

AI & Society International Symposium 2026

*Applied AI for Societal Impact in the Global South
Celebrating Four Decades of the AI & Society Journal*

12–15 July 2026

Al Akhawayn University
Ifrane, Morocco

AGENDA

12 July 2026 ACC		
18:00	20:00	Welcome and Early Registration Al Akhawayn University Conference Center
13 July 2026, Al Akhawayn University		
8:00	9:00	Arrival and Registration (Event Room Building 2)
9:00	10:00	Welcome & Honorary Speeches Dr Karim Moustaghfir AVP for the 21st Century Learning Innovation, Al Akhawayn University, Morocco Dr. Amine Bensaid, President Al Akhawayn University Ifrane, Morocco Prof Karamjit Gill, Chief Editor AI & Society Journal, United Kingdom Dr Houda Chakiri, Symposium Chair, Al Akhawayn University Ifrane, Morocco
10:00	11:00	Session 1: Human Values, Rights and Trust in the Age of AI Session Chair: Dr Nasser Assem , Al Akhawayn University, Morocco - AI trajectory: Governance in the Digital Age. Prof Karamjit Gill, Chief Editor AI & Society Journal. - Digital humanism will come true? Dr Alfredo Ronchi, OCCAM representative at UN ECOSOC, Italy.
11:00	11:20	Moderated Discussion Q&A
		Coffee Break & Networking
11:20	13:00	Session 2: Governing AI for the Global South Session Chair: Dr Abderrahim Agnaou , Al Akhawayn University, Morocco - Beyond the Brussels Effect: South Korea's AI Basic Act as a Governance model for societal impact in the global South. Dr Dora Papadopoulou, European Law & Governance School, Greece. - AI in Public Services of Developing Countries: The Digitalisation–AI Readiness Paradox and the Expert-Validated PRIMA Model, Dr Hajar Hadi, Digital Innovation Lab, Al Akhawayn University, Morocco. - Between Empowerment and Opacity: AI, Open Innovation, and the Governance Challenge in Open Government. Wiame Bakkali, Ecole des Science de L'information, Morocco. - A fresh Global South Look at the Ethics of AI: broadening AI ethical governance beyond Western parochial schools of thought. Dr Marc Idelson, HEC Paris, France.
		Moderated Discussion Q&A
13:00	14:00	Campus Tour & Lunch Break
14:00	16:00	Session 3: AI, Knowledge and the Future of Human Collective Intelligence Session Chair: Dr Lakshmi Goel , Dean School of Business Administration, Al Akhawayn University, Ifrane, Morocco - Why looking into the past is not looking into the future: Critiquing 'Dataism'. Dr Rajakishore Nath, Indian Institute of Technology IIT Bombay, India. - The Unreasonable Effectiveness of Next-Token Predictions: LLMs and Epistemic Opacity. Dr Sushruth Ravish, Indian Institute of Technology IIT Kunpur, India

		- Common Good and Digital Rights, - The Biggest Fake in Modern History? Dr Caterina Berbenni-Rehm, PROMIS@Service, EC Ethical Review member and EIC Business Coach for Transition and Accelerator, Italy. - Knowledge Commons, AI, and Digital Humanism: Towards Responsible Stewardship of Collective Intelligence. Dr Abderrahim Agnaou, Al Akhawayn University, Morocco. Moderated Discussion Q&A
16:00	16:20	Coffee Break & Networking
16:20	18:00	Session 4 : AI for Human Development: Education, Healthcare and Well-being Session Chair: Dr Asmae Bentaleb, Ibn Tofail University, Kenitra, Morocco. - Rethinking AI Liability in the Global South: Data Governance, Algorithmic Bias and Risk Based Regulation. Ms Zineb Kharaz, Université Ibn Tofail, Morocco. - A human-centered AI system for equitable classroom participation in resource-limited environments. Dr Adnane Abdelhak, Ibn Tofail University, Morocco. - Copewell: A Multi-Agent Swarm Architecture for Equitable Mental Health Support. Dr Seren Yenikent, Women in AI Global, (Online). Moderated Discussion Q&A
20:30	22:30	Gala Dinner <i>Al Akhawayn University Conference Center</i>

14 July 2026, Al Akhawayn University (Main Campus)		
8:30	9:00	Arrival and Late Registration (Event Room, Building 2)
9:00	11:00	Session 5: Sustainable and Responsible AI for Societal Impact Session Chair : Dr Sofia Ghacham, Women in AI Morocco Ambassador. - AI for conservation-driven orchard management: Integrating probabilistic graphical models and robust optimization under climate uncertainty. Dr Sadeq Damrah, College of Engineering, Australian University, Kuwait. (Online) - Societal Impact of Resource-Rich Language Models in Healthcare: Toward Lightweight, Culturally-Aware Architectures for Low-Resource Languages. Dr Meriem Benhaddi, Faculté des Sciences et Techniques de Marrakech (FST Marrakech), Morocco. - Measuring Who AI Actually Serves: A Leaderboard Architecture for Continuously Observable Language Equity, Dr Andrew Lizzio, CEO Palorma AI Pty Ltd, Australia. Moderated Discussion Q&A
11:00	11:30	Coffee Break
11:30	12:30	Session 6: The Future of AI & Society: priorities for research in the global majority. Session Chair: Dr Violetta Cavalli Sforza, School of Science & Engineering, Al Akhawayn University, Morocco. - Ethics as practical Knowledge : for Social Good. Dr Satinder Gill, Managing Editor AI & Society Journal, UK. - Can we measure a Person's Talent ? AI and Illusionary assessments. Dr Britta Nordin Forsberg, Mälardalen university, Sweden. - Sociotechnical Imaginaries of Artificial Life. Dr Thomas Wilkens, Al Akhawayn University, Morocco. Moderated discussion Q&A
12:30	13:30	Digital Innovation Lab Visit & Poster Session
13:30	14:30	Lunch Break (Restaurant VIP Room)
14:30	16:30	Session 7: Future-Oriented Dialogue: Building the Global Majority AI Research & Policy Agenda Workshop Hosted and co-organized by EngageAI.org Future-Oriented Dialogue and Agenda Setting Session Chair: Dr Emad Tinawi, CEO EngageAI.org The workshop has three objectives, ordered by priority:

		- To produce a Priority Research and Policy Agenda, the workshop's central output, identifying the most urgent research questions and policy priorities for the Global Majority in claiming its AI future across three thematic clusters - To propose one concrete initiative that participants commit to advancing beyond the workshop (to be determined through discussion) - To explore, as a potential longer-term mechanism, the case for an international research consortium on AI & Society in the Global Majority, without formally launching it at this stage
20:30	22:30	AI & Society Editorial Board Meeting <i>(Palais des Cerisiers, Azrou)</i>
15 July 2026		
9:30	20:00	Guided Visit to the Imperial City of Fès (Optional) <i>(Departure and return from the AUI Conference Center)</i>

Poster Session:

- Evaluating AI-Generated Image Fidelity for Climate-Resilient Early Warning in Data-Scarce Regions, Rania Khaoudane, Amine Amar.
- An AI-Based Framework for Citizen Grievance Categorization, Urgency Detection, and Routing, Mohammed Boudrioua, Mira Negra.
- TawthiqID: Voice Grievance Intelligent System with MOSIP Verified Identity and Fine-Tuned ASR Model For Government Services, Ilyass Lhafi, Lina Lasri.
- Automated Information Extraction from Handwritten Arabic Government Documents Using Handwritten Text Recognition (HTR). Niema Alaoui Mdaghri, Salma Madoud, Hiba Barroug, Nada El Yassenasni.
- XGBoost-Based Wildfire Occurrence Prediction in Morocco: Evaluating Generalization Across Spatial, Temporal, and Weather-Station Validation Regimes. Marouane Erraisse, Razane Souane, Wiame Hara.

Background and Rationale

Artificial Intelligence (AI) is increasingly embedded in societal systems, influencing decision-making, public services, economic models, cultural production, and everyday life. While AI innovation is often driven by technical performance and market forces, its societal, ethical, governance, and human implications require sustained interdisciplinary engagement.

The AI & Society Symposium 2026 is conceived as a cross-sector and interdisciplinary forum bringing together diverse perspectives on AI, spanning technical development, governance, ethics, public policy, social sciences, philosophy, and business practice. The symposium recognizes that responsible, inclusive, and sustainable AI cannot emerge from technical innovation alone, but rather from continuous dialogue between technological, societal, institutional, and human-centered perspectives.

The symposium aligns with the interdisciplinary tradition of AI & Society, Journal of Knowledge, Culture and Communication (Springer Nature), which for four decades has explored the societal, cultural, ethical, and communicative dimensions of artificial intelligence. Organized in the context of the journal's 40-year anniversary, the symposium offers an opportunity both to reflect on past contributions and to engage with emerging challenges and future directions for AI in society.

Beyond a scholarly gathering, the symposium is envisioned as a catalyst for sustained collaboration, research exchange, and long-term capacity building. Building on prior initiatives hosted at Al Akhawayn University, the event aims to strengthen interdisciplinary dialogue and foster continuity through research networks, joint initiatives, and collaborative activities extending beyond the symposium itself. Particular attention will be given to AI deployment in African and Global South contexts, where structural, historical, institutional, and capacity-related constraints shape the trajectories of digital transformation.

Rather than positioning itself as another general AI or business-oriented event, the symposium seeks to emphasize AI's societal and public-interest dimensions, with a focus on public innovation, social impact, digital inclusion, civic technologies, human-centered AI, and equitable technological development for Africa and the Global South.

The symposium would also serve as a foundational platform to initiate a collaborative framework for responsible and inclusive AI deployment adapted to African realities. In this perspective, the event would lay the groundwork for the creation of a multi-stakeholder working group dedicated to elaborating a medium-term community of practice for AI & Society in Africa, bringing together academic institutions, public-sector actors, civil society, industry, and international partners around shared priorities in public innovation, social impact, digital inclusion, civic technologies, human-centered design, and equitable technological development.

Objectives

The symposium aims to:

- Foster cross-disciplinary dialogue on AI's societal, ethical, economic, and governance implications.
- Bring together research, practice, policy, and industry perspectives on AI and encourage collaboration between various stakeholders.
- Highlight inclusive and responsible AI approaches relevant to diverse global contexts.
- Generate high-quality scholarly and reflective outputs contributing to AI & Society discourse.
- Contribute to sustained impact by enabling follow-up collaborations, research initiatives, and institutional partnerships emerging from the symposium.
- Identify forward-looking research priorities, methodological gaps, and emerging challenges for AI applications in the Global South.

Key Dimensions and Themes

The symposium will be organized around complementary dimensions, including:

- Applied Technical Solutions for Local Challenges: AI applications in areas such as climate resilience, agriculture, health, education, urban services, and public administration, with emphasis on deployment in resource-constrained environments and contexts characterized by limited technical capacity or structural barriers to digital transformation.
- Societal and Ethical Dimensions: Fairness, accountability, inclusion, human-centered AI, and social impact
- Philosophical and Conceptual Reflections: Agency, responsibility, values, and meaning in socio-technical systems
- Governance, Policy, and Regulation: AI governance frameworks, public sector use, and digital rights
- Economic and Business Perspectives: AI innovation, entrepreneurship, deployment challenges, and organizational impact

Future-Oriented Dialogue and Agenda Setting

In addition to thematic sessions, the symposium will include a forward-looking workshop dedicated to identifying priority research questions, underexplored domains, and methodological challenges for AI in the Global South. This dialogue aims to contribute to a collective reflection on future directions for interdisciplinary AI scholarship and practice. One anticipated outcome of this workshop is the initiation of international research working group on AI & Society in the Global South, bringing together scholars, practitioners, and institutions committed to advancing collaborative research, knowledge exchange, and joint initiatives addressing the societal implications of AI in emerging and developing contexts.

Stakeholders and Partners

The symposium is organized by the Digital Innovation Lab (DIL), Al Akhawayn University in Ifrane, Morocco, with the support of strategic partners and sponsors including :

- AI & Society Journal (Springer Nature), whose long-standing interdisciplinary focus on the societal and cultural implications of artificial intelligence provides an important intellectual foundation for the symposium;
- EngageAI, is an international nonprofit organization advancing responsible and inclusive AI dialogue and governance to support sustainable development, particularly in Global Majority countries.
- Afretec coordinated through Carnegie Mellon University Africa, which advances technology-driven capacity building, innovation, and digital transformation across African higher education institutions.
- Upanzi Network, which supports digital innovation, digital public infrastructure, and inclusive technological ecosystems across Africa.
- Women in AI Morocco, a nonprofit community dedicated to making artificial intelligence inclusive, ethical, and accessible for all. Through education, mentorship, and community-driven projects, we provide Moroccan women with the tools and network to become leaders in technology.
- IEEE WIE Region 8 one of the world's largest professional networks dedicated to empowering women in engineering, science, and technology. Through mentorship, leadership development, collaboration, and advocacy, IEEE WIE Region 8, covering Europe, the Middle East, and Africa, promotes diversity, inclusion, and the advancement of women in STEM.

Participants and contributors will include AI researchers, data scientists, philosophers, social scientists, policymakers, civil society actors, and business leaders from diverse geographic and professional backgrounds. The symposium will also explore complementary activities aligned with its objectives, including collaborative research initiatives and partnership pathways designed to reinforce sustained institutional engagement beyond the event.

Scholarly Outputs

Selected contributions from the symposium will be invited for submission to AI & Society, subject to the journal's standard editorial and peer-review processes. Possible formats include symposium notes, reflective essays, position papers, or a thematic collection, aligned with the journal's interdisciplinary scope.

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