

ENGAGE.EU Winter School “Cultural Perspectives on Sustainability”

Workshop title:

Who Gets Recommended? Digital Platforms, AI Biases and Sustainable Urban Life

Lecturer + Status & affiliation:

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Workshop description:

This four-hour workshop examines the digital dimensions of sustainability in urban contexts through the lens of AI and digital platforms. Participants explore how access, inclusion and participation in cities are shaped by algorithmic systems, particularly group recommender systems, using Vienna as a living laboratory. This exploration considers the implications of this for SDG 11. The session connects current research in Human-AI interaction to tangible urban applications, equipping participants with the analytical tools to critically evaluate AI biases, ethical challenges and the tension between algorithmic efficiency and human agency.

Learning objectives:

By the end of the session, participants will be able to:

- explain how AI-based recommendation systems function and how they shape urban life
- identify and critically assess forms of algorithmic bias and their implications for inclusion and sustainability
- analyse the ethical dimensions of AI use in public urban governance, with reference to the EU AI Act and the Vienna AI Strategy
- apply a structured analytical framework to a real-world urban AI application articulate an informed personal position on responsible AI use in cities.

Content:

- Recommender systems in the city: how group recommenders shape urban life
- Algorithmic bias: exclusion, ethics and regulation of public urban AI (EU AI Act)
- Human-AI group decision: algorithm aversion/appreciation

Input/examples:

- Mapping exercise: everyday platforms on a sustainability matrix
- Vienna cases: WienBot, Wien gibt Raum und BRISE (digital building permits)
- Role-play: city council decision on AI-supported social housing allocation

Duration: 4 hours

number of students: 15-25 bachelor's students