Workshop Report

Creative AI Exploration and Imagination: Innovative Methods for Alternative Digital Futures

24 – 26 September 2025

ScaDS.AI Living Lab, Löhrs Carré, Humboldtstrasse 25, 04105 Leipzig

https://www.sozphil.uni-leipzig.de/en/institut-fuer-kommunikations-und-medienwissenschaft/professuren/professur-fuer-medien-und-kommunikationswissenschaft/creative-ai-exploration-and-imagination-innovative-methods-for-alternative-digital-futures

Organizers: Christian Pentzold, Leipzig University; Juliane Jarke, University of Graz; Stefano Crabu, University of Padua; Oliver Dawkins, Maynooth University; Benedikt Haupt, Leipzig University; Emma Hughes Leipzig University; Federico Neresini, University of Padua, Rob Kitchin, Maynooth University; Laura Kunz, University of Graz

The event was supported by the ARQUS University Alliance and the German Academic Exchange Service DAAD.

All photos, if not stated differently: Bartje Krüger.

Workshop photos and selected materials can be downloaded from here: https://speicherwolke.uni-leipzig.de/index.php/s/H2wYLijNqmQnjxf

REPORT

The workshop *Creative AI Exploration and Imagination: Innovative Methods for Alternative Digital Futures* brought together researchers from a wide range of fields, from the social sciences and humanities to engineering and data science, and artists to explore how creative, experiential, and participatory methods can support engagement with artificial intelligence (AI).

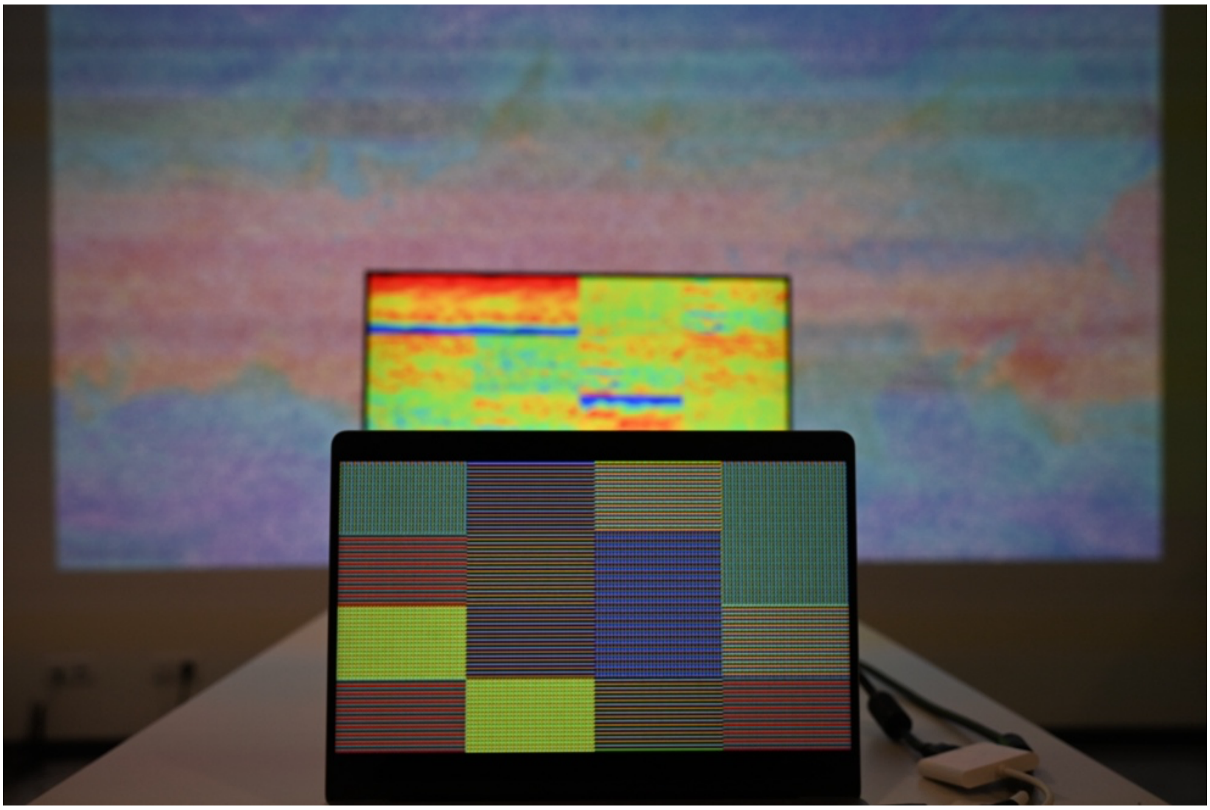
The workshop started form the idea that AI and other types of digital technologies are deeply intertwined with the everyday lives of people, yet their underlying conditions and consequences often remain invisible or difficult to grasp. Many people experience the digital transformation as inevitable and uncontrollable, as exemplified by the current public discourse around the "AI race" and generative AI technologies. Innovative approaches and methods are urgently needed to empower people to critically engage with digital transformation processes and imagine alternative futures.

The workshop – according to the perspective well developed by scholars within the Public Communication of Science and Technology (PCST) domain – sought to move beyond traditional information dissemination and focused on playful and artistic engagement methods. These approaches foster experiential and creative explorations of AI and digital transformation, using photography, music, literary and poetic texts, diaries, or installations. The methods are not aimed at conveying the current state of AI technology but rather at collaboratively defining future frameworks for action, governance, and regulation with civil society actors. Arts-based methods, the workshop assumed, are particularly valuable as they allow participants to experience, explore and imagine alternative scenarios beyond the status quo and/or dominant narratives about how "the" future will unfold.

The organization of the workshop was carried out by researchers of four ARQUS universities to facilitate networking and potential future collaboration. Overall, the workshop pursued several interrelated objectives: One aim was to advance arts-based and participatory research methodologies capable of supporting engagement with AI, both from the side of research practice and citizen participation. Another aim was to facilitate exchange among scholars and practitioners working at the intersection of critical data studies, human–AI interaction, participatory design, and community-based knowledge production. In addition, the workshop sought to identify emerging patterns and recurring questions in creative public engagement with socio-technical change.

Imagination emerged not as a speculative retreat, but as a participatory and deliberative practice that reopens technological futures to contestation and to the collaborative design of a socially desirable technological landscape. Embodiment and materiality were repeatedly emphasized as counterpoints to narratives of AI as abstract and immaterial. Participatory infrastructures were shown to be essential for enabling equitable engagement with socio-technical systems. Creative practice was demonstrated not merely as a form of communication but as an epistemic method for generating situated and collectively held knowledge.

The workshop demonstrated that arts-based, participatory, and speculative approaches can provide powerful and accessible ways for publics to engage in critical reflections on AI. By centering embodied experience, emotional resonance, and shared narrative meaning-making, these methods challenge dominant narratives of technological inevitability and support alternative visions of digital futures. The workshop therefore contributes to broader efforts to redistribute agency in socio-technical systems and to cultivate more plural, situated, and democratic forms of technological development.



Opening Event: *Data Shadows*

The workshop opened with a screening of *Data Shadows*, created by artist Jacob van der Beugel in collaboration with philosopher of science, Prof. Sabina Leonelli (TU Munich). The film examines forms of data that are absent, inaccessible, or intentionally obscured, thereby disrupting the common assumption that data is objective, complete, and readily available. It highlights the socially embedded and materially situated nature of data infrastructures, suggesting that data travels, shifts, and transforms as it moves across institutional and environmental contexts. By rendering visible the traces and absences that shape knowledge production, the film challenges conventional narratives of data as neutral fact. The screening established a foundation for the workshop by demonstrating how artistic practice can expose the hidden infrastructures that underpin digital cultures and AI systems.

The screen of the film was followed by a discussion of Prof. Christian Pentzold (Leipzig University), Sara Morais dos Santos Bruss (Haus der Kulturen der Welt, Berlin), Prof. Juliane Jarke (University of Graz) and Prof. Rob Kitchin (Maynooth University) with Jacob van der Beugel thus showcasing the joint interests of the participating ARQUS universities.

Photo: Benedikt Haupt.

Thematic Clusters and Contribution Summaries

A. Participatory and Reflective Engagement with AI

In their contribution, *Exploring User–AI Relations*, Martina Skrubbeltrang Mahnke (Roskilde University) and Sandra Simonsen (Aarhus University) introduced two participatory workshop formats designed to examine emotional and cognitive processes in interactions with generative AI. The methods invite participants to reflect on how they attribute agency, negotiate meaning, and express emotion when interacting with AI-based tools. Through role-taking and guided dialogue, participants come to recognize the relational nature of their encounters with AI. The approach demonstrates how participatory methods can foster critical awareness and support citizens in navigating the rapidly evolving communicative space created by generative AI.

In *The 2084 Protocol*, Kassie Headon (University of Surrey) presented a social deduction game in which participants use smart-home device data to identify responsibility for a minor household dispute. By reconstructing events from partial digital traces, players are encouraged to reflect on surveillance, inference, privacy, and interpersonal trust. The game translates abstract debates about algorithmic legibility and monitoring into a concrete, playful experience. It thereby shows how game-based learning can support public reflection on data ethics.

In *Thawing, Positionality, and the Co-Created Interactive Video*, Xiaoyu Hao (University of Edinburgh) described an educational method in which students create interactive video narratives addressing controversial AI issues. The approach emphasizes embodied reflection, emotional expression, and shifting identity positions as central components of public debate.

Rather than producing fixed arguments, the method seeks to cultivate relational awareness and ethical reflexivity. It illustrates how creative media production can serve as a platform for ethical engagement and collective inquiry.

B. Arts-Based and Material Engagements

In *LLooM*, Kimberley Paradis (University of Edinburgh) introduced a participatory textile installation in which participants weave fabric strips representing moments when they felt understood or misunderstood by AI systems. Each woven piece is annotated with a personal narrative, generating a shared tactile archive of experiences with AI. The method draws from feminist and queer craft traditions and emphasizes relational storytelling, care, and tactile reflection. It demonstrates how low-tech and craft-based approaches can foster deeper forms of public engagement with algorithmic systems.

The project *A(I) Typewriter*, presented by Karola Köpferl, Albrecht Kurze, Andreas Bischof, and Nick Eichler (TU Chemnitz), transforms a 1980s electronic typewriter into a conversational interface connected to large language models. This configuration shifts AI interaction into a slower, more tactile medium, encouraging reflection on pace, materiality, and attention. Public exhibition of the device prompted intergenerational discussions about automation and the temporalities of writing. The project shows how repurposing historical technologies can challenge narratives of technological inevitability.

In *Constant Washing Machine*, Denis Newman-Griffis and Susan Oman (University of Sheffield), together with curator Hannah Redler Hawes, presented an installation that uses engraved soaps as metaphors for the instability of ethical language in responsible AI. Participants wash their hands with the soaps, gradually erasing the engraved terms and highlighting how normative framings shift in practice. The work bridges arts research and institutional policy, revealing the everyday processes through which values are negotiated. It illustrates how artistic engagement can democratize discussions surrounding AI governance.

C. Future-Making, Speculation, and Collective Imagination

In *Techno-Enhancing Foresight*, Wenzel Mehnert and Pia Weinlinger (AIT Austrian Institute of Technology) described a methodological framework that integrates generative AI into participatory world-building workshops. The approach positions AI variously as a prompt for imagination, a collaborator in synthesis, and a reflector that surfaces assumptions and contradictions. The method draws from critical futures studies and aims to create space for plural, situated, and contestable future visions. It highlights the role of co-creation in developing reflexive, inclusive forms of future-oriented knowledge.

In *Listening and Playing (with) AI*, Federico Neresini and Nicola Orio (University of Padova) demonstrated how music can be mobilized as an accessible and emotionally resonant medium for engaging with AI and fostering scientific literacy. Participants experiment with sound restoration, extraction, and generation, encountering AI both as a technical instrument and as a cultural mediator. The method foregrounds listening as a reflective mode rarely prioritized in AI discourse. It illustrates how shared sensory experience can promote collective understanding of AI systems.

D. Public Memory, Digital Storytelling, and Community Narratives

In *StoryTrails 2.0*, Helen Scarlett O'Neill (Royal Holloway, University of London) reflected on the use of immersive storytelling techniques to foreground local histories and underrepresented community narratives in public library settings. The project demonstrates how mixed-reality media can support collaborative cultural memory work and expand the role of libraries as civic spaces. The contribution considered how AI-assisted tools might enhance such public storytelling practices. It emphasizes the importance of cultural institutions as inclusive sites of technological engagement.

In *'Amai!': Citizens as Drivers of AI Innovation*, Neena Singh (Vrije Universiteit Brussel) and Steve Bers (RVO Society) presented a participatory innovation model in which citizens propose, refine, and evaluate AI solutions to address societal challenges. The process involves open idea collection, collaborative project development, and shared decision-making in funding selection. The initiative challenges assumptions that AI innovation must be directed primarily by industry or expert institutions. It provides a viable model for citizen-centered technological governance.

In Entangled Instruments, Steve Symons (University of Sussex, UK) explores how digital musical instruments can reshape the relationship between musicians and technology. His project investigates systems in which multiple performers and machines are so interconnected that they function as a single, co-created musical entity. Through a hands-on workshop, participants experiment with two types of entangled instruments: one that emphasizes human-to-human interaction and another that uses machine learning to create a shared, networked experience. By contrasting these, Symons examines shifting notions of agency, creativity, and collaboration between humans and AI. His work offers a creative and critical approach to exploring how artificial intelligence can transform artistic and participatory practices.

Finally, in *Artistic Explorations Toward an Un/Common Language for AI*, Verena Friedrich (University of Arts Linz) and Benjamin Gerdes (Institute for Futures Studies), moderated by Anne Kaun (Södertörn University), discussed how artistic research can create new ways of speaking about and sensing AI. Their respective projects foreground the material and labor dimensions of technological systems that are typically obscured in public discourse. The conversation highlighted how art can make complex socio-technical processes perceptible while simultaneously defamiliarizing them to provoke critical inquiry. It demonstrated the productive tension between accessibility and conceptual estrangement in public engagement with AI.

AGENDA

Wednesday, September 24, 2025

06:00	Kick-Off, Venue: Schaubühne Lindenfels, Karl-Heine-Strasse 50 (not barrier-free)
06:00–07:30 pm	**Screening: Data Shadows** Sabina Leonelli (TU Munich) Jacob van der Beugel (Artist) **Plenary Panel: "(Re)-Imagining AI with and for the People"** Sara Morais dos Santos Bruss (Haus der Kulturen der Welt, Berlin), Jacob van der Beugel (Artist), Juliane Jarke (University of Graz), Rob Kitchin (Maynooth University). Moderation: Christian Pentzold (Leipzig University)

Thursday, September 25, 2025

08:30–09:00 am	Registration and Welcome
09:00–10:30 am	**PANEL 1 WORKSHOPS** Martina Skrubbeltrang Mahnke (Roskilde University, Denmark), Sandra Simonsen (Aarhus University, Denmark) *Exploring User-AI Relations: Participatory Methods for Creative Inquiry and Citizen Empowerment* Kassie Headon (University of Surrey, UK) *The 2084 Protocol. Social Deduction Game*
10:30–11:00 am	Tea and Coffee

11:00–12:30 pm	**PANEL 2 WORKSHOPS** Helen Scarlett O'Neill (Royal Holloway, UK) *StoryTrails 2.0* Kimberley Paradis (University of Edinburgh, Scotland) *LLooM: A Participatory Textile Method for Mapping AI Interactions*
12:30–01:30 pm	Lunch
01:30–03:00 pm	**PANEL 3 WORKSHOPS** Steve Symons (University of Sussex, UK) *Interrogating Entangled Instruments* Neena Singh (Vrije Universiteit Brussel, Belgium), Steve Bers (RVO Society) *'Amai!': Empowering citizens as drivers of AI innovation, a practical approach and lessons learned*
03:00–03:30 pm	Tea and Coffee
03:30–04:30 pm	**PANEL 4 PRESENTATIONS** Xiaoyu Hao (University of Edinburgh, UK) *Thawing, Positionality, and Authentic Microcosm: Co-created Interactive Video and Situational Mapping in Discussions of Controversial AI Issues* Denis Newman-Griffis (University of Sheffield, UK), Susan Oman (University of Sheffield, UK), Hannah Redler Hawes (Curator) *Constant Washing Machine: Re-thinking responsible AI with embedded arts research and soap*
04:30 – 05:30 pm	ScaDS.AI Living Lab Tour
07:00 pm	Dinner (self-pay, venue: Mala, Schulze-Delitzsch-Straße 19)

Friday, September 26, 2025

08:30–10:00 am	**PANEL 5 WORKSHOPS** Karola Köpferl, Albrecht Kurze, Andreas Bischof, Nick Eichler (TU Chemnitz, Germany) *A(I) Typewriter - Nostalgic Interface for Human-Chatbot Interaction* Wenzel Mehnert, Pia Weinlinger (AIT Austrian Institute of Technology, Austria) *Techno-Enhancing Foresight – Co-, De-, and Re-construct futures through digital means*

10:00–10:30 am	Tea and Coffee
10:30–11:00 am	**PANEL 6 PRESENTATION** Federico Neresini, Nicola Orio (University of Padova, Italy) *Listening and Playing (with) AI: How Music can Offer an Opportunity for Understanding and Engaging with AI*
11:00–11:30 am	**PANEL 7 CONVERSATION** Verena Friedrich (University of Arts Linz, Austria), Benjamin Gerdes (Institute for Futures Studies, Sweden), Anne Kaun (Södertörn University, Sweden) *Artistic explorations towards an un/common language for AI*
11:30–01:00 pm	Lunch and Farewell

ABSTRACTS

Data Shadows

Sabina Leonelli (TU Munich) Jacob van der Beugel (Artist)

Artist Jacob van der Beugel and philosopher Sabina Leonelli have collaborated with filmmaker Oliver Page towards an art movie examining the notion of 'data shadows', which Sabina pioneered (and discusses at length in a forthcoming book). Examining data that are not there, not readily available, and/or not usable towards proving claims or fostering discoveries brings us to confront the significance of what is not typically recognised as knowledge — what is invisible, tacit, ignored, denied, expected, forbidden, private, inaccessible, unknown, or unexplored. The film casts a light on how research data make their way through through human activities and non-human landscapes. By reimagining data as tangible physical objects that are subject to change from its very inception, we burst the bubble that has taught the general public, as well as academics, that data are immutable objects that magically appear everywhere all at once and can be easily controlled and owned. Our data have a life of their own, viscerally related to changes in nature, societies and climate, constantly adapting to novel conditions. Data clusters are visualised by Jacob as concrete casts cast with a choice of aggregates: Physical cores get extracted from the soil, then graded and polished to go into a repository. This decontextualisation is the start of their meandering journeys to other contexts and applications. When trying later to fit a core back into an extraction hole, some no longer fit as the core or the hole have degraded or filled, whereas others slot seamlessly together. The data shadows are what is missing, unavailable, or invisible — contrary to the naive idea of 'data' as solid, clear and immutable, we follow them through their journey of de- and re-contextualisation, here with patterns of light and shade that act to both clarify and obscure, and attract speculation, hinting at hidden infrastructures that change their meaning. Since there has been a perceived loss of human agency around data for many years, this project will reestablish the reasons why data does this and dissolve the magic that surrounds its perceived ethereality. This is one of the defining issues of our time and this project aims to bring a degree of restitution to this complex field. More information on the film are available here: https://opensciencestudies.eu/datashadowsfilm/

Exploring User-AI Relations: Participatory Methods for Creative Inquiry and Citizen Empowerment

Martina Skrubbeltrang Mahnke (Roskilde University, Denmark), Sandra Simonsen (Aarhus University, Denmark)

The widespread adoption of platformized generative AI (GenAI) is transforming contemporary society in profound ways (Mahnke & Bagger, 2024). With GenAI platforms like ChatGPT and Gemini reaching unprecedented user numbers and co-creating audiences (Heuser et al., 2024), urgent questions arise with regard to how citizens understand and relate to GenAI and how this shapes their social, cultural, and political engagement. The rapidly evolving nature of GenAI demands innovative and creative approaches that capture the dynamic relations that emerge between citizens' engagements and platformized GenAI. Our contribution proposes two participatory methods that invite citizens and stakeholder communities to creatively explore and reflect on their communicative relations with GenAI through performative exercises and dialogue. The aim is to enrich discussions on how participatory methods can be utilized not only for research purposes but also as a vehicle for citizen empowerment. The proposed methods enable researchers to study user-AI relations while actively involving study participants in creative, meaning-making pro-cesses.
The method *Anybody Home?* draws on existential media theory (Lagerkvist, 2024) and human-machine communication (Guzman & Lewis, 2020). Following creative prompt exercises, participants engage in an existential conversation with ChatGPT to explore how they attribute agency, project emotions, and negotiate meaning in human-AI communication. The second method *AI Mirror* is inspired by Vallor's (Vallor, 2024) concept of AI as a moral mirror. It invites participants to take on different roles to examine how their communicative styles and preconceptions shape AI communication. Both methods are designed to foster creative reflections, emotional responses, and creatively reimagine GenAI's role in society. During the live session, we will carry out both methods, allowing attendees to experience and discuss them. By proposing participatory methods for critical AI studies, we aim to contribute to methodological advancements that support both citizen empowerment and creative inquiry, thereby fostering alternative digital futures.

'Amai!': Empowering citizens as drivers of AI innovation, a practical approach and lessons learned

Neena Singh (Vrije Universiteit Brussel, Belgium), Steve Bers (RVO Society)

The rapid and far-reaching evolution of AI technology has not only reinforced AI's presence in society but simultaneously heightened alienation amongst citizens who perceive advancements in technology as beyond their control. Amai! (Flemish for 'oh my!') challenges the perception of AI as an abstract and complex phenomenon beyond regular people's sphere of influence and gives them a voice in further development of AI applications.

Amai! is a mission-oriented participatory approach that aims to change how artificial intelligence (AI) solutions are created and integrated into society. Amai! empowers citizens to think about AI and contribute insights that shape AI development for tangible societal benefits.
Amai! has two main objectives. On one hand amai!'s aims to create awareness about the existing presence of AI in citizens daily lives and to empower them to think about how AI-innovation could benefit them and society in a responsible way. This is achieved by various outreach initiatives and active engagement at events where we foster dialogue and stimulate citizens to share their ideas for AI-innovation. Over the four editions of amai!, citizens have contributed close to 1000 ideas for AI-innovation.
The second objective involves a project call in which citizens and experts collaboratively refine ideas into actionable AI-solutions. Consortia are then invited to submit proposals relating to one or more ideas and solutions of citizen. Finally, each year, a number of projects get funded based on a selection process combining an expert and a citizen jury. Selected projects receive guidance on citizen involvement and responsible AI. To date, funding has been allocated to 17 AI innovation projects.
In this workshop participants will gain insight in the participatory methods used to create citizen engagement throughout the whole process, from idea to AI-innovation.

A(I) Typewriter: Nostalgic Interface for Human-Chatbot Interaction

Karola Köpferl, Albrecht Kurze, Andreas Bischof, Nick Eichler (TU Chemnitz, Germany)

Our research explores the intersection of nostalgia, artificial intelligence (AI), and human-computer interaction by transforming a classic East German typewriter, the Erika S 3004 electronic, into an AI-driven conversational interface. By hacking this vintage device, we integrated it with large language models (LLMs) such as ChatGPT, Mixtral, and DeepSeek, allowing users to interact with AI through typed prompts and printed responses on paper. This AI typewriter serves as both a research and science communication tool, bringing together historical and contemporary technologies to stimulate discussion about the role of AI in everyday life. Through public exhibitions and maker events, we engaged over 1,200 participants and explored their perceptions of AI in a tangible, non-screen-based format. Our findings suggest that this retro-futuristic approach encourages deeper reflection on digital transformation, disrupts assumptions of technological inevitability, and facilitates intergenerational discussions.
By blending old and new technologies, our work offers new insights into AI literacy, trust and human-like expectations of chatbots. The physical medium of the typewriter makes AI interactions more transparent, providing a unique 'conversation piece' that challenges dominant narratives about automation, ethics and the future of work. Participants of all ages - many encountering AI for the first time - engaged in rich discussions, questioning AI's capabilities, limitations and societal implications.
Ultimately, this project illustrates how the recontextualisation of past technologies can inspire meaningful engagement with the challenges and opportunities of AI. It demonstrates that creative and artistic approaches not only make AI more accessible, but also encourage critical engagement with the acceleration of information, human-machine relationships, and the broader digital transformation of society.
AI Typewriter in Action: https://youtu.be/YF74Ekyu_t4

Listening and Playing (with) AI: How Music can Offer an Opportunity for Understanding and Engaging with AI

Federico Neresini, Nicola Orio (University of Padova, Italy)

Although most of the attention has been paid to the ability of Artificial Intelligence (AI) to generate novel music directly in audio format, AI has been exploited for a wide variety of music applications: from the restoration of old recordings to the extraction of individual instruments inside the recording of an ensemble, from the identification of an audio track to the classification of music styles. All these tasks can be carried out also with classical techniques but, in most cases, AI outperforms the state of the art. Understanding how this can be achieved and why AI is so effective can provide useful insights on the nature of AI, its potentials but also its limitations. Listening and playing music can therefore become a mean for both better understanding AI and acquiring a deeper awareness on its social implications. With this contribution we aim at addressing the interactions between AI and the way users access to music, considering that the universality of music enjoyment can be a driver to involve a large variety of final users as active participants of the AI (r)evolution. In this way we can also explore how a sense that is usually little considered - such as listening – can constitute an interesting opportunity for public engagement initiatives about AI.

The 2084 Protocol – social deduction game

Kassie Headon (University of Surrey, UK)

The 2084 Protocol is a social deduction game that casts players as one of five housemates trying to resolve a dispute—with a little help from their AI assistant. The dispute? Someone has broken a very expensive vase in the living room... and no one is owning up. As you investigate, you'll gather clues about your housemates' movements over the past 24 hours by interacting with your home's 'smart' devices—like doors, fridges, and other connected appliances. Using these data snippets, you'll work to piece together who might be hiding the truth.

Players take on character roles and collect information about each other throughout the game. If you happen to be the culprit, your goal is to throw others off the scent. Guided by the AI assistant, the game unfolds over short rounds of group discussion, culminating in a vote to reveal who the housemates believe is responsible.

Beyond the game, *The 2084 Protocol* invites players to reflect on their own feelings about AI and connected technologies. What does it mean to live with systems that are always listening, watching, and remembering?

StoryTrails 2.0

Helen Scarlett O'Neill (Royal Holloway, UK)

In 2022, I was involved in StoryTrails – the UK's largest immersive storytelling project. Led by historian and TV presenter David Olusoga's call for a "radical appraisal of the parameters of history", StoryTrails harnessed the disruptive potential of new, mixed reality

technologies to reveal, elevate and share untold stories about people and place. It engaged 1.3 million people live across 15 UK locations. It showcased thousands of stories mediated by 50 local storytellers from diverse career backgrounds, supporting career paths into an emerging XR sector. It put public libraries at the heart of it all, training over 900 librarians in immersive technologies.
Our motivation in working with public libraries at this scale was to demonstrate a possible alternative future in which our mixed-reality spaces were shaped by the public – a people's metaverse. In 2023, I won a StoryArcs research fellowship to investigate how a future iteration of the StoryTrails project might use AI assisted tech to further this aim. I am looking for an opportunity to share my findings and am keen to so this in way you suggest - through live demonstrations in as interactive a way as possible. I would share relevant parts of StoryTrails 1.0 as well as some prototype work and thinking around StoryTrails 2.0.

Techno-Enhancing Foresight – Co-, De-, and Re-construct futures through digital means

Wenzel Mehnert, Pia Weinlinger (AIT Austrian Institute of Technology, Austria)

We aim to explore the potential of generative AI for participatory and co-creative visioneering processes to inform more reflexive, inclusive, and effective practices of knowledge co-production with civil society actors under a broader transformative lens. For this purpose, we will develop a specific workshop exercise based on a series of interventions modeled in a generative AI environment. These interventions will consist of prompts, scenarios, and interactive exercises in which participants co-create future visions with the help of AI tools. By combining methods from critical future studies (such as CLA, Hermeneutic TA or the Futures Circle) with Gen AI applications, we explore the possibilities of AI driven co-creation processes to engage in a reflective mode to re-imagine human futures with and through AI. Drawing on recent findings about the evolving role of AI in participatory processes, we structure the engagement around three distinct roles for AI. (1) AI as a muse, to spark imagination and encourage creative exploration. (2) AI as co-pilot, to support participants in synthesizing, refining, and advancing their ideas. (3) AI as a support for critical reflection that enables the challenge of assumptions and biases. These roles enable us to explore how generative AI can enrich participatory foresight, while also bringing to light critical ethical and epistemic challenges.
Through this co-creative future worldbuilding workshop based on human-machine interactions, we aim to empirically and collaboratively assess together with the local civil society actors the ethical, socio-technical, and epistemic challenges that arise when integrating generative AI into participatory visioneering processes. Participants will be actively involved in evaluating both the potentials and limitations of AI-supported visioning to co-develop a framework that addresses the conditions for responsible and meaningful human-AI collaboration.

Thawing, Positionality, and Authentic Microcosm: Co-created Interactive Video and Situational Mapping in Discussions of Controversial AI Issues

Xiaoyu Hao (University of Edinburgh, UK)

The co-created interactive video is an assessment format used in the Controversies in the Data Society course at the University of Edinburgh. It allows students to collaborate in pairs, interact with outside interest groups especially with the missing voices, and in ten minutes, present imaginaries and reflections about controversial data and AI issues. By extending and interacting with the agents' first-person perspective, creating such mediated form of dialogue indirectly enhances participants' capability of social and emotional learning and expressing in given contexts. Beyond encouraging discussion and engagement in specific topics, it activates critical elements in alternative AI imaginaries, such as embodied cognition, intuition and reflexivity on positioning, both within and across situations. It also empowers participants to take ownership of their creation and turns agency and responsibility into creative action. Meanwhile, because of the limited timeframe and the opening up of the fragmented storytelling, it invites individual experiences, vitality, differences, and contingencies. It creates reflective and fluid spaces in between subjects, in between subjects and works, and in between works and audiences, yet resists political framing. Such space goes beyond text and art itself, disrupting the consistency of established narratives. It affirms life, bodily involvement, direct experience, creativity, sympathy, and even conflict, and reintegrates them into practice. By highlighting fluid identities and authentic microcosms, carrying postmodern alienation and fragmented experience, and breaking away from closed narrative structures, it holds itself apart from the everyday, and then opposes standardisation, efficiency, and the drive to maximise profit. It goes on until the postmodern governance sphere begins to converge with authentic microcosms, until the thawing of the original structures and imaginaries of technological governance and inner changes meet with new perspectives on everyday participation. Beyond the co-created interactive video, this work provides an editable and printable map tracing interactions between the creators and the outside world. The map presents the creators' documentation of and reflection on positionality, the authentic microcosm, and thawing, while also inviting audiences to co-create their memories and technological imaginaries. This project also raises other important questions: How do varied methods or formats of co-creation shape narrative and ethical choices? How might these approaches align narrative aims and trigger more impactful actions in alternative ethical AI future imaginaries, while resisting instrumentalisation? These questions call for further discussion.

Constant Washing Machine: Re-thinking responsible AI with embedded arts research and soap

Denis Newman-Griffis (University of Sheffield, UK), Susan Oman (University of Sheffield, UK), Hannah Redler Hawes (Curator)

Shaping the responsible use and development of artificial intelligence technologies is essential for making AI applications effective, ethical, and equitable. However, responsible AI is a highly contested concept and practice, the complexities of which are inaccessible to non-experts. Our research demonstrates how working with artists and creative practitioners can both make the challenges of responsible and ethical AI tangible for broad audiences, and surface invaluable research insights.

The AHRC/BRAID-funded Framing Responsible AI Implementation and Management (FRAIM) project worked with the arts collective Blast Theory as practice-based researchers to study the meaning and practice of responsible AI in organisations. We conducted the project in partnership with four non-academic UK organisations representing AI use and leadership in diverse sectors: Sheffield City Council, the British Library, the Open Data Institute, and Eviden. Our research analysed publicly-available AI policies from 80 organisations to understand how they conceptualised responsible AI, and we interviewed staff from our partner organisations to learn how responsible AI was put into practice in their contexts. Blast Theory participated in project meetings and observed our research as material for their reflections in the concluding artwork of the project.

Constant Washing Machine is an interactive work that conceptualises responsible AI through the metaphor of soaps engraved with key responsible AI phrases. It captures the everyday, social nature of the decisions that affect responsible AI in practice and the slipperiness of language about AI. To present Constant Washing Machine at the workshop, we will briefly overview the project and findings, including how exploring AI creatively has broadened both our engagement with diverse audiences and our thinking on the challenges of responsible AI. We will then invite participation in the artwork, through participants to wash their hands with the soaps, participating in responsible AI practice and simultaneously reshaping and erasing its previous form.

Interrogating Entangled Instruments

Steve Symons (University of Sussex, UK)

The development of digital musical instruments has questioned the traditional relationship between the individual musician and their instrument. As well as creating opportunities to inter-connect performers' systems, technology has opened a field of entangled instruments; where multiple players are so enmeshed as to be considered a single mutually played instrument. In the light of on-going discussions around the implications of post-human thought and theories of entanglement to HCI, as well as to interfaces for musical expression, this workshop offers a practical exploration of the experience of playing two person entangled instruments for close mutual participation. It is also an opportunity to hear insights by the designer on the underlying technologies used and associated shifts towards decentered design thinking, alongside critically exploring relations between AI and human creative collaboration.

Firstly participants will explore an entangled instrument that centres the players as individuals; whist the second experience uses machine learning to create a collaborative immersion where the players act within a network of forces rather than on each other. Working together we will explore the differences in agency and empowerment that emerge between these two playing experiences. Finally we will use an introductory exploration of the underlying technologies to interrogate relationships between AI and human creativity.

No musical or instrument playing experience or perceived skill level is needed. Although playing the instruments requires little effort, a range of physical hand/arm movement is required; this can be adjusted and scaled. Participants are also asked to bring headphones.

Steve is an experienced sound artist, performer and technologist. He is currently completing a practice research based PhD at the University of Sussex (UK) exploring the application of participatory and post-human ideas of entanglement to collaborative musical experiences.

LLooM: A Participatory Textile Method for Mapping AI Interactions

Kimberley Paradis (University of Edinburgh, Scotland)

This contribution presents LLooM, a participatory textile method for exploring how people experience AI-driven language technologies in daily life. It invites participants to reflect on everyday interactions with AI, such as prompting ChatGPT, using autocorrect, or asking Siri to play a song. Participants are asked whether they felt understood or misunderstood by the AI in that moment, and then select a colour-coded strip of fabric: yellow for understood, blue for misunderstood. They write their story on the strip and weave it into either a positive loom (for interactions that felt helpful or welcome) or a negative loom (for interactions that felt invasive or frustrating). A participant may, for example, recall asking Siri to find boot stores nearby (understood – yellow fabric), only to later receive targeted ads on social media (negative loom).

Rather than assuming AI should always understand its users, LLooM encourages reflection on when misunderstanding might feel positive, and when understanding may feel negative. This method was developed for a public installation at the 2025 Edinburgh Science Festival, where two large-scale looms (each approximately 1 by 2 metres) will invite participants to share and weave their stories.

At this workshop, I will present pictorial documentation of that installation and share how the project is evolving into a mobile, community-based exhibit designed for Queer and rural contexts. I will also facilitate a small, hands-on weaving activity to demonstrate how the method can be adapted for different contexts, including low-resource or grassroots settings. Drawing on feminist and Queer design traditions, this method uses textiles as a material and artistic medium. Each loom becomes a tactile artefact, building a collective and ambiguous archive of how people interact with, reflect on, and occasionally refuse AI. By combining craft, storytelling, and participatory design, LLooM opens space for reflection, resistance, and alternative digital futures.

Artistic explorations towards an un/common language for AI

Verena Friedrich (University of Arts Linz, Austria), Benjamin Gerdes (Institute for Futures Studies, Sweden), Anne Kaun (Södertörn University, Sweden)

In this conversation, we discuss the need for a common or uncommon language for AI based on the artistic works by Verena Friedrich and Benjamin Gerdes. Both artists have in quite distinct ways engaged with artificial intelligence and digital data in their practices. The conversation will first introduce parts of their work to then move into identifying tensions around art as providing a common and at the same time defamiliarizing language to emerging societal phenomena, especially when it comes to complex sociotechnical systems such as artificial intelligence and supercomputing infrastructures.

Verena Friedrich creates installations and machines that can be experienced in art exhibitions and festival settings. Her work “EZ Quality Sorter” is an interactive installation that invites audiences to engage in the classification of live material–in this case pea seeds. Touching on topics such as ghost work and the automation of decision-making, the installation translates complex, socially relevant questions into a tangible form. By making visible aspects of AI-

driven processes that usually remain hidden from public view, it opens up space for interaction and critical discussion.
Benjamin Gerdes leads the artistic research project “Ghost Platform: Generating the "Complex Image" of Data, Labour, and Logistics.” In the project, a network of logistics workers, artists and researchers have developed a secure software platform hosted on public Swedish supercomputer infrastructure. This “Ghost Platform” allows sharing and analysis of audio and video material, using LLMs for automated transcription and translation to facilitate collaboration across contexts and linguistic hurdles.
Anne Kaun who is currently leading the European AUTO-WELF consortium will moderate the conversation focusing on the challenges and possibilities of engaging art and artistic methods in research projects.

Contact:
Christian Pentzold
Leipzig University
christian.pentzold@uni-leipzig.de

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