IKMZ Speaker Series

Civic Tech Goes to Market

Burcu Baykurt, *University of Massachusetts Amherst*

Monday, 7 March 2022
16:00 – 17:00
Virtual [Zoom link on Teams]

Many U.S. municipalities increasingly work with data analytics companies that help them build and maintain urban big data. Placing themselves among tech giants, municipal agencies, and community groups as epistemic brokers, these firms, on the one hand, instrumentalize critiques of the smart city, such as instituting equity in decision-making, streamlining data processes, or building public-facing civic tools, as a way to build partnerships with cities. On the other hand, they make a concerted effort to access and extract value from municipal data and seek to offer a coherent area of expertise that solves local problems. Drawing on in-depth interviews with data scientists and founders of digital startups in the field of gov-tech, this talk discusses how the cultural techniques of data capitalism exploit bureaucratic inefficiencies and in what ways civic spaces of the so-called smart city are incorporated into American techno-capitalism.

Burcu Baykurt is an assistant professor of urban futures and communication at the University of Massachusetts Amherst and a faculty associate at the Berkman Klein Center for Internet & Society at Harvard University. Her research focuses on the critical study of technology and culture, and their role in the reproduction of social inequalities.