

Public values in a digital society: 9 honoured projects

Within the joint call with Adessium Foundation "Public values in a digital society", 9 projects were honored. Among other things, the projects get started with tools for education, research into influencing via (social) media and political targeting. Read more about these projects and what they are working on.

What do we actually know about the influence of Instagram?

How does Instagram decide what messages you see? And what are the implications for the way we view the world: does Instagram shape our opinions? Little or no research has yet been done into the influence of Instagram. This project aims to address that situation by performing a controlled experiment designed to shed light on how the Instagram algorithm works. The experiment will focus on Dutch political accounts and hashtags with a view to testing various hypotheses linked to questions such as how often and how readily the recommendation algorithm shows a post to users. Dutch news outlet NRC Handelsblad is the project's media partner.

[TAMI - Towards a Monitoring of Instagram \(AW AlgorithmWatch gGmbH\)](#)

How tech giants manipulate and impede our communications

WhatsApp, Facebook, YouTube and Instagram. The biggest communication services in the Netherlands are all controlled by two US tech giants. They dominate the information landscape and have a big say in what we can and can't share. What they decide has far-reaching implications. But how much do we actually know about how these platforms work? This project involves the development of Short Manipulation Course, an online tool that reveals the subtle and non-so-subtle ways in which your communications are manipulated or even impeded. And what you can do about it. Curious? Come on the course!

[Short Manipulation Course \(\(Stichting Bits of Freedom\)](#)

Online debate gets youngsters outside their bubbles

Our social and political landscape is becoming more and more polarised. People with different backgrounds and viewpoints are increasingly isolated from one another in the physical *and* electronic worlds. And that is eroding mutual trust and functional democracy. Vox Pop Academy is a digital educational resource that aims to address that issue by enabling online debate amongst young Dutch people. Anonymised discussions with contemporaries who hold opposing views encourage participating youngsters to step outside their bubbles and learn democratic skills. The goal of this Vox Pop Foundation project is to get the Vox Pop Academy used in Dutch secondary schools and to continue its development.

[Vox Pop Academy Secondary Vocational Pilot \(Civinc\)](#)

Who would you like to be guided by? Making the case for algorithmic recommender personae.

Our democracy is based on informed public debate. However, different people get different information. What we get to see on line is silently influenced by algorithmic recommendation systems, giving rise to widespread concerns about the lack of transparency, diversity and control opportunities. This project is therefore investigating the possibility of enabling users to select their own recommender personae. The idea is that the ability to exercise more control over one's information supply will empower individuals, thus reinforcing democracy. So the user might select a 'diplomat' for ideologically opposing news, a 'wizard' to deliver surprising perspectives or an 'explorer' to show more varied content.

[Who would you like to be guided by? Making the case for algorithmic recommender personae. \(Institute for Media Studies, KU Leuven\)](#)

How can you protect yourself against political surveillance?

Political data surveillance of voters is increasingly pervasive. How is your personal data being used for political purposes? And what can you do about it? Tactical Tech wants to inform Dutch citizens about what's happening, and to offer strategies and tools for increasing internet users' awareness and autonomy. They are building upon earlier research on data-driven elections in fourteen countries. This project will involve making a short video and continuing development of the existing [Data Detox Kit](#) to provide detailed, practical guidance on protecting yourself. The tools will be designed for use in the Netherlands and a wider European context.

[Personal Data for Political Purposes: How does it work, what can you do? \(Tactical Technology Collective\)](#)

What's the impact of data? Let's not forget the kids!

Nearly all youngsters have smartphones packed with complex algorithms that control what they get to see. As a result, children are a vulnerable group. SkillsDojo is therefore developing three lesson series on the ethics of artificial intelligence, data and democracy with the aim of letting youngsters aged ten to fourteen discover how they are being influenced and how data and artificial intelligence impact on their lives. Accessible, practical and positive material is used to make young people aware of the relevant issues and what they themselves can do about them. Central to each series are practical videos that can be watched in class or independently at home.

[Lesson Series on the Ethics of Artificial Intelligence, Data and Democracy \(Skillsdojo\)](#)

The future of news provision: filter bubbles versus diversity

Confronted by a flood of information, we increasingly put our trust in personalised recommendations made by automated systems. That's fine for filtering many forms of online information, but has significant implications where news is concerned. The news we see and read shapes our understanding of social issues and supports our decision-making in elections and other situations. It's therefore important that the news stories recommended to us are diverse. Against that background, the Universiteit of Amsterdam and RTL News have developed a 'diversity toolkit' that's already attracting attention in the media world. News organisations can use the toolkit to measure the diversity of their recommendations. This project involves further research and development of the toolkit.

[Algorithms for freedom of expression and a well-informed public \(University of Amsterdam, Institute for Information Law \(IViR\)\)](#)

Online hate and trolling. A survival kit for social influencers.

Anyone who tries to raise an issue or bring about social change – speaking out against Islamophobia, for example, or calling for an end to festive blackface traditions, action on climate change or easier access to contraception – soon finds themselves facing online hate and intimidation. As an activist or campaigner, you need to develop a thick skin to cope with coordinated, hurtful responses and not become discouraged. In this project, DeGoedeZaak is developing a universal, user-friendly and practical toolkit that anyone can use to protect themselves against online hate and trolling.

[More power to you! How social influencers can face down hate. \(DeGoedeZaak\)](#)

Who's using Facebook ads to win your vote?

The WhoTargetsMe browser plug-in provides insight into the political actors that are targeting you using social media advertising. Over 50,000 people in fifty-plus countries have installed the tool, which support twenty languages. The aim of this project is to promote use of the plug-in by Dutch Facebook users. It helps voters understand how online political campaigns are chasing their votes and what they can do about it. WhoTargetsMe has already tracked political advertising in more than twenty election campaigns. Extensive coverage of the 2019 UK general election was recently provided, and work has now started on the US 2020 presidential primaries.

[Who Targets Me? Who's using Facebook ads to win your vote – and how are they doing it?](#)
[\(Understanding Targeting Ltd\)](#)