Responsible Digital Transformations
Call for Interdisciplinary research projects for funding under the UvA IP

'Responsible Digital Transformations' showcases, assembles and deepens research on digital transformation across the University of Amsterdam, in close cooperation with societal partners. The theme focuses on the technology and the ethical, legal and societal aspects of digital algorithms, systems, and platforms, and their impact on trust, dependence, and equality in society.

Our aim is twofold:

First, to understand, analyze and critique digital transformations across a number of issue areas, including but not limited to (municipal) governance, policing, education and healthcare, and to map their societal, legal and ethical implications, with a particular interest in inclusion and risk of bias and exclusion.

Second, to map, test, and experiment with modes and mechanisms of responsibility that address the exclusionary effects of digital transformation through innovative methodologies including but not limited to sandboxing, scenario modeling, and science fiction narration.

Digital technologies have unlocked new social benefits. From connecting people to sharing and accessing information, digital technologies have made a huge impact on how people communicate, collaborate, work, and learn. Digital technologies have shown promise to facilitate innovative solutions to social problems such as affordable healthcare, poverty, and functional democratic processes. Initiatives like open-access educational resources or the innovation of 'digital twins' in healthcare - virtual representations of patients from rich data – offer improved access and data flows.

Nevertheless, digital transformation and technologies have severe social consequences as is evidenced in the social and racialized exclusion about – for example – predictive policing, municipal governance, and risk assessment for benefit fraud. Although digital initiatives can help flatten traditional hierarchies and mobilize social activism, they also (re)produce inequality and (re)create marginalization in new ways. Increasingly, (vulnerable) people are left out of a fast-changing digital life leading to a digital divide between those who have skills and access to digital technologies and those who do not. It also raises the question of how digital technologies and machine learning systems create new types of (racialized) exclusion that need to be addressed.

What are the processes and dynamics that can result in inequality and marginalization and how can we address them? What is needed to empower vulnerable and marginalized groups to benefit from digital transformations? How can we develop and implement technologies and business processes to facilitate responsibility and transparency and include a broad range of stakeholders? We need to understand – for example – how to prevent mental health issues due to misuse of social media, how to bring accountability to work against online surveillance and ensure enhanced privacy, and how to foster new modes of responsibility in relation to predictive policing.

With its responsible digital transformation theme, UvA is committed to critically researching datafication, algorithmization, and platformization, and their impact on inequality, society, regulation, and fundamental rights. Dialogue between technical and social research is crucial here: societal

prejudice overshadows technological development and valuable social knowledge is insufficiently considered in technological 'solutionism'. Dialogue has to be fostered between, for example, software engineers, technology designers, database specialists, social justice experts, and philosophers of responsibility.
We are open to all proposals that work with societal partners and across faculties and disciplinary interests to address fairness, accountability, and transparency of digital transformations.

We invite research groups that work together with external partners on societal questions. We explicitly encourage interdisciplinary co-creation methodologies that integrate the voice of citizens, organizations, government, or companies into the research design, and by that facilitate new dialogues with societal partners, including but not limited to municipal governments, non-governmental organizations, museums, and policymakers.

In the call for **Mid-size projects (Instrument II, to a maximum of € 400k)** we invite proposals that spur the dialogue between technical and social research while developing and deepening our focus on engaging non-academic institutions with the research at UvA. The interdisciplinary novel research projects we are looking for will actively engage societal partners with co-researching/co-developing methodologies from across the arts and sciences. We are especially interested in building upon existing research within the UvA to continue excellent research and provide it with a more long-term basis.

In the call for **Seed grants (Instrument I, to a maximum of € 15-50 k)**, we invite proposals from interdisciplinary research teams that can stimulate the dialogue between technical and social research and illustrate the societal importance of this approach. We welcome innovative proposals from across the spectrum of responsible digital transformation including those that build on the AI4Society Sandbox project from our *first 2022 round of seed grants*.