



MAX PLANCK INSTITUTE
FOR HUMAN DEVELOPMENT



جامعة
حمد بن خليفة
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UNIVERSITY



Divan Symposium on Cross- Cultural Artificial Intelligence



October 9th & 10th, 2025

Der Divan is pleased to welcome you to the **Symposium on Cross-Cultural Artificial Intelligence**, organised in cooperation with the Center for Humans & Machines at the Max Planck Institute for Human Development, Berlin and Hamad Bin Khalifa University (HBKU), Doha, Qatar.

We invite you to join us for two days of interdisciplinary exchange, exploring one of today's most significant questions: How do different cultures perceive AI, and how can we design technology that honours and reflects the cultural diversity of our world?

In an era marked by rapid technological advancement, building AI technologies that are culturally aware, respectful, and inclusive has become increasingly vital. The Symposium stands at this critical juncture, seeking to address this challenge and rethink the foundations of AI through a cross-cultural lens. It will bring together experts in computer science, behavioural science, ethics, law, and cultural studies to bridge the gap between cutting-edge AI technology and the deep, often unspoken ethical and cultural dimensions that underpin our societies. Our goal is not only to discuss how AI can be developed to be culturally sensitive and uphold diverse systems of value, languages, and religious principles but also to address the technical, conceptual, legal, and ethical challenges inherent in this endeavor.

When: October 9th & 10th, 2025

Where: Der Divan – Das Arabische Kulturhaus, Schützallee 27, 14169 Berlin

Language: English

The programme will cover a wide range of topics, including:

- **Cultural Sensitivity in AI Design:** How can AI systems be designed to respect and reflect diverse cultural norms and values?
- **Ethical AI Across Cultures:** What ethical frameworks can guide AI development in ways that honour different cultural, religious and philosophical traditions?
- **Language and Representation:** How can we overcome linguistic barriers and biases in AI, ensuring all cultures and languages are represented?
- **Legal and Governance Challenges:** How do international legal frameworks shape AI development and deployment?
- **AI and Cultural Heritage:** Can AI help preserve endangered languages and cultural practices while respecting the rights and wishes of indigenous communities?
- **Interfaith and Intercultural Dialogues:** How can AI facilitate understanding and dialogue between different religious and cultural communities?
- **Technical Challenges:** What are the limitations and possibilities of developing culturally sensitive AI?
- **AI and Culture Wars:** How are AI models becoming contested spaces of cultural influence?

School on AI & Culture

October 9, 2025

Ahead of the symposium, we will host a full-day school, welcoming MSc and PhD students from German and international universities. The school will focus on developing better cross-cultural AI systems, exploring topics from Natural Language Processing to the evaluation of Large Language Models.

Students are expected to bring their own laptops and should have prior experience in computer programming, as well as familiarity with modern generative AI technologies, such as LLMs.

Speakers:

Dr. Rafiya Javed (Google DeepMind)

Talk title: Exploring AI Reasoning on Human Rights Scenarios in Localized Cultural Contexts

Prof. Mustafa Jarrar (Hamad Bin Khalifa University & Birzeit University)

Prof. Ingmar Webber (Saarland University)

Talk title: Can You See Culture from Space?

Abstract: Today, more than a thousand Earth observation (EO) satellites image our planet. With recent progress in computer vision, analyzing this data automatically has become much easier, especially for non-experts. Yet EO imagery is still rarely used in social science research. In this session, we ask how satellite images can help study culture around the globe. The first half of the session steps back to show what kinds of satellite imagery exist, how to access them, and which social patterns and behaviors might be visible from space. The second half is hands-on: students will sketch a study idea and run a first exploration using free satellite imagery. By the end, participants will know where to find open EO data, judge when a cultural signal is likely visible, and creatively reuse EO data to form and test research questions.

Dr. Mengchen Dong (Max Planck Institute for Human Development)

Symposium on Cross-Cultural AI

October 10, 2025

Confirmed speakers:

Prof. Iyad Rahwan (Max Planck Institute for Human Development)

Prof. Mohammed Ghaly (Hamad Bin Khalifa University)

Prof. Ingmar Weber (Saarland University)

Talk title: **Slow AI: When the Journey is the Destination**

Abstract: A usual software design mantra is “don’t make the user think”. Using software should be effortless and help get the user’s job done as quickly as possible. While this is often desirable, this efficiency-first approach can be detrimental for democracies where engagement with societal discussions, rather than just ticking a box should be the goal. In our goal, we explore who “slow AI” could be used to make people think more, not less. We believe that this could also help with cross-cultural understanding, where people might default to caricature-like assumptions about the other side.

Dr. Rafiya Javed (Google DeepMind)

Talk title: Do LLMs 'Believe' In Equal Rights for all? A Benchmark on Human Rights and Future Directions

Prof. Mona Diab (Carnegie Mellon University)

Prof. Mustafa Jarrar (Hamad Bin Khalifa University & Birzeit University)

Talk title: Culturally Aware Datasets for Arabic LLMs

Abstract: AI models are often biased toward the datasets used in pre-training or fine-tuning, which may not represent the diversity of human values, cultures, and ethics. This talk will present a wide range of datasets developed for Arabic NLP, spanning various dialects, domains, and modalities, including text, audio, and images. It will highlight multiple resources for Arabic dialects, morphological tagging, semantic analysis and word sense disambiguation, named entity recognition, relation extraction, hate speech detection, bias and propaganda detection, culturally-aware prompting, image captioning, among others.

Dr. Sanjay Chawla (Hamad Bin Khalifa University)

Talk title: FANAR Arabic-Centric Multi-Modal Generative AI Platform

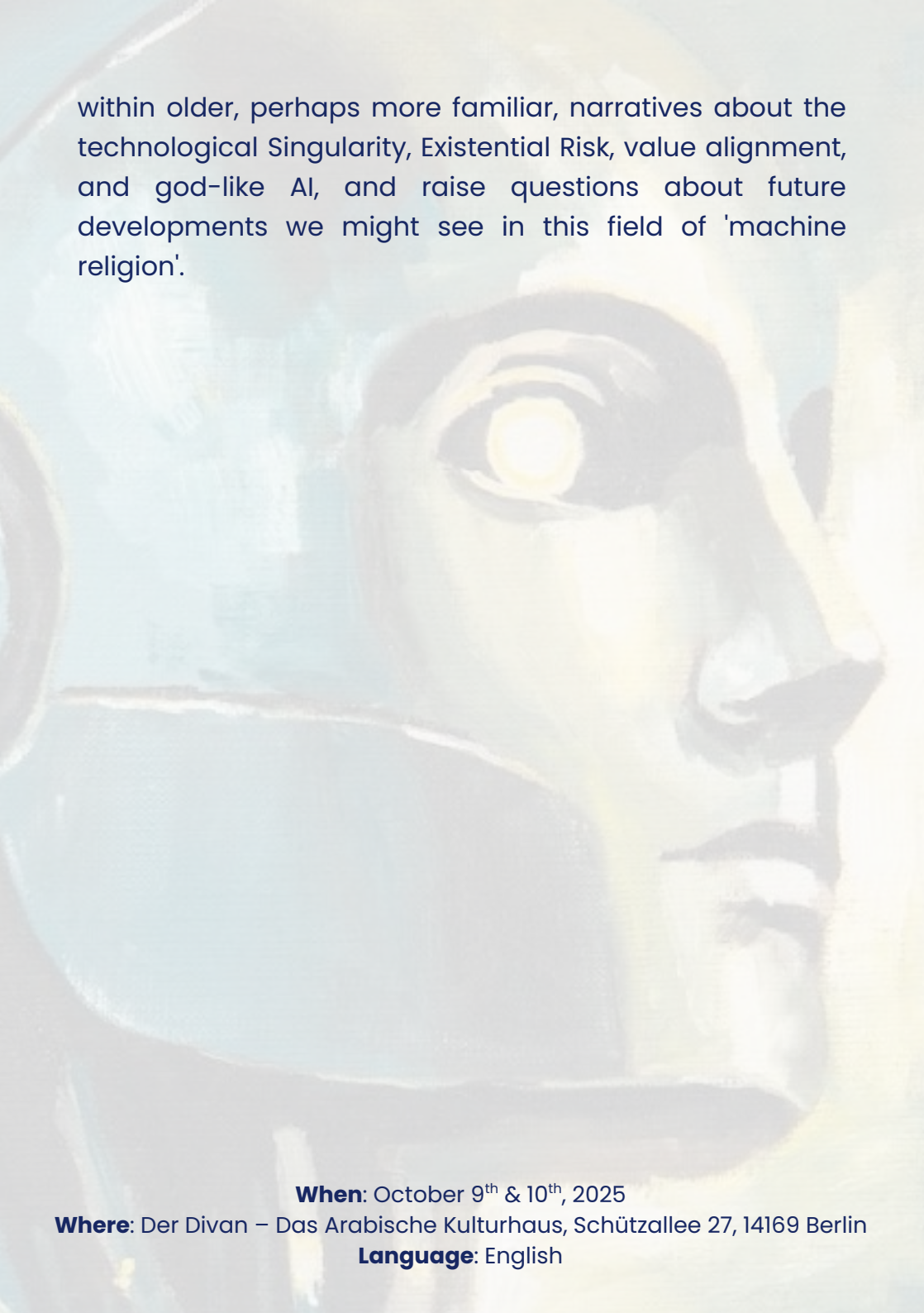
Abstract: FANAR is a groundbreaking Generative AI platform developed by the Qatar Computing Research Institute (QCRI) at Hamad Bin Khalifa University (HBKU), and sponsored by the Ministry of Communications and Information Technology (MCIT). It aims to seamlessly integrate the richness of the Arabic language and its dialects, regional culture, and Islamic values with the forefront of artificial intelligence innovation. FANAR seeks to establish Qatar as a leader in culturally aligned AI, ensuring digital sovereignty for the Arab world and addressing significant market needs for advanced Arabic AI technologies. Fanar encompasses several features including text-based Large Language Models (LLMs), speech and image generation systems, specialized Retrieval Augmented Generation (RAG) modules, and an attribution service to authenticate and correct facts in generated text.

Dr. Hassan Abu Alhaija (NVIDIA)

Prof. Beth Singler (University of Zurich)

Talk title: Machine Religion: Emergent LLM Focussed Spiritualities and New AI Cultures

Abstract: Drawing on recent research being done at the URPP in Digital Religion(s) at the University of Zurich, Professor Beth Singler, an anthropologist of AI and religion, will introduce and contextualise some new trends in human-LLM interactions in her paper. Included will be examples of the new social and cultural influences occurring through and beyond individuals' singular experiences of the LLM and responses to its outputs. Examples of the wider impact of these new relations to the machine Other include developing communities and cultures. These loosely affiliated groups have their own understandings of how communication with LLMs occurs, the nature of LLMs/AI and are seekers for signs of any new non-Human Others to engage with. The influence of such ideas as they are shared through these networks as well as reported by the Media grows. We will also specifically note how the orientation of such conversations tends towards the religious and the spiritual, as LLM programmed sycophancy lends itself to eschatological improvisations. The developing communities of thought around LLMs also therefore is shaped by a religious sensibility, norms, narratives, and aesthetics. In considering such examples of new "LLM-Theisms" and religious improvisations, Singler will locate also them



within older, perhaps more familiar, narratives about the technological Singularity, Existential Risk, value alignment, and god-like AI, and raise questions about future developments we might see in this field of 'machine religion'.

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Program

09.10.2025 | School on AI & Culture

09:00 – 09:15 *Welcome + Coffee*

09:15 – 10:45 Mengchen Dong (*Max Planck Institute for Human Development*)

10:45 – 11:00 *Break*

11:00 – 12:30 Mustafa Jarrar (*Hamad Bin Khalifa University & Birzeit University*)

12:30 – 13:30 *Lunch*

13:30 – 15:00 Ingmar Weber (*Saarland University*)

15:00 – 15:15 *Break*

15:15 – 16:45 Rafiya Javed (*Google DeepMind*)

10.10.2025 | Symposium on Cross-Cultural AI

08:45 – 09:15 *Registration + Coffee*

09:15 – 09:25 Welcome | Abdalla Al Hamar (*Chairman of the Divan board*)

09:30 – 09:45 Special remarks | Ahmad M. Hasnah

09:45 – 10:00 SOpening Presentation | Iyad Rahwan

Session 1: AI and Religion

10:00 - 10:15 Mohammed Ghaly (Hamad Bin Khalifa University) Charting the Two-Way Encounter: Artificial Intelligence (AI) and the Islamic Moral Tradition

10:15- 10:30 Beth Singler (University of Zurich)
Machine Religion: Emergent LLM Focussed Spiritualities and New AI Cultures

10:30 - 10:50 Panel Discussion | Moderator: Annette Zimmermann

11:00 – 11:30 Coffee break

Session 2: Measurement of Culture & Bias

11:30 - 11:45 Ingmar Webber (Saarland University) Slow AI: When the Journey is the Destination

11:45 - 12:00 Rafiya Javed (Google DeepMind)
Do LLMs exhibit demographic parity in responses to queries about Human Rights?

12:00- 12:20 Panel Discussion | Moderator: Matthew J. Dennis

12:30 – 13:30 Lunch

Session 3: The Challenge of Low Resource Languages

13:00 – 13:45 Mona Diab (Carnegie Mellon University) Hire Your Anthropologist! Towards Truly Culturally Aware Gen AI

13:45 – 14:00 Mustafa Jarrar (Hamad Bin Khalifa University & Birzeit University)

Culturally Aware Datasets for Arabic LLMs

14:00 – 14:20 Panel Discussion | Moderator: Mengchen Dong

Session 4: Engineering Generative AI

15:00 – 15:15 Sanjay Chawla (Hamad Bin Khalifa University)

FANAR Arabic-Centric Multi-Modal Generative AI Platform

15:15 – 15:30 Hassan Abu Alhaija (NVIDIA)

15:30 – 15:50 Panel Discussion | Moderator: Levin Brinkmann

16:00 – 16:15 Coffee break

16:15 – 16:45 Keynote Presentation | Jürgen Pfeffer (Technical University of Munich)

Towards a Global Ethos for the AI-Driven World

16:45 – 17:00 Keynote Q&A