FOR 5656 »Communicative AI«

Die Automatisierung der gesellschaftlichen Kommunikation erforschen

“When AI leaves the chat: Communicative AI and the Transformation of Societal Communication”

Date: Thursday, June 3, 2027 (Full day, 8:00am-5:00pm)

Venue: On-site at the ICA27 conference venue in Glasgow, Scotland (Scottish Event Campus or Crowne Plaza Glasgow; the room will be announced in January)

Supported by: ICA Divisions Human-Machine Communication (HMC) and Philosophy, Theory and Critique (PTC)



About the pre-conference

Today’s generative AI is built, marketed and used for one thing above all: communication. For this reason, it makes sense to speak of communicative AI. While communication and media research has for a long time focused primarily on human interaction with communicative AI—with chatbots, voice assistants, social bots—the aim of this pre-conference is to develop a broader, critical perspective: the focus shifts from viewing AI as a mere tool to understanding it as an integral constituent of societal communication. To what extent is the emergence of communicative AI itself driven forward by societal discourses? How does communication in society change with communicative AI? What does this mean for journalism and politics, for public discourse, for media economics, for media use, for legal frameworks; but also for education, health and the private sphere? Which norms should apply to communication

that no longer has an obvious human speaker, and how do such norms in turn shape what communicative AI becomes? And what does it mean for a critical media and communication research in general?

This one-day pre-conference brings together researchers examining these transformations both empirically and theoretically. We invite contributions on empirical findings and theoretical reflections on how communicative AI is imagined, developed, regulated and legally framed as well as on how it is appropriated in different societal domains. The aim of the preconference is to connect empirical insights with overarching theorizing and critical reflection.

We are interested in work that connects empirical analysis with conceptual and normative critique. What is at stake when communicative capacities are ascribed to machines? Which understandings of communication, agency, subjectivity and of "the human" are presupposed when AI systems are described as communicating, whose interests do such descriptions serve, who counts as the speaker of an AI-generated statement and who is answerable for it, and what can a critical media and communication research set against them? Contributions working with a wide range of theoretical perspectives – including phenomenological, critical-theoretical, feminist, postcolonial, legal, and science and technology studies perspectives – are as welcome as empirical case studies. In this sense the pre-conference takes up the ICA 2027 theme "Centering the Human: Communication in an Age of Uncertainty" by not taking "the human" as given, but asking how it is being redefined in and through increasingly automated communication.

We welcome contributions from all theoretical and methodological traditions, including work in progress. Topics might include, but are not limited to:

- the discourses, imaginaries and pioneer communities that drive the development of communicative AI, and the interests they serve;
- the restructuring of communicative fields, such as journalism and public and political communication;
- communicative AI in institutional settings of education, health care, public administration, or the workplace;
- the appropriation of communicative AI in everyday life, in families and in personal relationships;
- legal perspectives on the juridification of communicative AI, from the politics of regulation, standard-setting and AI governance, including questions of liability, intellectual property and digital rights, to speech and media law questions such as the attribution of AI-generated statements, personality rights and the scope of freedom of expression;
- conceptual and normative questions of agency, responsibility, attribution and subjectivity, and what "communication" comes to mean once it is ascribed to machines;

- methodological challenges in studying communicative AI empirically;
- decolonial, feminist and Global South perspectives on communicative AI and its infrastructures.

The day runs as a single track in one shared room: everyone follows the same discussion rather than splitting into parallel sessions. Presentations will be kept short and grouped into thematic blocks, each closed by a prepared response and an extended open discussion. A concluding session will draw the threads together and ask what a shared research agenda on communicative AI could look like. The pre-conference takes place in person only, hybrid participation is not possible.

Submission

Please send an extended abstract of no more than **1,000 words** (excluding references), together with a short biographical note of up to 100 words, as a single PDF to **comai@uni-bremen.de** by **31 January 2027**. Abstracts should make clear what the contribution is and, where applicable, on what material and methods it draws. Submissions do not need to be anonymized, and work in progress is explicitly welcome.

All submissions will be peer reviewed. Neither ICA membership nor registration for the main conference is required in order to take part in the pre-conference.

Participation and registration

There is no registration fee. The pre-conference is financed from the budget of DFG/FWF Research Unit 5656 “Communicative AI”, including the morning break, lunch and afternoon break that ICA provides for all full-day on-site pre-conferences, so that taking part does not depend on institutional funding. Registration opens on 15 January 2027 and is handled through the ICA registration system; the link will be posted on the ICA27 website. Attendance is open to everyone, whether presenting or not – you do not need to have submitted an abstract to register. Places are limited though, so we ask everyone attending to register in advance.

We are committed to ICA’s Inclusion, Diversity, Equity and Access (IDEA) guidelines. In selecting contributions we take account of regional representation – with an explicit effort to include scholars from outside Europe and North America – of gender balance and of career stage, and a number of places is reserved for doctoral and early-career researchers. Dietary requirements are collected on the ICA registration form. Please let us know about any accessibility needs as early as possible, so that we can arrange them in time.

Important Dates

- **Submissions due**: January 31, 2027 (23:59 CET)
- **Reviews due:** February 28, 2027
- **Decision notifications:** mid-March, 2027 (definitely before the early registration rate expires)

Questions about the pre-conference can be sent to Andreas Hepp (ahepp@uni-bremen.de). Further information on Research Unit “Communicative AI” is available at comai.space. We thank the ICA Divisions Human-Machine Communication and Philosophy, Theory and Critique for supporting this pre-conference.

Organizers

Andreas Hepp (ZeMKI, University of Bremen), Florian Hohmann (ZeMKI, University of Bremen), Christian Katzenbach (ZeMKI, University of Bremen), Cornelius Puschmann (ZeMKI, University of Bremen) and Wiebke Loosen (Leibniz Institute for Media Research | Hans-Bredow-Institut, Hamburg) for DFG/FWF Research Unit 5656 “Communicative AI”