



AI & Democracy: Launch of “Democratic Commons”

The first global research program to build AI in service of Democracy

- *Make.org, Sciences Po, Sorbonne University, and the CNRS are launching the first global program for research, experimentation, and deployment of open-source generative AI solutions in service of democracy.*
- *At a time when democracies are weakened by informational warfare surrounding elections, it is urgent to invest in a trusted sphere through mastered AI.*
- *This project has attracted the world’s leading experts in ethical AI: Hugging Face, Mozilla.ai, Aspen Institute, Project Liberty Institute, and Genci.*
- *It is supervised by a Scientific Supervisory Board representing top global institutions: Berkman Klein Center, Harvard, Yale, OECD, EHESS, CNRS, Columbia, Sorbonne University, Omidyar Network, and Inria.*
- *The initiative is supported by « the Digital Commons » program of France 2030 and Bpifrance, which is funding the project to the tune of 6 million euros*

Marina Ferrari, Secretary of State for the Digital Affairs *"France defends an open, fair and responsible approach to AI. This is the purpose of the projects we launched for the "Digital Commons" on artificial intelligence. I'm delighted to announce the winners today, including the 'Democratic Commons' project launched by Make.org with Sciences Po, Sorbonne University and the CNRS, which will provide solutions for assessing and correcting bias in AI systems to ensure their responsible use in democratic processes."*

Paris - May 24, 2024 - Make.org, Sciences Po, Sorbonne University, and the CNRS announce the launch of the "Democratic Commons" research program. This project aims to harness the potential of generative AI to preserve and strengthen the foundations of democracy in a world facing an unprecedented crisis of institutional trust and escalating informational warfare.

In response to current challenges, the "Democratic Commons" program will bring together over 50 researchers and engineers over a two-year period. Its primary objective is to develop and share a social science scientific framework for determining democratic principles applied to AI, a model for evaluating the biases of large language models (LLMs) against these principles, debiased LLMs, and citizen participation platforms that adhere to these principles.

This unprecedented multidisciplinary approach combines advanced expertise in data science with in-depth knowledge of social sciences. It is supported by five leading partners in ethical AI: Hugging Face, Aspen Institute, Mozilla.ai, Project Liberty Institute, and Genci.

To ensure the quality and relevance of the work, a Scientific Supervisory Board has been established, bringing together international luminaries such as Yochai Benkler (Berkman Klein Center / Harvard), Hélène Landemore (Yale), Karine Perset (OECD.ai), Asma Mhalla (EHESS/CNRS - Columbia), Raja Chatila (Sorbonne University), Michelle Barsa (Omidyar Network), and Djamé Seddah (Inria).

This initiative is what we should have done 20 years ago regarding social media: harness their best features while ensuring they do not undermine democracy. In the future, thanks to the "Democratic Commons" program, **all states and cities worldwide will have free access to an artificial intelligence that adheres to democratic principles.**

Axel Dauchez and Alicia Combaz, Founders of Make.org : *"The increasing electoral abstention reflects a deep crisis of trust in democratic institutions. This distrust is exacerbated by the rise of global conflicts fueling an informational warfare aimed at destabilizing democracy, and the emergence of*

generative AI, which amplifies their means of action. In this context, it was a priority for Make.org to invest heavily in building AI in service of democracy."

Antoine Petit, CEO of CNRS : *"The generative AI and large language models is revolutionizing a wide range of sectors, from justice and education to healthcare and the cultural industries. Anticipating the impacts of these technologies on society – and in particular on the exercise of citizenship in digital spaces – has become urgent. The CNRS brings to this project complementary expertise in computer science, political science and language science. This multi-disciplinary perspective is key to provide answers to the many scientific challenges posed by the study of the biases of generative AI and the control of their possible impacts".*

Nathalie Drach-Temam, President of Sorbonne University : *"Sorbonne University demonstrates once again with "Democratic commons" the excellence of its research for a more democratic and safer AI. This project is all the more fundamental in view of the forthcoming European elections."*

Jean-Philippe Cointet, Director Institut Libre des Transformation Numériques de Sciences Po : *"At a time when AI is putting the democratic principles of our societies to the test, the humanities and social sciences have a decisive role to play in understanding and analyzing digital transformations. As a world-class research university, Sciences Po has the ambition to decipher and provide concrete answers to major contemporary issues. That's why our institution, one of the first universities to set up a free Institute for Digital Transformations, is committed to developing these Democratic Commons, in partnership with the computer scientists who develop these technologies, and by observing in situ the uses they generate."*

Paul-François Fournier, Executive VP in charge of innovation - Bpifrance : *"Artificial intelligence has the potential to positively revolutionize the constructive engagement of citizens in public life, by reducing the obstacles to their participation. Trust and transparency are essential to its development, and to its inevitable appropriation by all stakeholders. We are delighted to support this global research program, which will enable us to identify democratic biases qualitatively and quantitatively, correct AI models and guide the virtuous development of these future models by making the results available in open-source format."*

About Sorbonne University:

Sorbonne University is a world-class, multidisciplinary, research-intensive university covering the humanities, health, science and engineering. Anchored in the heart of Paris and with a regional presence, Sorbonne University has 55,000 students, 7,300 teaching and research staff, and over a hundred laboratories. Sorbonne University's ambition is to become a leader in the deeptech field, notably through its Cité de l'Innovation project. Alongside its partners in the Sorbonne University Alliance, and via its institutes and multidisciplinary initiatives, it conducts and programs research and education activities to strengthen its collective contribution to the challenges of three major transitions: a global approach to health (One Health), resources for a sustainable planet (One Earth), and changing societies, languages and cultures (One Humanity). Sorbonne University is also a member of 4EU+ Alliance, an innovative model for European universities that develops strategic international partnerships and promotes the openness of its community to the rest of the world.
<https://www.sorbonne-universite.fr/en> <https://scai.sorbonne-universite.fr/>

Press Contacts

Katherine Tyrka – Sorbonne University
01 44 27 51 05
katherine.tyrka@sorbonne-universite.fr

Alyssa Perrott – Sorbonne University
01 44 27 47 01
alyssa.perrott@sorbonne-universite.fr

Sibylle de Villeneuve - Agence Raoul
06 45 29 58 57
sibylle@agenceraoul.com

Alexandre Costes - Agence Raoul
06 72 71 97 98
alexandre@agenceraoul.com