

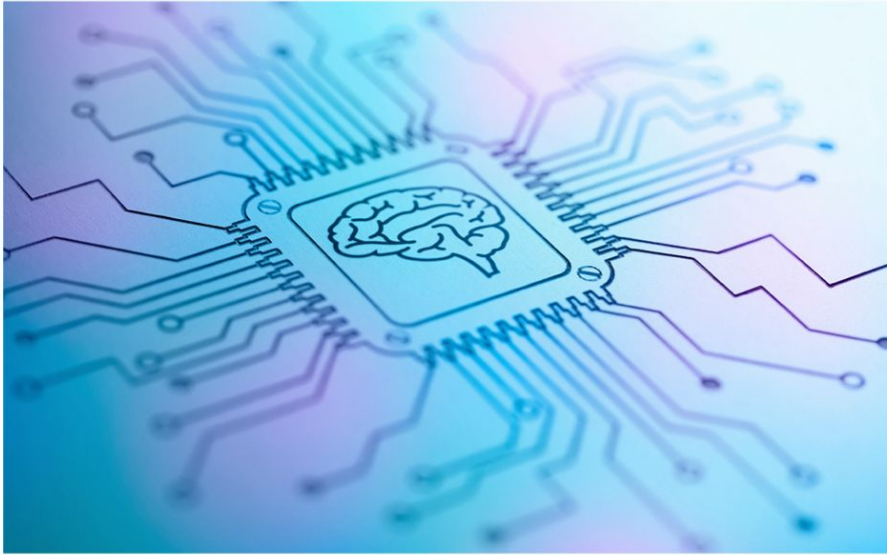
Artificial Intelligence in Participatory Planning

Early Reflections on Impacts and Ethical Challenges

Plan Canada Webinar | Summer 2025 | Technology

Artificial Intelligence: Its potential and ethics in the practice of public participation

A Research Paper by the International Association for Public Participation Canada



A computer chip with a brain in the center to represent artificial intelligence.

Written by:

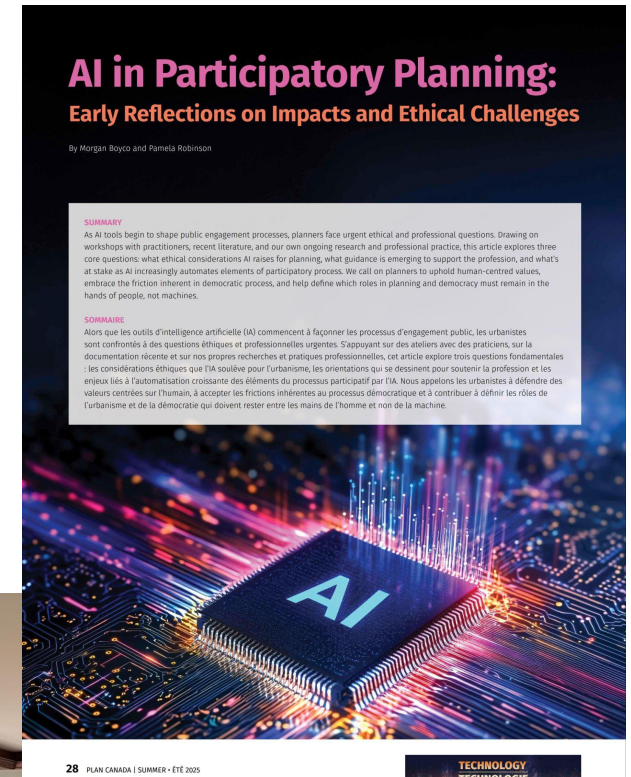
Morgan Boyco MCIP RPP & Dr. Pamela Robinson MCIP RPP
April 2024





IAP2 North America Conference
October, 2024

Plan Canada
June, 2025



APPI Workshop
November, 2024



CIP/OPPI Conference Workshop
July, 2025

Encounters with AI in Planning Practice

AI in Community Engagement

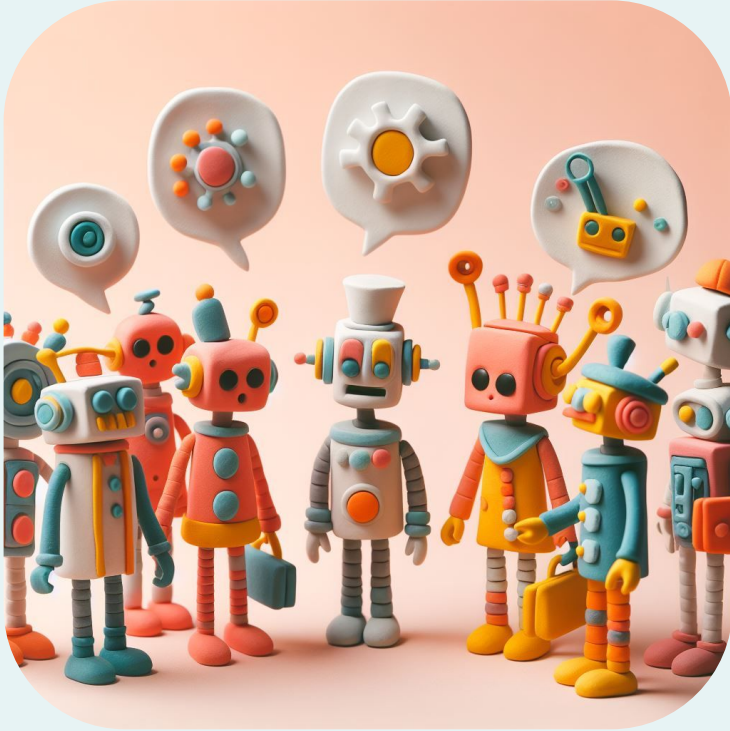


Image created by DALL·E 3
Prompt: Abstract clay robot figures talking to one another in fun colours

- More Accessible, More Visual, More Efficient (?)
- Communications and Visualizations
- Chatbots and Digital Facilitators
- Engagement Data Analysis
- “Personas” for Public Participation
- Empowering Community Members

What will be the impacts on trust between practitioners and the public where AI systems are becoming intermediaries in participatory planning processes?

Near Future: Synthetic Democracy?



“Can AI language models replace human participants?”

Dillion et al., 2023

Image created by DALL·E 3

Prompt: Image of abstract clay robots in fun colours at a public meeting sitting around tables collaboratively working on a planning issue, using sticky notes, drinking coffee, working together.

Risks, Uncertainties, and AI's WEIRD Problem

AI's WEIRD problem

Western

Educated

Industrialized

Rich

Democratic

LLM Risks & Harms

- Discrimination, hate speech and exclusion
- Information hazards
- Misinformation harms
- Malicious uses
- Human-computer interaction harms
- Environmental and socioeconomic harms

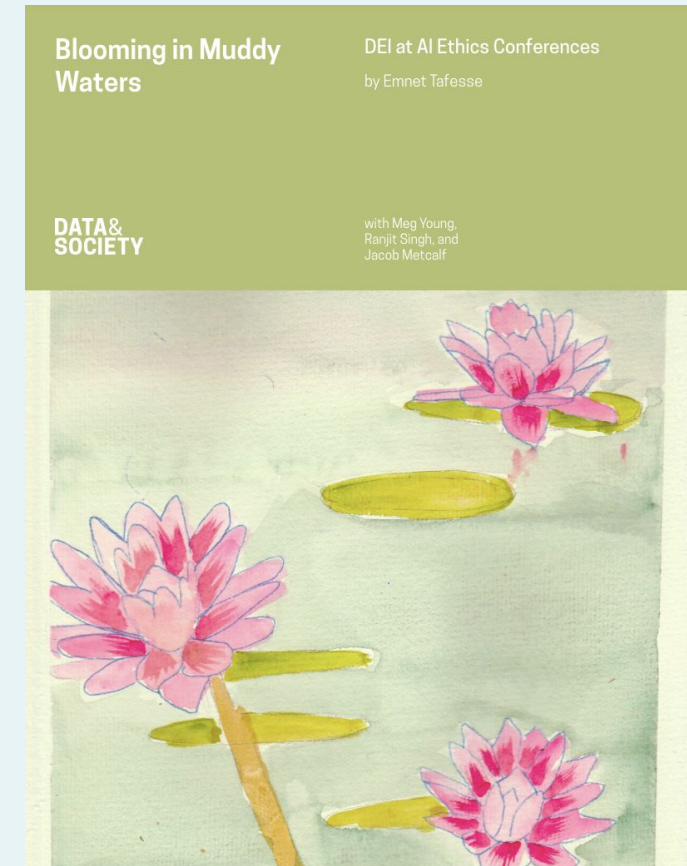
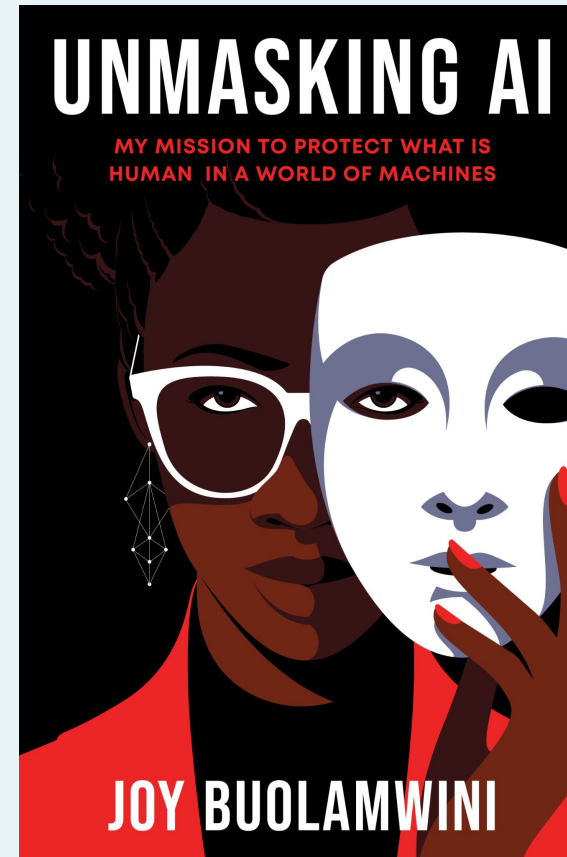
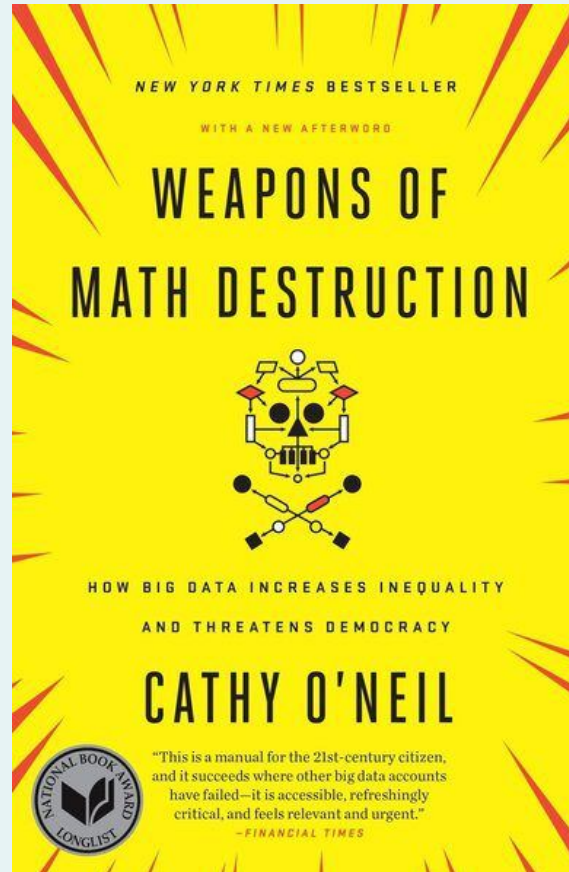
Adapted from: (Weidinger et al., 2022)



Image created by DALL·E 3
Prompt: Now in the same style, do an abstract monster robot under the bed.

Can professional planners ethically use AI-based tools without a clear line of sight into the relevance, appropriateness, and provenance of AI training data? What is the public interest here?

Algorithmic Bias



Guidance for Planning Practitioners

Recommendations for Ethical and Appropriate Use of AI in Planning

EXAMPLES OF GUIDANCE FOR PLANNING PRACTITIONERS FROM 2024/2025

Source	Summary of Guidance
Artificial Intelligence: Its potential and ethics in the practice of public participation (IAP2 Canada) ⁸	<p>Build trust and transparency Be aware of AI risks and remain accountable for its use. Ask participants for their perspectives on AI use, disclose how it is used, and only use tools that enhance public trust.</p> <p>Tread carefully Assess tools for bias, promote equity, and understand ethical implications. Use appropriate tools and be skeptical of AI hype. Protect privacy and be cyber secure. Test wisely and assess risks before implementation.</p> <p>Keep a hand on the wheel Don't let AI make decisions that affect people's lives. Don't short-circuit your own thinking or creativity. Always ensure human oversight.</p> <p>Support real democracy, not synthetic Don't diminish the value of individual contributions. Prioritize genuine human interaction over potentially inappropriate automation.</p>
Planning Ethics and Generative AI (American Planning Association) ⁹	<p>Be sensitive to the bias and limitations of AI Recognize embedded bias and contextualize outputs with professional judgement.</p> <p>Automatically check outputs</p>



Image created by DALL·E 3
Prompt: A wise-looking robot owl in a colourful abstract clay style

The Role of Professional Planners

AI in Planning, Planners in AI

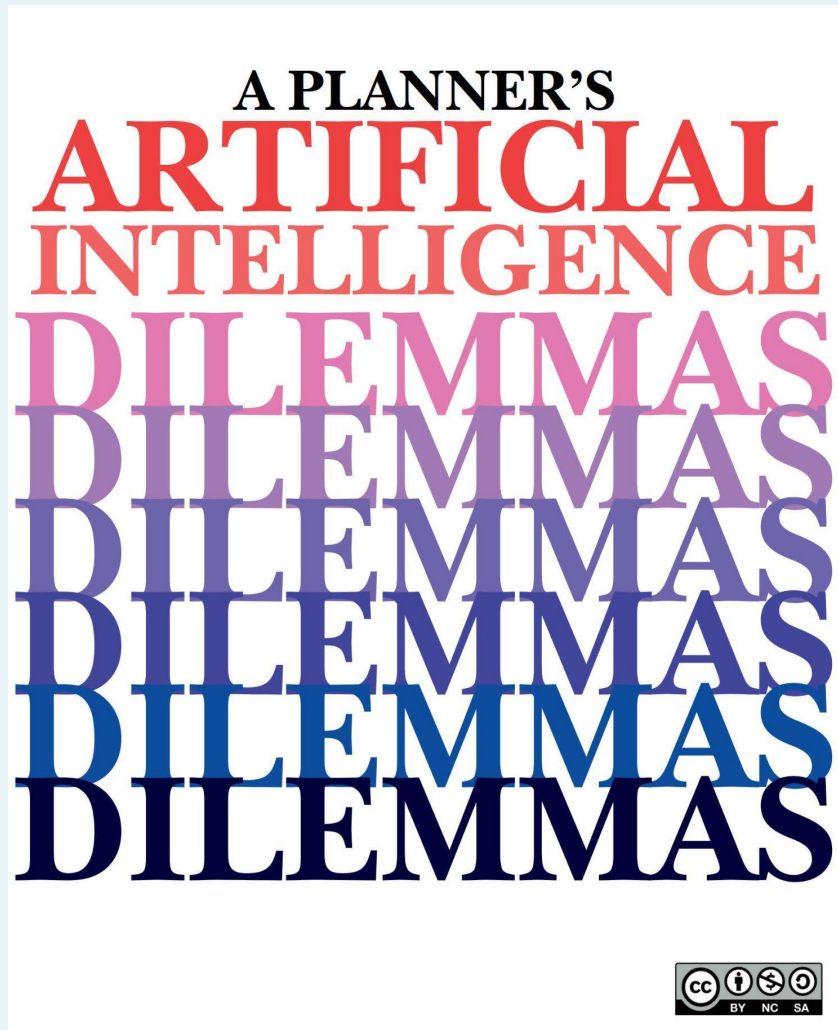


Image created by DALL-E 3
Prompt: Fun abstract robot made of clay in fun colors looking at a magical crystal ball



Image created in
Pamela's kitchen using
tea leaves, crazy glue
and plastic wrap

- What's the role of planners in a world that increasingly includes AI?
- What work do we need to do together?
- Should we be exploring new partnerships between researchers and practitioners?
- How do we keep up in real time?



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