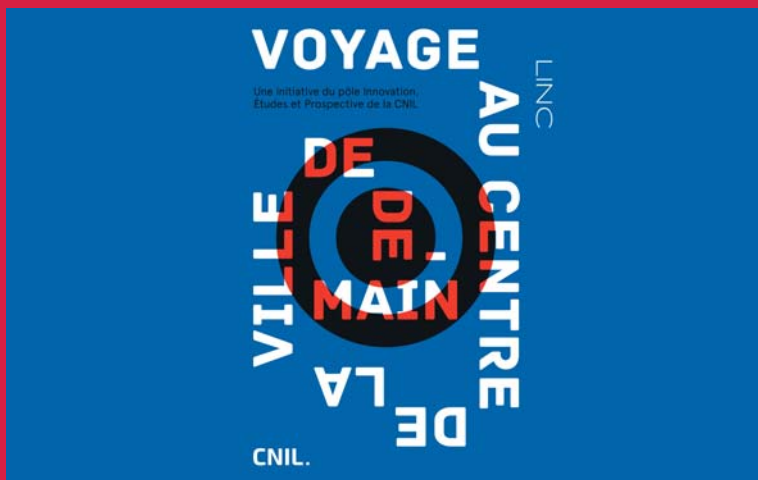# MARIANNE RELOADED: a design-fiction scenario that speculates on the roll-out of a new generation of civic bots

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A graduate in political sciences, geopolitics and defense, Geoffrey Delcroix began his career as a consultant and researcher in the Futuribles team, an independent center for contemporary world study. He then worked for the foresight unit at the French Ministry of the Interior's foresight and strategy team before joining CNIL in 2011.

The team focuses on three missions:
. explore emerging trends at the frontier between digital technologies, ethical issues and data
. exchange ideas and act as the main point of contact for innovation ecosystems (the team works with startups, labs and academics around those topics)
. experiment with innovation methods and produce or co-produce demos, proof of concepts and prototypes relating to privacy issues.

The team publishes on various topics (connected vehicles, chatbots, robotics, AI, connected objects, drones, digital health, algorithms, etc.). All articles are available from LINC (https://linc.cnil.fr/), the platform for CNIL's innovation and future-focused media.

The Platform of a City, the fifth IP Report, is an exploration of the issues related to smart cities and data uses in urban planning and services. It contains recommendations, in particular regarding the different tools that can be used in the future to create meaningful and controlled uses of personal data for general interest purposes.

KEYWORDS

• CIVIC TECHNOLOGY
• CHATBOT
• CYBERSECURITY
• FUTURE STUDIES
• MUNICIPAL GOVERNMENT

It's late 2027 and the residents of the city of Lille meet Marianne Reloaded, artificial intelligence in a civic bot that brings residents and elected officials closer together. Marianne is a harbinger of a new era of trust in politics. Launched by private company Civitar, its roots lie in a crowdfunded campaign that saw the city's inhabitants collectively fund and design the template. The people of Lille can now use the interface's instant messaging feature to pass on their opinions, complaints and suggestions directly to the city council, which can keep in touch with what people think with unparalleled ease and fluidity.

INTRODUCTION

Everyone is familiar with the term "Smart City." But what realities lie behind it? Smart cities have triggered intense international competition between all the big digital players and cities everywhere are competing to get in on the act. For smaller places, smart cities represent above all a chance to experiment with participative initiatives. These two approaches can appear mutually exclusive: one closed and top-down, the other open and flat with unlimited possibilities. But isn't the challenge of the smart city to find ways to make these two approaches coincide?

Seeking ways to answer this question and avoid a sterile debate of dichotomies, we decided to take an approach founded in imaginary worlds and works of fiction. Once the outline shape of our future cities was settled, two workshop sessions were held. Attended by leading figures and actors from urban ecosystems, experts, local government leaders and legal experts, they tried to imagine and design various fictional services that could nonetheless be realistic possibilities for 2027, as well as looking at the political and legal issues each raises.

The third scenario, titled Marianne Reloaded, takes place in the city of Lille in northern France and is intended to shine a light on the public debates, challenges and controversies surrounding the crowd-sourced city. It is 2027. In Lille, the end of the year is marked by the arrival of a new political reality, heralding a resetting of democratic processes. The new and more transparent form of city governance

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has emerged from a process of co-construction involving local government and residents. The participation-driven component accounts for over a third of Lille's total budget and residents participate overwhelmingly in choosing spending for the year ahead. Driven by the emergence of ground-breaking technology initiatives, direct resident participation in the decision-making process is expanding constantly.

SOME INSPIRATION FROM SCI-FI

8th Wonderland, dir. Nicolas Alberny and Jean Mach (2010)
People create an ideal virtual state on the internet. They meet weekly via webcam, voting each time on a referendum to structure and regulate their community.

Octavia's Brood: Science Fiction Stories from Social Justice Movements (2015)
A collection of short stories exploring the links between speculative fiction and pacifist movements, offering readers utopian and dystopian visions of far-reaching social transformations put in place through innovative governmental structures.

Her, dir. Spike Jonze (2013)
Samantha is the female voice of an AI system that adapts to the character of every user. She draws the hero into a spiral of virtual love before abandoning him, alone and rudderless as he faces up to his emotions.

MARIANNE RELOADED: IDENTITY CARD

Company: Civitar (subsidiary of a leading provider of urban data visualization)

Target public: all users of public services in the city of Lille

Key functions: direct communication with the city council, organizing and catalyzing resident participation, helping to mediate between groups in the community, special interest groups and local actors

Technologies used: chatbots, holograms, sensors, augmented street furniture, integrated into the instant message services that are successors to WhatsApp, Messenger and the rest

Business model: the city pays a modular license fee to Civitar based on the amount saved thanks to recommendations from the civic bot

Delivery channel: push service via instant messaging apps and special booths scattered around the city

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As well as on smartphones, the service is delivered via dedicated booths where it presents as a hologram of a mature Marianne figure who talks directly with users. By comparing feedback from users with local administrative data and information gathered by the city's sensors, the council is able to optimize its decision-making processes in real time, anticipating residents' needs district by district.

In addition to an identity card for this imaginary service, as a way of describing the public policy issues, and in an attempt to highlight the controversies surrounding the use of tools and services of this type, we also wrote a fictional press article that gives a platform to the views of the service's critics and backers.

LILLE: RESIDENTS AND NIGHT OWLS AT LOGGERHEADS ON MARIANNE RELOADED

" *The city of Lille's civic bot is a hot story in the popular press. Outrageous misuse of public funds or canny investment with real benefits for daily life? It's a game of table tennis where both sides justify their positions with equal vehemence.*

Our revelations a few months ago about Civitar's spending sent shockwaves through the city. The company responsible for operating the Marianne

Reloaded civic bot was spending a third of its total budget on communications campaigns. Residents of Lille who had contributed to setting up the partially crowdfunded service were scandalized.

Aït Ben Lahcen, a long-time Civitar staffer, agreed to answer our questions. "You've got to put these revelations and their impact on public acceptance into perspective. Conflict between Civitar and the project's critics led by ALPB, an association of Lille's bar owners, are inevitable. Artificial intelligence gets a bad press. We wanted to answer people's anxieties proactively, communicating in ways that are completely open and transparent."

But residents who have already massively backed the project find this promotional zeal unconvincing.

"If I give money to a project it's because I support it. Trying to win me over now is looking at the issue entirely the wrong way round," complains Jeanine Fabre, who contributed money to the Marianne project.

"It's not so simple," replies Civitar's head of public affairs. "It's easy to get people interested in a novelty, but keeping them engaged over the long term is a different matter." A large part of the communications budget was spent on hackathons organized with the city council. The two days of intensive scrutiny, one focusing on the program's security, the other one on commercial uses for the data collected, are vital for oversight of a tool designed for and by the people of Lille.

These arguments fail to convince the project's detractors. Locals have used Marianne to complain about the noise made by beer drinkers in the city's bars. Marie-Christine Deckaert, president of ALPB and owner of a bar popular with students from the nearby university, feels fingers are being pointed as the result of "a vendetta of the small-minded" against her profession. The bar owner feels that "soulless technology" shouldn't be used to regulate problems with local residents. Although Marianne has been a draw for tourists, it seems mostly to have been a magnet for complaints. She bemoans the fact that "people with a complaint don't even bother talking to us about it anymore." She maintains that the civic bot has had an immediate negative impact on business and has filed a complaint with the police, claiming that local residents have gamed the system by making noises close to the noise nuisance sensors.

But Marianne sees a brighter future for all. It suggests restricting opening hours at the city's bar on examination nights, increasing the number of quiet nights for locals, and extending them on

days when local residents are traditionally absent from their homes. The exact shape of the proposed solution will depend on the data collected. Aït Ben Lahcen concludes on an optimistic note: "These teething troubles are simply a reflection of people's interest in seeing city services move to embrace artificial intelligence." **"**

We feel that this mini-scenario highlights four challenges to public policy and ethics that the potential roll-out of this type of service would entail:
- to what extent can public decision-making be automated?
- how to avoid hacking of machine-learning installations?
- what citizen controls to establish over these digital mechanisms?
- how to resolve the difference between private interests and the public interest?