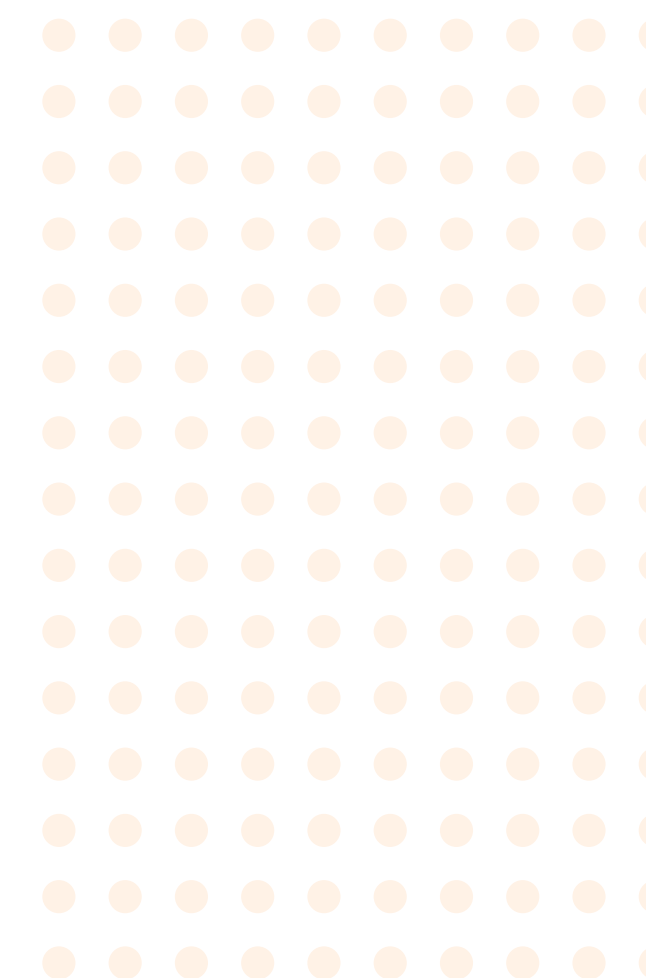
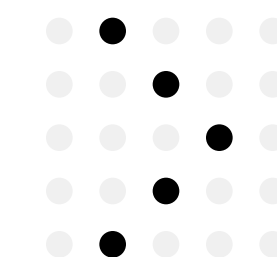
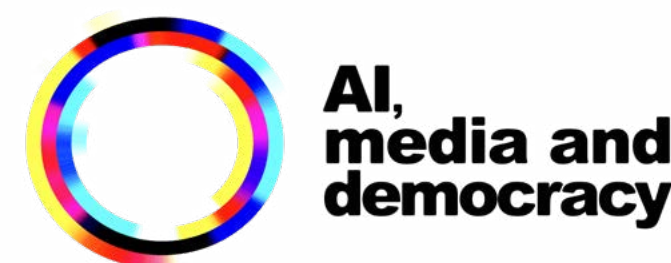


2 AI, Media & Democracy



In a world in which AI enables us to alter voices and appearances, how can we still ensure the news we see is authentic? How do we know if information generated with AI tools such as ChatGPT is trustworthy? The ELSA Lab AI, Media, & Democracy (AIMD) explores challenges on the crossroads of technology and media, focusing on the societal implications of AI via media on democracy.



2.1 The Lab

Navigating the future of media and democracy



The AI, Media, and Democracy ELSA Lab focuses on understanding how AI influences the democratic functioning of the media. Together with journalists, media professionals, designers, citizens, researchers, and societal partners, the Lab develops and tests human-centred AI-applications and ethical and legal frameworks. The aim is to stimulate the innovation of responsible AI applications that strengthen the democratic function of media.

VISIT OUR WEBSITE



From left to right:
Han La Poutré, Sara Spaargaren, Pablo César, Nanda Piersma, Pascal Wiggers, Laura Hollink, Natali Helberger, Tamara Witschge, Claes de Vreese

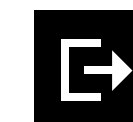
Located at the Institute for Advanced Study in the heart of Amsterdam, the Lab provides a dedicated space for interdisciplinary research. Every Tuesday, team members meet, brainstorm, and co-work in the Lab space. The Lab also organizes community events and connects with the broader community online, discussing topics like the impact of Generative AI on the media and AI's role in elections.

Applying innovative methods for societal impact



AIMD conducted a large-scale survey to gauge citizens' attitudes towards AI in journalism and workshops with media partners to identify AI-related needs and challenges. Currently, the Lab is creating an AI sandbox environment to test assumptions and prototype AI tools with media practitioners, particularly focusing on content recommender systems (e.g. Spotify, Netflix, YouTube). This approach helps bridge the gap between theoretical research and practical applications, ensuring that the tools that are developed are relevant and effective.

Strengthening media and democracy through ethical AI



The Lab aims to enhance the understanding of how AI influences the relationship between media, its users, and democracy. The focus is on building and testing AI tools that respect and contribute to public values instead of compromising them. One of the Lab's goals is to promote independent innovation outside of large tech platforms. The ELSA Lab AI Media & Democracy continues to evolve, addressing emerging challenges and ensuring that AI advancements benefit society, while upholding democratic values. Through interdisciplinary collaboration and innovative research, the Lab aims to create a media landscape where AI enhances, rather than undermines, democratic processes.

Adaptable research programs



The Lab has learned valuable lessons from its flexible and adaptable research agenda, co-informed by stakeholders. In the first year, the introduction of ChatGPT and other Generative AI technologies made a quick change to the media ecosystem. In response, the Lab emphasized this technology in their research, analysing [ethical guidelines](#) drafted by media organizations across the globe. They also launched an online seminar series, '[The Impact We Generate](#),' to facilitate dialogue among policymakers, academics, and media professionals.

'One of the Lab's goals is to promote independent innovation outside of large tech platforms.'



Hannes Cools has a background in political science and journalism. He joined the AI, Media, and Democracy Lab in November 2022. What he loves about being involved in an ELSA Lab is the interdisciplinary nature of the research. There's a strong emphasis on the practical implications of research work, which aligns closely with the kind of researcher he aspires to be.



Anna Schjøtt Hansen comes from a background in technological anthropology and journalism. She joined the AI, Media, and Democracy Lab as an affiliated PhD candidate in the summer of 2022. What she enjoys most is the interdisciplinary way of working and the focus on collaborating with partners, aiming to have a direct impact both locally and more broadly in society.

We talk to them about their research on responsible AI use at the BBC.

2.2 Exploring responsible AI at the BBC

Helping the media use AI responsibly

 'Our research at the ELSA Lab aims to contribute to the understanding and practice of responsible AI at the BBC', tells Hannes. 'This effort is part of the broader goal of the AI Media and Democracy Lab to help the media sector use and develop AI responsibly.' The research was composed of two complementary projects: one focusing on transparency practices and the other on decision-making practices around AI at the BBC.

Close collaboration with stakeholders within the BBC, including researchers, legal staff, data scientists, and editors. 'Our reach extended beyond the BBC through two significant events. One was organized by [BRAID](#) in September 2023, and hosted an interdisciplinary group of researchers and artists. The other event, organized by the BBC, included research partners, legislative bodies, other research institutes, and industry associations.'

'They collaborated closely with stakeholders within the BBC, including researchers, legal staff, data scientists, and editors.'



Workshops with BBC Staff

 The research projects at the BBC utilized participatory observation and interviews as core methodologies. Additionally, Anna and Hannes incorporated an action research component through three workshops with BBC staff. These workshops aimed to qualify initial insights and co-create solutions that can help the BBC and other media organizations pursue responsible AI.

Anna: 'The workshops added immediate value by enabling reflection on existing practices. They were developed into two internal reports that will support future practices at the BBC, presented to the involved stakeholders in April 2024'. This participatory approach ensured that our research remained grounded in real-world challenges and opportunities.

Technologies that enhance democratic processes

 Both projects led to several key findings and recommendations for the BBC, which will be disseminated through a journal article (co-authored with the BBC) and a blog post. Hannes: 'Our findings highlight the requirements needed to ensure good conditions for developing and using AI in the media sector and point to potential issues such as unclarity and decision asymmetries.'

The impact of the research is aimed at other media organizations facing similar challenges, as well as contributing to the emerging scholarship on AI in the media. By sharing their insights and recommendations, Anna and Hannes hope to support the responsible integration of AI in the media sector, ensuring that these technologies enhance rather than sabotage democratic processes.

2.3 Human or Machine? Transparency matters

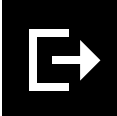
Ensuring Transparency in AI-Generated Content

 Karthik leads a research project aimed at enhancing the trustworthiness and authenticity of media content by addressing the challenges posed by the introduction of generative AI systems. In line with the transparency obligations established by Article 50 of the European AI Act, the project seeks to develop effective and transparent AI disclosures specifically for the media sector. To achieve this, the project brings together researchers from diverse fields, including Human-Computer Interaction, Design, Law, and Communication Science, to collaboratively design solutions. Karthik hopes to enhance the understanding of Human-AI Interaction.

Knowing who (or what) you are dealing with

 'It is essential that users are made aware that they are interacting with AI systems,' Karthik emphasizes. His focus is on designing disclosures that are transparent, informative, and minimally distracting to explain the pros and cons of AI use. The research uses a mixed methods approach, combining both quantitative and qualitative methods. Focus groups with citizens have been conducted to understand their information needs and concerns regarding AI disclosures, which inform cocreation sessions with media partners to design and test prototypes.

Impacting AI literacy and empowering users

 Karthik's research aims to address the challenge of integrating transparency within Human-AI interaction, requiring collaborative efforts from researchers and practitioners across industries and institutes. The primary focus is 'to contribute towards the creation of AI technology for social good, increase AI literacy, empower users, and ensure human creative practices are safeguarded.' Karthik believes that this work can provide the news and media sector with tools to design AI systems with better and more meaningful disclosure mechanisms. His research is expected to benefit both scientific and societal spheres, contributing towards the creation of AI technology for social good.

'It is essential that users are made aware that they are interacting with AI systems.'

Karthikeya (Karthik) Venkatraj, whose background lies in design research and Human-Computer Interaction, joined the AI, Media, and Democracy (AIMD) Lab in November 2023. His role involves facilitating collaboration between researchers from three research groups at the Centrum Wiskunde en Informatica: Distributed & Interactive Systems, Intelligent & Autonomous Systems and Human-Centred Data Analytics. He focuses on designing disclosures for AI tools that are transparent, informative and minimally distracting.

His reason to join the ELSA Lab? 'I like the Lab's approach in tackling very complex topics with an interdisciplinary team. This provides a comprehensive and holistic understanding and helps me to also look at my work from different perspectives. I also enjoy taking part in the workshops, discussions and events hosted by the Lab'.

