

Maggie Hughes

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Civic technologist, organizer, and product lead with eight years building participatory democracy infrastructure. Co-founder of Convoca and product lead on Voice to Vision, deployed in partnership with the NYC Department of City Planning, and LumoViz, a relational organizing data platform deployed with the Carolina Federation. Doctoral candidate at MIT Media Lab researching how civic technology can support relational rather than transactional democratic practice.

EXPERIENCE

2025 – PRESENT

Convoca

Co-Founder

- Co-founded civic technology organization (convoca.org) in 2025 to sustain and scale Voice to Vision and LumoViz, two production sociotechnical systems for participatory democracy and co-governance.
- Manage production GCP infrastructure for lumoviz-production, including PostgreSQL database design, deployment, and access management for distributed organizing teams.
- Co-developed the organization's sustainability model, open-source commitments, and partnership pipeline, including a current capabilities proposal with the City of Cambridge.
- Selected for MIT DesignX Venture Accelerator (2026); Second Place, MIT Women's Venture Competition (2026); Top 15%, Hult Prize (2026).

2018 – PRESENT

MIT Center for Constructive Communication, Media Lab

Doctoral Researcher and Product Lead

- Led the full software development lifecycle for Voice to Vision in partnership with the NYC Department of City Planning, from ethnographic research and codesign with community members and urban planners through production deployment and post-launch maintenance. Platform now functions as a living library of community voice informing neighborhood planning decisions. Awarded MIT Prize for Open Data, Honorable Mention (2025).
- Built and shipped Keeper, an online conversation infrastructure platform informed by in-person facilitation practice, and ran a randomized controlled trial with 120+ participants.
- Built and evaluated a conversation dynamics visualization tool developing metrics and a taxonomy for assessing constructive behavior across deliberative conversations.
- Co-led Real Talk for Change Boston, a participatory action research project amplifying community voice in the 2021 Boston Mayoral Election through iterative thematic analysis of 70+ experience-based dialogues with marginalized groups.
- Published peer-reviewed research at CHI, CSCW, EMNLP, HICSS, and DIS.

2022 – PRESENT

Practicing Democracy Project, Harvard Kennedy School

Research Affiliate and Product Lead

- Co-designed, deployed, and iterated LumoViz/Lumos with the Carolina Federation over three years, building both technical infrastructure and accompanying pedagogy and training for 20+ data team members and grassroots organizers across North Carolina. Work spanned user research, problem refinement, system development, and integration into ongoing organizing practice.
- Built and managed a distributed team of researchers, practitioners, and builders across institutional contexts, including PhD students, data practitioners embedded within community organizations, and research scientists at partner labs.

- Bridged cross-institutional collaborations spanning the Data + Feminism Lab (MIT DUSP, with Catherine D'Ignazio) and the Practicing Democracy Project (HKS) to support field-based research on relational organizing infrastructure.
- Teaching Fellow for "Organizing: People, Power, Change" (MLD-377), Marshall Ganz's flagship organizing course at Harvard Kennedy School.

2024 – 2025

Metagov

Working Group Co-Lead, Deliberative Democracy & Interoperability Grant Recipient

- Co-led the Interoperability and Data Mesh working group, coordinating a team of eight civic technologists across global organizations to cooperatively develop a data ontology and mesh enabling deliberative democratic platforms to interoperate in the field.
- Authored and co-authored two publications at critical computing conferences on the fairness and justice implications of open-source deliberative democratic infrastructure.

SKILLS

LANGUAGES	Python, JavaScript, TypeScript, HTML, SQL
DATA & VIZ	PostgreSQL, BigQuery, Google Cloud Platform (GCP), D3.js, Tableau, Processing, full-stack development, database design and access management for distributed teams
METHODS	Codesign, participatory action research, ethnography, mixed-methods evaluation, randomized controlled trials, agile software development through full lifecycle
DOMAINS	Civic technology, relational organizing, deliberative democracy, sociotechnical systems, community engagement

SELECTED PUBLICATIONS

Hughes, M., Lin, E. S., Wolters, D., & Ganz, M. Infrastructuring Relational Practice: Data Infrastructure for Growing People Power in Grassroots Organizing. *GROUP 2027* (under review).

Hughes, M.*, Overney, C.*, Kamra, A., Tepale, J., Hamby, E., Jasim, M., & Roy, D. Voice to Vision: Enabling Shared Understanding in Civic Decision-Making through Participatory Data Infrastructure. *CSCW 2026* (forthcoming). *Equal contribution.

Hughes, M.*, Overney, C.*, Jasim, M., & Roy, D. The Impacts of Transparency and Personalization on Feelings of Agency and Connection in Democratic Decision Making. *CHI 2026*.

Hughes, M., Roy, B., Poole-Dayana, E., Roy, D., & Kabbara, J. Computational Analysis of Conversation Dynamics through Participant Responsivity. *EMNLP 2025*.

Hughes, M., DeSota, E., Victor, M., Lynn, S., Stormonth-Darling, J., & Barry, L. Towards Interoperability: Pursuing an Ontology for Data Exchange between Deliberative Democratic Platforms. *Aarhus 2025: Computing X Crisis*.

Hughes, M., & Roy, D. Keeper: A Synchronous Computer-Mediated Communication Environment Informed by In-Person Facilitation Practices. *CHI 2021*.

EDUCATION

Ph.D., Media Arts and Sciences, MIT Media Lab	EXPECTED MAY 2026
Advisor: Deb Roy. Dissertation Committee: Eric Gordon, Christopher Le Dantec. Generals Committee included Catherine D'Ignazio.	
M.S., Media Arts and Sciences, MIT Media Lab	2020
Advisor: Deb Roy. Committee: Marshall Ganz, Daynna Cunningham.	
B.A., Political Science (Minor: Design), Wellesley College	2018

HONORS, GRANTS & SERVICE

Microsoft Sociotechnical Systems PhD Fellowship (2023 — 2025); Metagov Deliberative Democracy & Interoperability Grant (2024 — 2025); Morningside Academy for Design Grant (2023); Sandbox Innovation Fund (2023).

Chief Steward (School of Architecture and Planning) and Bargaining Committee Member, MIT Graduate Student Union. Public Narrative Coach, Leading Change Network (Marshall Ganz). Reviewer, ACM CSCW and ACM CHI (2019 — 2025).