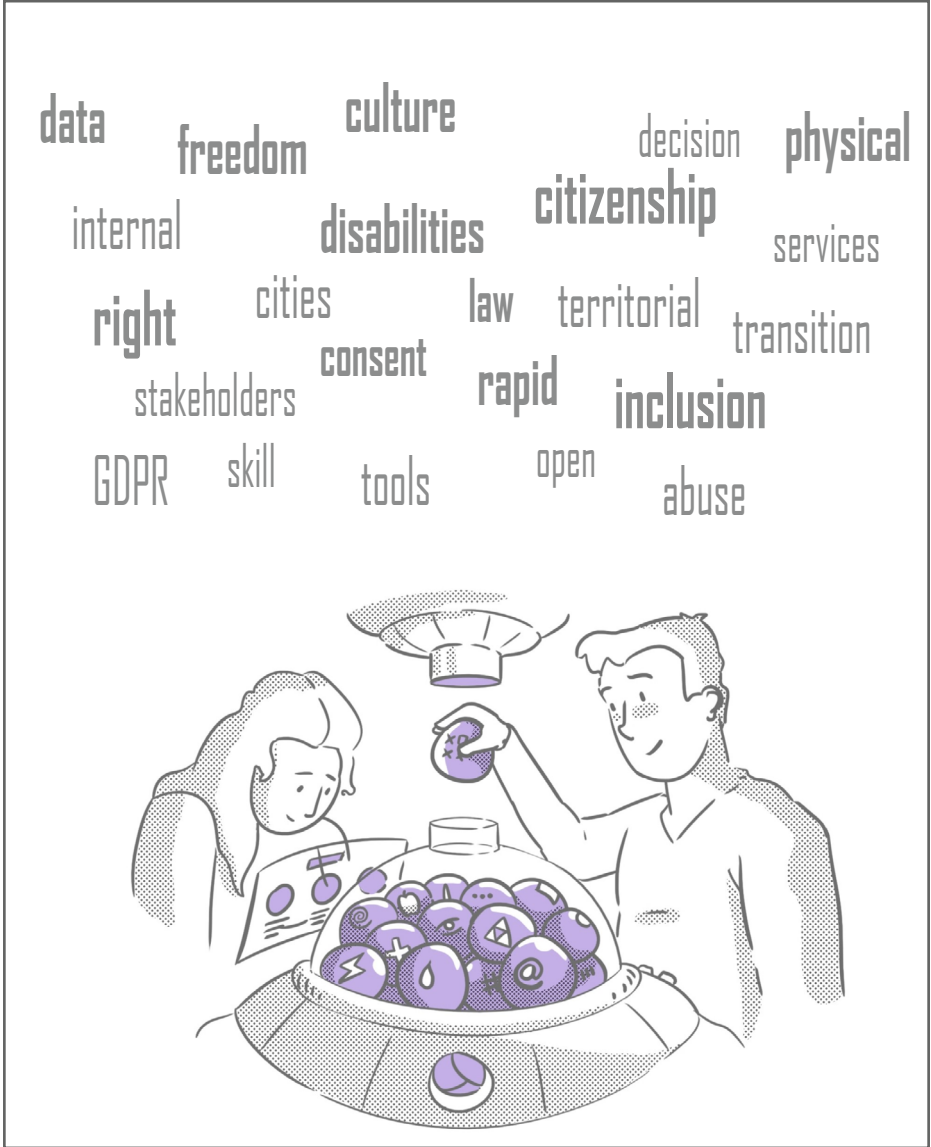
Frédéric Vallier, General Delegate of the International Association of Francophone Mayors (AIMF) and Céline Colucci, General Delegate of The Interconnected

The introduction of charters raises the importance of clarifying the framework for the governance of data of territorial interest. These charters make it possible to create a climate of trust between several stakeholders, so that they can work together on fair and beneficial regulations. The charter can be seen as 'soft law'. It is not law in the true sense of the word, but rather an incentive. It is effective insofar as everyone can benefit from it.

In the late 2010s, cities such as Montreal, London and Nantes paved the way by publishing territorial data charters, attracting the interest of French and French-speaking local authorities who were wondering about their usefulness and content. In response, The interconnected and the International Association of Francophone Mayors (AIMF) have been exploring this issue since 2021 through working groups. This guide, intended for all French-speaking local authorities, aims to clarify what a territorial data charter is, to provide a common basis for its implementation adapted to the specific needs of each territory, and to share the lessons learned from the experiences of the pioneers. The point of internationalising this approach is to begin to build a community of cities committed to the ethical use of data.



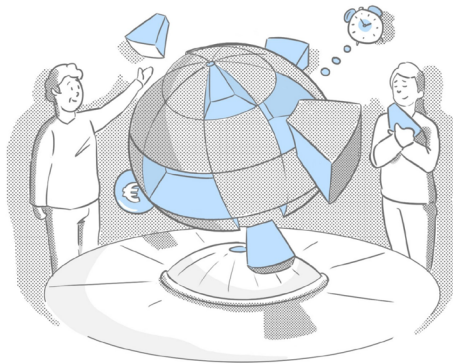
Conclusion



This 'Turnkey' project is a follow-up of the ASToN (Africa Smart Towns Network) initiative, financially supported by AFD, which has brought together a dozen French- and English-speaking African towns for South-South peer-to-peer cooperation on concrete digital projects for cooperation between local authorities.

It also follows on from the Strasbourg Conference organised in February 2022 by the Ministry of Europe and Foreign Affairs, the Grand Est region and the Fnuu to discuss with international experts the work carried out under the UN Habitat flagship programme 'people-focused smart cities'.

The aim of the project is to promote exchanges and areas of cooperation between French and African local authorities on the challenges of inclusive and responsible digital development, and to identify the needs and make contributions of local authorities to the 'people-centered smart cities' guidelines process launched in June 2025 by UN-Habitat.



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