

INCLUSIVE AI LAB

Quarterly Newsletter

April Edition

Building applied, cross-sector AI systems grounded in care, context, and community.

Note from the Founder

We kicked off the year with a strong policy push, launching reports at the India AI Summit with the Tony Blair Institute for Global Change and IT for Change, and joining conversations with ICAI - Innovation Center for Artificial Intelligence and the Netherlands Innovation Network India, and others. In South Africa, we brought this energy to Pretoria, hosting an Inclusive AI roundtable and workshop with the Deep Transitions Lab and the University of Pretoria. Together with ministries from Botswana, Malawi, South Africa, and Kenya—and leaders across civic, business, creative tech, and academia—we began shaping the Fair Futures Initiative, grounded in local realities and needs.

Behind the scenes, we've also grown our team, expanding our work in China and Latin America, and strengthening our approach to AI methods, and sustainability. At the same time, the Data CARE Festival has taken on a life of its own—bringing together 80 impact leaders from 21 countries under the theme of reclaiming techno-optimism. Registrations filled up within weeks, including for a PhD-led day focused on helping researchers step beyond academia and into real-world impact. This has sparked plans for an Inclusive AI PhD Summer School at Utrecht University next year.

What's been most exciting is working with our former and current fellows to make this happen—building capacity together and turning shared ambition into something tangible.

Thank you for being part of this journey. We look forward to seeing many of you at our Data CARE festival.

– Payal Arora

Making an Impact: Global Engagements

We engaged across policy, academia, industry, and public platforms to advance conversations on inclusive AI and digital transformation - at universities, global forums, and policy platforms and in the media, amongst others.

- Our work was covered by **22 international media outlets** across Europe, Asia, and other international platforms, including by Rest of World, NRC, Weconomy, D+C, Business Outlook and Le Monde
- We spoke at **15 global policy forums, governance dialogues, and civic platforms** such as WOW - Women of the World, Davos, and For the Love of the World Festival
- **12 academic talks, workshops, and research engagements** with universities such as MacMaster University (Canada), University of Applied Arts Vienna, and Groningen University (Netherlands).

Policy Leadership Highlights

AI Impact Summit 2026: AI Governance & Public Value



At the AI Impact Summit 2026, **Payal Arora** contributed to the Tony Blair Institute report “*Delivering AI Impact*,” advancing pathways for aligning AI systems with public value, while **Usha Raman** contributed to the *ReGenAI* manifesto, shaping alternative models for AI governance and economic transformation.

Pallavi Bansal contributed to policy discussions at the AI Impact Summit, including sessions on sociotechnical AI governance and EU–India digital policy alignment.

Pretoria Dialogues: Grounding Inclusive AI in Practice



Our Lab hosted an Inclusive AI dinner roundtable in Pretoria with our networks, and fellows in South Africa, in partnership with Deep Transition Lab and University of Pretoria. We participated in the Transformative Innovation Policy Consortium (TIPC), Fair Futures Delegation at University of Johannesburg, and on inclusive AI and digital transformation.

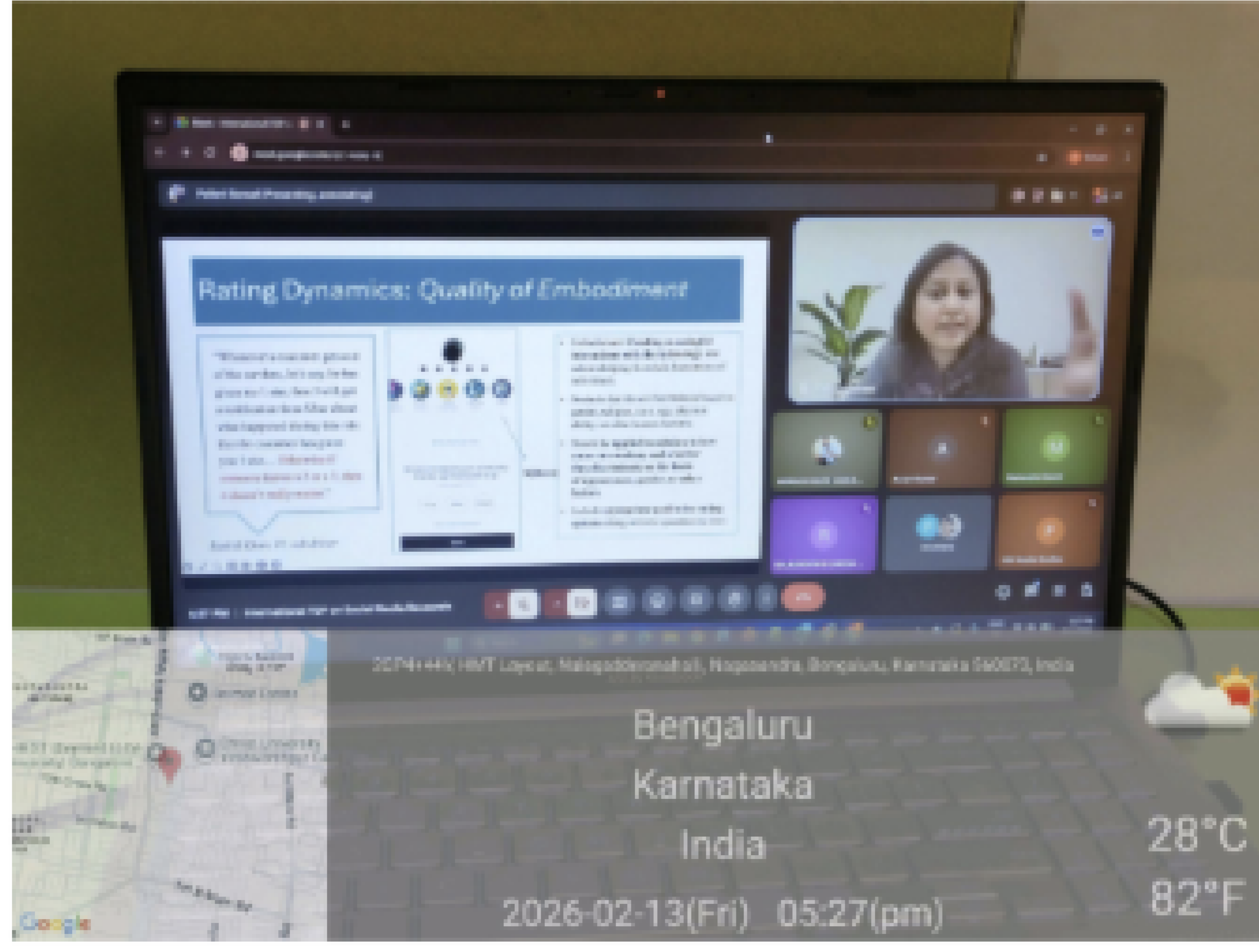
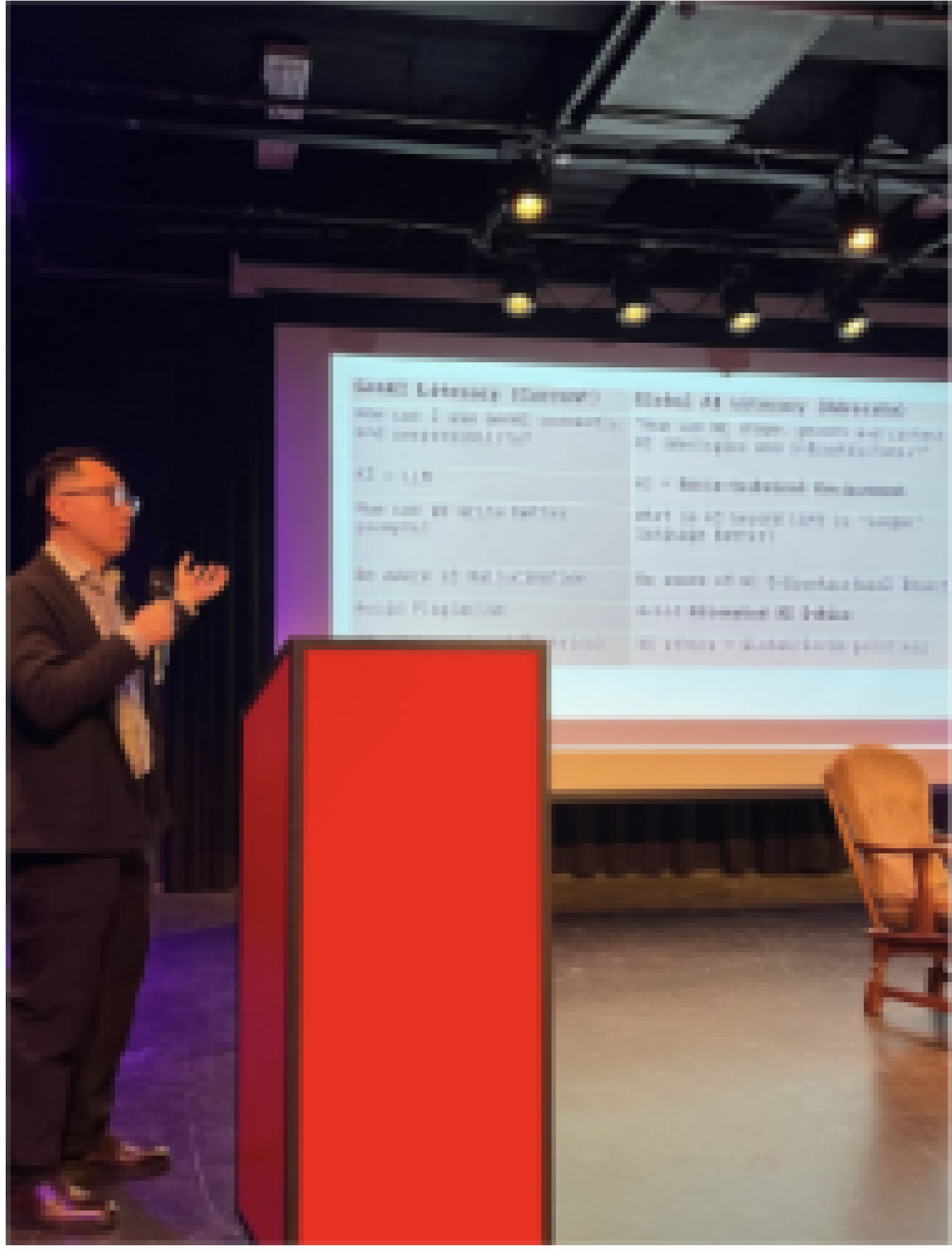
Unearthodox (Davos): Power, Participation & Global AI Dialogues

At Unearthodox #Davos, Wakanyi Macharia-Hoffman reflected on how global convenings shape access, participation, and power, raising critical questions on inclusion and the reproduction of hierarchy in international forums.

In the Media Highlights

- **Payal Arora** joined **Doha Debates** for a discussion on whether we are on the verge of civilization's collapse or rebirth
- Wakanyi Macharia-Hoffman and Weijie Huang presented at the **Solaris EU Project** on deepfake governance and cross-cultural frameworks for Gender AI Safety.
- **Usha Raman** was interviewed by **The Economic Times** on AI and childhood development, highlighting the need to centre children's rights in AI governance.
- **Kirthi Jayakumar** published Part 10 of her **Feminist AI Series** advancing a feminist redefinition of AI security.
- In an interview with **BBC**, **Yichen Rao** argued that systems of discipline reflect broader social anxieties and structural gaps, not individual deviance.

Academic Leadership Highlights



Our work connected research with real-world challenges in AI governance, justice, and design—spanning universities, global conferences, and interdisciplinary forums.

- **Weijie Huang** participated in a roundtable on AI, Gender & Digital Justice at the Global Challenges Conference held at **Leiden University**
- **Yichen Rao** presented how AI intersects with justice, sovereignty, and systems of control in everyday life at “Unjust AI?” at the **Studium Generale Groningen**
- **Pallavi Bansal** delivered a faculty session on feminist design and ethical AI in digital labour platforms at **Christ University, Bangalore**
- **Payal Arora** gave a keynote for **International Communication Association India**
- **Kiran Bhatia** led a workshop on Qual Research for Inclusive AI at **QUAL360 North America**, translating lived experience into safeguards online.
- **Samuel Briones Barrales** defended his PhD on working carers, examining how care systems and labour policies shape work–care balance.

Industry & Business Impact Highlight



Wakanyi Hoffman engaged with entrepreneurs at IESE Business School’s School of Founders programme in Lagos, exploring leadership, culture, and inclusive innovation, and contributed to a global podcast on [Ubuntu ethics and human-centred AI](#).

Payal Arora spoke with [Outlook Business](#) India on the structural challenges shaping India’s AI ecosystem, highlighting the need for sustained investment in deep tech, research, and long-term innovation capacity.

🌟 Recognition & Community

Payal Arora



Inclusive AI champion

Payal Arora was nominated as one of the 8 Women with a New Vision for Earth 2026 by the Global Landscapes Forum, recognizing her work on inclusive AI alongside global leaders across sectors.

🌟 New Team Members

- 🔪 **Samuel Briones Barrales** - Care Tech Researcher
- 🔪 **Adil Boughlala** - Sustainable AI Researcher
- 🔪 **Dennis Nguyen** - AI Methods Lead
- 🔪 **Aashna Narula** - Social Media Team
- 🔪 **Jingzhi Chen** - Visiting PhD Fellow

Beyond technical performance, our work focuses on how AI is encountered, interpreted, and contested in everyday contexts.

Through research and practice, we explore how systems of automation intersect with human experience, governance, and culture—bringing attention to the tensions, trade-offs, and possibilities that emerge when AI moves from abstraction into real-world use.

***In*CLUSIVE AI LAB BLOG SERIES**

Reclaiming Techno-Optimism!



[When “Good Enough” Data Shapes Policy](#) — Shefali Mehra

This piece examines how synthetic data is used in policy contexts, raising questions about how “good enough” data shapes decision-making and what counts as reliable knowledge in AI systems.

[The Dream and the Vertigo](#) — Vincenzo Scagliarini

Drawing on his experience working with AI-driven organizational transformation, this piece explores how AI reshapes work, decision-making, and human relationships.

[The Oldest Way to See Our Newest Problem](#) — Charles Hayes

This piece turns to participatory theatre as a model for AI governance, showing how collective judgment and public engagement can open up decision-making beyond technical and policy elites.

[Life Needs Internet](#) — Jeroen van Loon

Based on over 1,500 handwritten letters collected globally, this project examines how people experience digital technologies across cultures—emphasizing that human interaction with technology is deeply personal, contextual, and cannot be reduced to data.

[What FabLabs Reveal About Building Inclusive AI Futures](#) — Dr. Behnaz Norouzi

This piece examines how synthetic data is used in policy contexts, raising questions about how “good enough” data shapes decision-making and what counts as reliable knowledge in AI systems.

[AI: Designing Artificial Intelligence from African Perspectives](#) — Wakanyi Hoffman

This piece explores how AI design can be grounded in African contexts, emphasizing local knowledge, cultural realities, and the need for systems shaped by and for communities.

[While the West Worries About AI, the South Gets to Work](#) — Payal Arora

This piece contrasts dominant narratives of AI risk with practical approaches in the Global South, where AI is shaped by everyday needs and real-world use.

Spotlight on Our Cohort Fellows

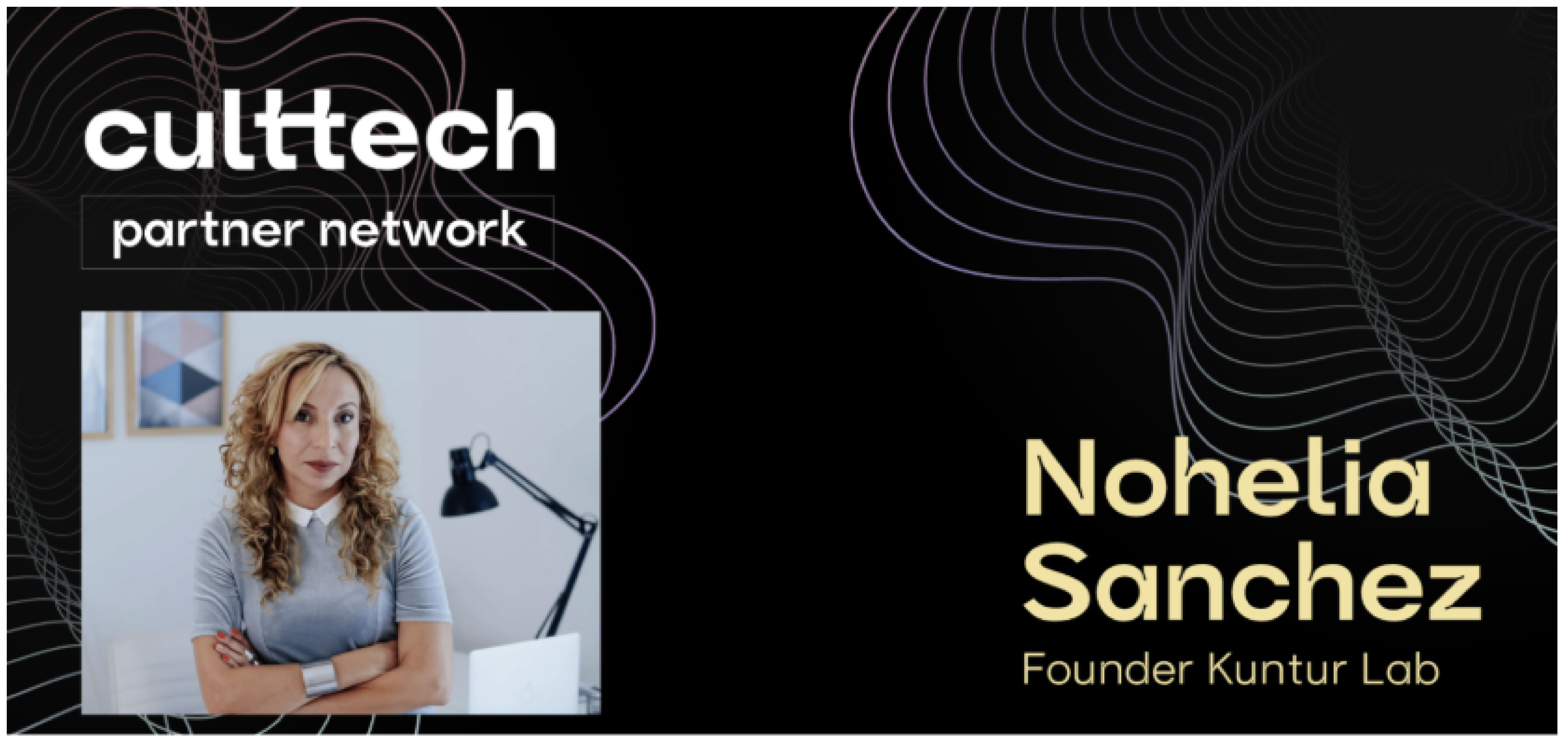
Our fellows contributed to critical conversations on AI employability, humanitarian response, digital governance, and platform accountability—advancing approaches that move beyond critique toward implementation.

Spotlight on Academia

Dyah Pitaloka — Platform Governance & Safety

Dyah Pitaloka co-authored a policy piece on Indonesia’s social media age restrictions, calling for stronger infrastructure and independent oversight to build safer and more accountable digital ecosystems.

[!\[\]\(8aa05b4b06c05d58ddd90cdbf335b307_img.jpg\) Find out more here](#)



Nohelia Sanchez — Creative Economies & CultTech

As co-founder of KunturLab, Nohelia Sánchez was featured in a CultTech Accelerator interview on the development of creative economy ventures in Latin America, and recently joined the program as a mentor supporting startups on growth strategy, scalability, and market positioning.

In an interview on CultTech in Latin America, she also discussed how creative work is shaped by access to tools, funding, and infrastructure, and how emerging technologies are changing how cultural production is organized and sustained.

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 **Spotlight on Civic & Policy**



Heather Leson — Humanitarian AI & Misinformation

Heather Leson was part of the launch of the World Disasters Report 2026 with the International Federation of Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies, examining how harmful information reshapes crisis response and humanitarian action.

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Sumita Sharma — Besties Research

Her 'Besties research' project supported by the Hybrid Intelligence - Human-AI Co-evolution and Learning in Multi-realities (HI) initiative and the University of Oulu got featured in Kaleva, examines how children bond with AI companions, advancing care-led, child-centered AI design that protects wellbeing as these technologies enter everyday life.

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WHAT'S NEXT? MARK YOUR CALENDARS!

 **June 9–12, 2026 – Data CARE Festival**
Across Utrecht, Amsterdam, and The Hague.



Data CARE Festival

At a Glance

4	Days	21	Countries Represented	Nigeria	Indonesia
				China	Colombia
80	Impact Leaders	Adobe	Ikea	Justdiggitt	3D Universum
		Code for Change	Museum Tot Zover	and many more	
1	Shared Vision	FEATURING	Workshops Field Visits Demos Poster Sessions		

AI In

Reclaiming Techno-Optimism | 9-12 June, 2026 

The [Data CARE Festival 2026](#) will bring together 80 global leaders like Adobe, IKEA, JustDiggitt, Code for Change from 21 countries like Nigeria, Indonesia, China and Colombia across academia, policy, industry, and the creative sectors, creating a space for sustained engagement across disciplines and regions.

Thank you for being part of this growing movement to make AI more ethical, inclusive, and human-centered. *Together, we continue to turn inclusion into action.*

- The Inclusive AI Lab Team