

Collaborative AI Workshop findings and paths for impactful cooperation

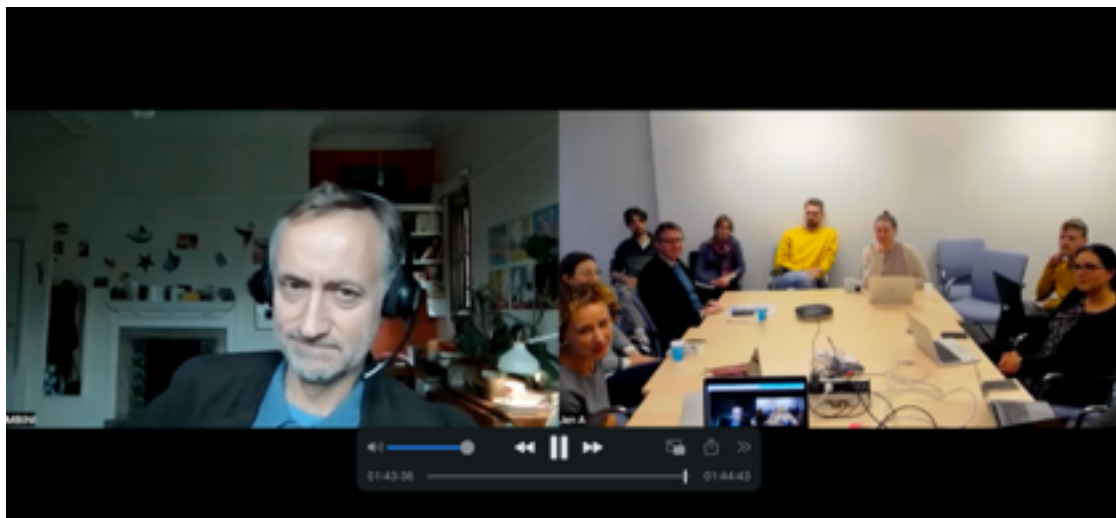
Collaboration among various stakeholders, such as academia, regulatory bodies, industry, and civil society, is vital in driving progress in the AI landscape. AI technologies are complex and dynamic, necessitating a multifaceted approach to development and regulation. Collaboration enables a comprehensive understanding of the nuances involved, allowing for the establishment of robust governance models that prioritize safety, ethics, and inclusivity.

To facilitate this type of collaboration, and pursuant to the University of Vienna's Third Mission commitments, and the mandate of the Comms Policy Collaborative (CPC), the CPC hosted a workshop on 'Collaborative AI: Mapping Stakeholders and Enhancing Cooperation', together with the Computational Computer Science Lab (CCL) on 22 November, 2023. Workshop participation included **Dr Annie Waldherr**, of the CCL, and a number of its **members**. **Dr Damian Tambini** of the London School of Economics, **Valerie Hafez** from Women in AI Austria, and **Roland Belfin**, representing Rundfunk und Telekom Regulierungs (RTR - the Austrian Regulatory Authority for Broadcasting and Telecommunications).

Importance of collaboration in AI development and regulation

Dr Damian Tambini, Distinguished Policy Fellow, London School of Economics

Dr Damian Tambini, an expert in media and communications regulation and policy, introduced participants to the international policy environment for the regulation and utilization of AI technologies, setting out common definitions, as well as ethical and regulatory issues in this area.



International policy environment:

The EU approach is a product liability model, defining risk and assigning responsibility for risk assessment. The US Executive Order (Executive Order 14110, "Safe, Secure, and Trustworthy Development and Use of Artificial Intelligence") is self-regulatory, but doesn't directly address liability, but rather obliges the registration of AI models. This document creates the foundation for future regulation. The Chinese model is very detailed in terms of labeling of content, and accuracy of training data. All of these models entail institution building alongside ethical debates of transparency, reliability, robustness, safety, and addressing existential risks posed by AI.

Ethical and regulatory issues:

Current pressing issues, and issues that have arisen from gathered data and usage of AI thus far include threats to democracy, specifically legitimacy and trust in elections. Another central issue is the potential threat AI poses to human agency and behavior. Regulatory frameworks to address these issues are constantly evolving, and subject to a number of economic, cultural and political factors.

Paths for collaboration:

These ethical/regulatory questions are where the inclusion of research data can make meaningful inroads in terms of trust, safety, and better understanding of potential AI impact on our societies and democratic processes. Collaboration on AI utilization and regulation, however, is rife with issues including those of privacy, group think, fragmentation, and questions surrounding human autonomy. Given existing and emerging legislation, there is increasing urgency and focus on data altruism and data transparency, which presents a significant opportunity for researchers to bridge the divide between stakeholders.

Research Networks for AI Advancement

Dr Annie Waldherr & members of the Computational Communication Science Lab (CCL), Department of Communication, University of Vienna

Stakeholder focus:

Dr Annie Waldherr, head of the CCL, introduced the work of the CCL, noting that research does not focus on AI as such, but rather utilizes large language models and automated data collection tools as a significant component of CCL research methodology. Existing CCL research topics include (but are not limited to):



- Utilization of algorithms to identify emotion on social media platforms, and how that emotion drives the spread of misinformation on social media, including non-English language analysis;
- The politics of visual content and use of automated tools to analyze how visual content, especially related to climate activism, posted on social media platforms inspire or contribute to the polarization of activism and engagement;
- Utilization of automated data collection/agent-based modeling to examine human agency in the digital environment generally, and political processes specifically;
- Building infrastructure for the investigation and monitoring of political texts, including testing of automated text analysis tools;
- Human-coded data and implications of human error/bias in machine learning, and difficulty of identification and correction of bias in large language models;
- Development of computational models to simulate and examine the emergence of and user engagement with social issues on social media platforms.

Paths for collaboration:

It was noted, that even though research outputs do not focus on AI, CCL work does indeed rely on the utilization of large language models and automated data collection tools. For this reason, the implications of existing and proposed policy, especially as relates to the Digital Services Act, is very valuable for the CCL. In addition, the facilitation of engagement between large language models human subjects brings up a number of ethical issues addressed by various stakeholders.

When it comes to the DSA, some researchers expressed concern about potential for the legislation to limit access both to those automated tools, and platform data crucial for CCL work, especially given the current situation of platform leadership narrowing, and/or eliminating access to data.

An expanding regulatory framework

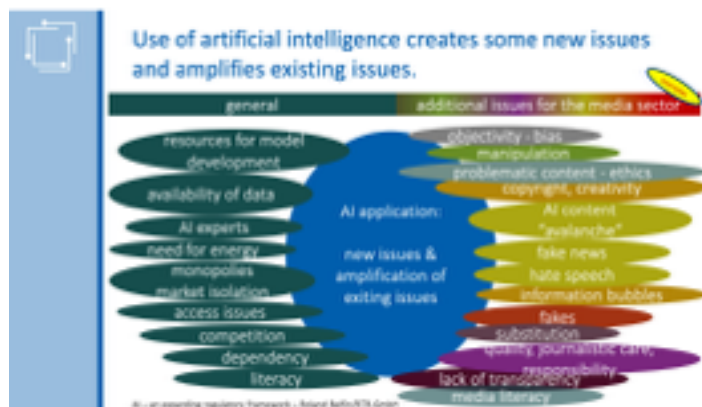
Roland Belfin, RTR

Stakeholder focus:

Roland Belfin, Head of the Wirtschaft Medien department at RTR, introduced RTR and provided an overview of its role (as set out in established law), including the support to regulation of media services by KommAustria, as a service unit for media consumers, provision of regulatory oversight when it comes to ensuring media pluralism, and as an administrator of public subsidies for a number of media projects, including media literacy initiatives with implications for the utilization of AI. While not an academic institution, RTR has a competency function that entails market research and collaboration with social scientists. There are ongoing discussions about the establishment of an intermediary service desk to fill the gap ahead of implementation of EU AI legislation, and it is currently foreseen that RTR will likely fill this role. Given media's 'dual' role in the marketplace - both as a service provider, but also as a necessary

tool for democratic processes - the manipulation of content, ethical considerations and other potential access issues, pose a fundamental, and multi-faceted threat to democratic societies.

There was a brief presentation of a recent study (full study available below in 'resources') conducted by RTR, including an analysis of AI utilization in the Austrian media value chain. He noted that within the information/communication sector, currently 37% of companies utilize AI, compared to only 11% across all sectors. The primary findings indicate a number of



obstacles that have arisen given this utilization, including: amplification of information bubbles (including the threat of an AI 'avalanche of information', and replacement of existing content), necessity of extensive resources for use of AI, fragmentation of AI policy and related legislation globally, risk of market isolation and monopolies, access issues to existing systems, and increasing dependence of media on AI.

The next presentation of report findings will take place on 22 February, 2024 at RTR offices, and workshop participants were invited to join.

Paths for collaboration:

Five specific challenges were identified, where increased and more sustainable cooperation amongst stakeholders could make a meaningful contribution to regulatory processes:

1. Speed and Flexibility: How can legislation respond to a rapidly changing AI environment
2. Fragmentation - How diverse standards in global regulation hinder and complicate a standardized framework for regulation
3. Resources - Financing of public service institutions for ensuring a consistent approach to the multiple facets of regulation
4. International standards and fundamental freedoms focus: Media sector as a tool of democracy, so regulation must also ensure pluralism
5. Legislative framework vs. self-regulation: The challenge is to find an intelligent combination of both models.

International priorities for safe and inclusive AI

Bojana Kostic & Krisztina Rozgonyi - shared experiences of the OSCE SAIFE project

Workshop participant, and media researcher Bojana Kostic, together with CPC lead, Dr Krisztina Rozgonyi provided a brief overview of their work as external experts for the OSCE's SAIFE (Spotlight on Artificial Intelligence and Freedom of Expression) project.

Stakeholder focus:

The Office of the Representative on Freedom of the Media (RFoM) is an independent institution under the umbrella of the OSCE. Its mandate is to serve as a watchdog for violations of media freedom, and freedom of expression in the OSCE's 57 participating States. As an international organization - much like the UN, OECD, etc. - the Organization provides guidance and resources directly to state representatives and governmental authorities. Given the RFoM's specific focus on media freedom, it utilizes engagement and expertise of civil society in the formulation of this guidance and provision of resources. The SAIFE project has been underway for the past five years, and uses a human rights framework to evaluate AI, and related issues, such as surveillance of the public sector, implications for the safety of journalists, targeted advertising, and threats to human agency in democratic processes.



Paths for collaboration:

Dr Rozgonyi noted that the resources produced during the course of the SAIFE project can be utilized as part of teaching curriculum, for media literacy initiatives, and for raising awareness of the potential media-related harms, amongst non-media experts, and experts with diverse perspectives and foci, when it comes AI utilization.

Intersectional Perspectives on AI Cooperation

Valerie Hafez, Women in AI Austria

Stakeholder focus:

Valerie Hafez, the policy lead for Women in AI Austria, explained that the organization tries to address, as much as possible, the existing gender divide when it comes to the design of AI systems. She noted that currently only 4% of the workforce in this space is women (OECD countries), which has implications for both AI development and AI regulation. Women In AI Austria (and global) work to translate gender-related concerns to other sectors.

Paths for collaboration:

Women in AI try to work across sectors, to engage with academia, civil society, etc, for broader knowledge creation and coalitions for generating politically engaged research as a significant tool for sustainable legislation. A crucial point was made in highlighting Women in AI's focus on Article 40 of the DSA - access to data for vetted researchers - and how this provision could create significant obstacles for civil society, particularly their access to platform data, since they aren't able (under art. 40) to apply as vetted researchers.

Opening up new paths for cooperation

Workshop findings and next steps

All participants concluded that access to data is key for all stakeholders, and crucial for the identification of both potential harms, and new opportunities stemming from AI utilization, and for maximizing the efficacy of regulation. For Austria-based stakeholders, the impending implementation of the EU's Digital Services Act was particularly concerning when it comes to Article 40 - namely the process of application for status of vetted researchers, the obstacles this process creates for civil society's access to data, and burden placed on academia to fill the civil society gap - a role that lies outside their responsibility and could have negative impacts on research.

As of February 2024, researchers, via research institutions, must apply through the AI coordinator (likely to be KommAustria [Kommunikationsbehörde Austria] with the support of RTR) to be given the status as 'vetted researcher'. It is suggested that the CPC establishes a protocol, together with academics and the AI coordinator, for better dissemination of information, and to ensure University access to crucial data.

To begin to address the potential responsibility placed on academia, as a result of their access to data, and to fill the gap left by civil society's lack of access to data, a consortium between key stakeholders, specifically for cross-sectoral sharing of information and data, is recommended. Introduced by Dr Tambini as 'coordinating the ask', this process would help to avoid a situation in which platforms further fragment advocacy, and collaboration in society in their pursuit to gate-keep crucial data. In addition, this process could provide a platform for addressing the 'harms' associated with AI utilization, not captured through regulatory and legislative processes.

Resources

[The Coming Wave](#), Mustafa Suleyman

[Einsatz künstlicher Intelligenz im Mediensektor: Anwendungen, Möglichkeiten, Herausforderungen & Optionen](#). RTR, 2023.

[Women in AI Austria](#)

OSCE SAIFE Project: [Project Manual](#), [Public Consultation Report](#), [Strategy Paper](#)

[Putting the DSA into Practice: Enforcement, Access to Justice, and Global Implications](#). DSA Observatory and Verfassungsblog, University of Amsterdam, 2023.

[User-Guide to the EU Digital Services Act](#). EU DisinfoLab, 2022.

