

# Payal Arora, PhD

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*Professor and Chair in Technology, Values, and Global Media Cultures, [Erasmus University](#)  
Co-Founder, [FemLab.Co](#) and Founder of [Catalyst Lab](#)  
Section Editor for *University of California Press journal – [Global Perspectives](#)**

## **Contact**

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## **Bio**

Payal Arora is a Professor and Chair in Technology, Values, and Global Media Cultures at Erasmus University Rotterdam. She is also the Founder and Executive Director of a digital activism organization, Catalyst Lab and Co-Founder of FemLab.co. She is the author of several books including *Dot Com Mantra: Social Computing in the Central Himalayas* (Ashgate, 2010), *The Leisure Commons* (Routledge, 2015; Winner of the EUR Fellowship Award), and, *The Next Billion Users: Digital Life beyond the West* (Harvard Press, 2019; Winner of the 2019 PROSE Award). She is the co-editor of *Crossroads in New Media, Identity & Law: The Shape of Diversity to Come* (Palgrave, 2015). Much of her research focuses on digital cultures, global inequality, and data governance in the Global South. She has published over 60 papers in her field and has given 200+ presentations in 109 cities in 54 countries, including a TEDx talk on the future of the internet. She has shared the stage with Jimmy Wales and Steve Wozniak to deliver keynotes on the making of an inclusive internet. Her work has been extensively covered by numerous global media outlets including The Economist, NRC, The Nation, BBC, NDTV-India, F.A.Z, De Standaard, TechCrunch, Quartz, CBC, Salon, and Vrij Nederland. Forbes called her the “next billion champion” and the right kind of person to change tech. She has consulted for both the public and private sector including hp, KPMG, Dutch Brewers, GE, and UNESCO. Her teaching has been recognized with best teacher nominations and awards including the prestigious University Education Prize in 2017. Arora sits on several boards/advisory committees such as the Facebook Social Science One, Columbia University Earth Institute’s Connect to Learn, and The World Women Global Council in New York. She was a Columnist for the Erasmus Magazine (2017-2019) and is the Media and Communication Section Editor for the Global Perspective Journal, a University of California Press journal. She has held Fellow positions at NYU Steinhardt, GE, Rio’s Institute of Technology and Society and ZEMKI at the University of Bremen. She has degrees from Harvard University (MA in International Development Policy) and Columbia University (Doctorate in Language, Literacy & Technology) and a Teaching Certification from the University of Cambridge.

## **Employment History**

Sept 2019-Current: Full Professor and Chair, ESPHIL, Erasmus Univ.

Jan 2015-Sept 2019: Associate Professor, Dept. of Media & Communication, Erasmus Univ.

Sept 2009- Dec 2014: Assistant Professor, Dept. of Media & Communication, Erasmus Univ.

## **Education**

2005-2009 Columbia University in New York City PhD (International and Transcultural Studies: Kellogg funded Doctorate)

2003-2004 Harvard University, Cambridge MA (International Policy: Deans List)

1996-1999 Mount Carmel College Bangalore BA (English Literature)

## **Fellowships**

2018: ZEMKI Visiting Research Fellow, University of Bremen

2015-2016: NYU Steinhardt Visiting Fellow, Media, Culture, & Communication dept.

2015: The Institute of Technology and Society (ITS) Global Fellow, Rio, Brazil

2014-2015: GE Fellow on the Industrial Internet Project, NY

### ***Awards & Grants (10/16)***

2020-2023 Co-Principle Investigator (PI), IDRC grant for Organizing digitally in South Asia (250,000€)

2017-2020 member WISEACT COST ACTION on Autonomous Vehicles & Smart Cities

2018 SNIP grant for the 'Global Privacy Culture' project. (10,000€)

2018 Visiting research fellowship at the ZeMKI, Centre for Media, Communication and Information Research, University of Bremen (4500€)

2018 Grant for Catalyst Lab student led initiative 'Diversify,' a social media campaign on diversity (2500€)

2016-2018 Network Member for the Development implications of digital economies (DIODE) research network (Professor Heeks as PI, 160,000€)

2016: PI: UNESCO Grant-Prizes on Innovation in the Global South (10,000\$)

2015: PI: Dutch Brewers Association Grant- Digital Public Engagement (10,000€)

2014: Co-PI: Netherlands Institute for Advanced Study Grant-New Cultural Commons (12,000€)

2014: PI: Erasmus Support Grant- Public Intelligence (9,200€)

2014: PI: General Electric Grant-Industrial Internet Project (20,000€)

### ***Publications***

#### ***Books (4/4)***

- **Arora, P.** (2019). *The next billion users: Digital Life beyond the West*. Harvard University Press. (A)
- Been, W., **Arora, P.**, & Hildebrandt, M. (2015). *Crossroads in New Media, Identity & Law: The Shape of Diversity to Come*. Palgrave.
- **Arora, P.** (2014). *The Leisure Commons: A Spatial History of Web 2.0*. Studies in Science, Technology & Society Series. Routledge/ Taylor & Francis (Winner of the EUR Fellowship Award)
- **Arora, P.** (2010). *Dot com mantra: Social computing in the Central Himalayas*. Ashgate.

#### ***Recent Peer reviewed International Journal articles and book chapters (12/64)***

- **Arora, P.**, & Raman, U. (2021). Chapter on 'Fair Work, Feminist Design and Women's Labour Collectives' in Graham, M & Ferrari, F. *"Digital Work in the Planetary Market,"* MIT Press [open access].
- Rusch, N., & **Arora, P.** (2021). Chapter on 'AI-based Strategies to Combat Wildlife Trafficking and Wet Markets in Asia' in 'The Next Digital Decade – Policy Approaches from Asia,' *Konrad-Adenauer Stiftung*
- **Arora, P.** (2020). *Unchain the human in the global value chain*. Chapter in 'The Great Re-design' NEXT Hamburg.
- Muhlbach, S. & **Arora, P.** (2020). Behind the music: How labor changed for musicians through the subscription economy, *First Monday*
- **Arora, P.** (2019). Politics of algorithms, Indian citizenship and the colonial legacy. In A. Punathambekar & S. Mohan (eds.) *Global Digital Cultures: Perspectives from South Asia*. University of Michigan Press [open access.]
- **Arora, P.** (2019). Benign dataveillance? Examining novel data-driven governance systems in India and China. In Special Issue: 'Data-Driven Models Of Governance Across Borders: datafication from the local to the global,' *First Monday*, 24(4)

- **Arora, P.** (2019). GDPR - a global standard? Privacy futures, digital activism and surveillance cultures in the Global South, *Surveillance & Society*
- **Arora, P.** (2018). Decolonizing privacy studies. In S. Milan, and E. Treré (Eds) Special issue, 'Big Data from the South: Beyond Data Universalism,' *Television and New Media*, 20(4), 366-378.
- **Arora, P.** & Thompson, H. L. (2018). Crowdsourcing as a platform for digital labour unions, *International Journal of Communication*, 12, 2314–2332.
- **Arora, P.**, & Schreiber, L. (2017). Slumdog romance: Facebook love and digital privacy in the global South, *Media, Culture & Society*, 39(3), 408–422.
- **Arora, P.** (2016). Bottom of the data pyramid: Big data and the global south, *International Journal of Communication*, 10, 1681–1699
- Rangaswamy, N., & **Arora, P.** (2016). The mobile internet in the wild and every day: Digital leisure in the slums of urban India. *International Journal of Cultural Studies*, 19(6), 611-626.
- **Arora, P.**, & Rangaswamy, N. (2014). ICTs for leisure in development: a case for motivation, exploration, and play in the global South. *Information Technologies & International Development*, 10(3), v-x.

#### Reports (2/4)

- **Arora, P.** (2019). *The next billion users market: Ten novel thought habits to reach this new market*. KPMG India Report.
- **Arora, P.** (2016). *Prizes for innovation: Impact analysis in the ICTs for Education sector*, UNESCO Report.

#### ***Speaking Engagements***

##### Keynotes and Invited lectures (12/135)

- Nov 2020, Tokyo. *Keynote*: “Global Digital Well-being,” MashingUP Summit.
- Nov 2020, Stockholm. *Keynote*: ‘Tech design for the NBU,’ The Swedish Internet Foundation.
- Oct 2020, The Hague). *Keynote*: “Digital Civic Power,” Partos Innovation Festival 2020Sept 2019, Hamburg. *Keynote*: The next billion users, NEXT19, Hamburg.
- Sept 2019, Copenhagen. *Keynote* at the annual public Tech festival with Jimmy Wales (founder of Wikipedia) and Chris Messina (founder of the hashtag) (Sept 5-7), Copenhagen Municipality.
- June 2019, London, UK. *Keynote*: Including the Next Billion, Digital Inclusion Policy and Research Conference 2019, University of Liverpool.
- Jan 2019, Hong Kong. *Keynote*: Privacy amid the global data order, Fairness, Accountability, Transparency (FAT)/Asia – Hong Kong, Digital Asia Hub. The Ethics and Governance of AI Initiative and the Konrad Adenauer Stiftung.
- Nov. 2018, Hamburg: *Keynote*: Ethics and Information Technology, Universität Hamburg ‘Regulated data. Regulated activism? Digital activism in the GDPR era.’
- Apr 2018, Salzburg: *Keynote*: Democracy and (Dis)Information Society, Universität Salzburg, Karlsruher Institut für Technologie and Universität Münster, ‘When exotic digital cultures become mainstream.’
- Apr 2017, Oslo: *Keynote*: Oromo Quest for Transformation Conference, Oromo Studies Association, ‘Digital cultures for social activism and change in the global South.’
- June 2015, Vienna: *Keynote*: IS4IS Summit Vienna 2015, ‘The Information Society at the Crossroads’
- Feb 2015: Berkeley: *Keynote*: Technology, Knowledge and Society & University of California Berkeley, ‘Big Data and the Politics of Participation in a Digital Age.’
- Oct 2015, Rhodes: *Keynote*: Rhodes Public Forum, ‘Digital Media, Digital Transition and Internet of Things.’

### Conference Presentations (3/75)

- Lead Organizer of panel with Taylor, L., Martin, A., & Jameson, S. (2018) 'Data and the Global South,' Discrimination, inequality and immigration Themed division, *Amsterdam Privacy Conference* (Oct. 5-8), Amsterdam.
- Lead organizer of roundtable with Kraidy, M., Jiang, M., Udupa, S., Willems, W., Gajjala, on Colonial Imaginations, Techno-Oligarchs and Digital Technology, *International Communication Association* (ICA), (24-28 May), Prague.
- Arora, P. (2017). Emerging databased democracies in China and India, Organized by *GESIS Leibniz Institute for the Social Sciences / The Alan Turing Institute/Nokia Bell Labs*, (Nov 15-17), London.

### ***External Academic Service (Selection 4/25)***

2019 - Current: Section editor University of California Press Journal – Global Perspectives

2017 - Current: Asian Advisory Committee member, Facebook: Social Science One initiative

2015 - Current: Advisory Board Member, Columbia's Earth Institute, Connect to Learn

2015 - Current: Advisory Board Member, Technology, Knowledge and Society Association

### ***Media Presence (20/85)***

Nov 5, 2020. *Financieele Dagblad* (Financial Times, The Netherlands) on How do you reach a billion new customers? 'By Listening To Them'

Oct 23, 2020. *99%Invisible* Podcast, Radiotopia interview with Google on The next billion

Mar 13, 2020. Quartz India interview on Inside the Chinese dating apps exploiting the loneliness of India's men

Aug 26, 2019. *Forbes* named Payal Arora the "Next Billion champion" in their article 10,000 People In Copenhagen Are About To Determine A Better Future For You

Aug 11, 2019. *Africa Development news* interview on the Next Billion Users

Aug 1, 2019). *Creative Next* podcast on How AI and Automation will change the world

July 29, 2019. We the People *NDTV* Indian Television Talk Show: How is technology impacting Culture?

July 27, 2019. *Engaget*: Hitting the Books: Modern surveillance and 'the science of happiness'

July 24, 2019. *Strategy + Business*: A new view of the fortune at the bottom of the digital pyramid

July 7, 2019. *El Confidential* (Spanish) Interview on book: Why do they use the internet in poor countries? Same reasons as we do.

June 8, 2019. *The Economist*: How the pursuit of leisure drives internet use

May 14, 2019. *The Nation*: The Race for Global Internet Access Is Not a Zero-Sum Game: Payal Arora's The Next Billion Users turns a critical eye to the humanitarian push to connect the globe.

March 6, 2019. *De Standaard* (Dutch) Interview: That the poor use the internet primarily for entertainment? So what?

March 8, 2019. *Tech Crunch* interview: Who are the next billion users and what do they want?

March 17, 2019. Podcast by the *Canadian Broadcasting Corporation* –Spark Despite limited access, online habits in the developing world aren't that different from ours

March 27, 2019. *FAZ* Edition: Now the next billion users are online (German)

March 22, 2019. *Engineering & Technology Magazine* (E&T): An uncomfortable challenge to the West's collective superiority complex that questions the way we see technology in the connected world.

March 2, 2019. *BBC* interview with Ritula Shah on The Next Billion Users

Jan 2019. *The Boston Globe*: The global poor go online for the same reasons you do by