

Payal Arora, PhD

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

Contact

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Employment History

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

Jan 2020-Current: Academic Director in UX & Inclusive Design, Erasmus Centre for Data Analytics

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

2022: Distinguished Professor-in-Residence at MICA, The School of Ideas, Gujarat

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

Grants (10/20)

2022: PI on Design for Inclusion project in India (135,000\$)

2021-2022: Co-PI, UNHCR grant for Digital leisure and Displaced populations in Brazil (50,000\$)

2020-2022 Co-PI, IDRC grant for Organizing digitally in South Asia (250,000€)

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

Publications

Books (6/6)

- (in progress). Tereza Hendl, Bianca Jansky, **Arora, P.**, Verina Wild (eds.). *mHealth: Transformation, Power, and Ethics*. University College London Press (open access).
- (in progress). **Arora, P.**, Raman, U., and König, R. *FemWork: Pathways to inclusive labour in the platform economy*. Amsterdam University Press (open access book)

- **Arora, P.** (2019). *The next billion users: Digital Life beyond the West*. Harvard University Press. (Winner of PROSE ASA Award 2019)
- 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 (15/68)

- Bhatia, K., **Arora, P.**, and Pathak, M. (2021). Good girls don't go online. *International Journal of Communication*
- Komarraju, S. A., **Arora, P.**; & Raman, U. (2021). Agency and servitude in platform labour, Special Issue 'Reclaiming the human in machine cultures' *Media Culture & Society*
- **Arora, P.**, & Chowdhury, R. (2021). Cross-cultural feminist technologies, *Global Perspectives*
- **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.** (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*
- **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*
- **Arora, P.** & Thompson, H. L. (2018). Crowdsourcing as a platform for digital labour unions, *International Journal of Communication*.
- **Arora, P.**, & Schreiber, L. (2017). Slumdog romance: Facebook love and digital privacy in the global South, *Media, Culture & Society*.
- **Arora, P.** (2016). Bottom of the data pyramid: Big data and the global south, *International Journal of Communication*.
- 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*.
- **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*.

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 (25/175)

- Dec 2021: Adobe Design Mix: AI and Creativity: How to build inclusive design
- Nov 2021: *Keynote*: Green design for the next billion, COP26: Design for Planet Festival
- Nov 2021: *Keynote*: FemTech and the Future of work in the Global South, Nethope
- Nov 2021: Designing for Work and Workers, New School Parsons, New York.
- Nov 2021: Diversity by Design for public security, EUROPOL.
- Sept 2021: *Keynote*: Digitalisation and forced displacement, Danish Refugee Council Global
- Oct 2021. *Keynote*: Digital inclusion and the rise of the next billion, In the Pocket Ghent
- June 2021. *Keynote*: AI for Good for the next billion, ACM COMPASS
- May 2021, Helsinki. *Keynote*: Next billion users, next billion journalists? Automation and data-driven journalism beyond the Western world, University of Helsinki
- April 2021, Leuven. *Keynote* on Aligning technology with Humanity, And&Festival Leuven
- 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.’

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.

Boards/Committees (public & private sector)

(2021-2024): Editorial Board member, Big Data & Society Journal
 (2021-2024): Editorial Board member: Communication, Culture & Critique Journal
 (2021-Current): Editorial board member, Amsterdam University Press: Digital Series
 (2021-2023): Danish Research Council Project ‘Reorganizing Trust through Social Credit System’: Board member
 (2020-2021): Advisory Board for UNESCO Manifesto on Connectivity and Education
 (2016-Current): Soteryx, a New York based company on data security
 (2015-Current): Makeosity Inc, an education innovation company in New York City
 (2016-current): The Communication Technology division; The Association for Education in Journalism and Mass Communication
 (2020-current): ICA’s Communication, Culture and Critique Journal
 (2015-current): Columbia University’s Earth Institute, Connect to Learn, New York
 (2015- current): Technology, Knowledge and Society Association
 (2021-2022). Advisory Board member for UNESCO Connectivity and Learning
 (2019-2021) UK Nuffield Foundation: ‘Me and My Big Data: Developing Citizens’ Data Literacies.’
 (2015-current): International Journal of Technology & Educational Marketing (IJTEM)
 (2018-2020): Social Science One, Facebook Partnership Initiative Asia Region
 (2013-2016) for the South Asian Media, Arts & Culture Research Center, a national center for South Asian scholarship at the University of North Texas
 (2015-2017): for the Aarhus EU Horizon 2020 initiative RESAW network of digital archiving
 (2013-2014): Programme committee: ICT4D2013 University of Cape Town, SA

Media Presence (20/95)

Nov 30, 2021. *Fragile Futures* podcast interview with [Bianca Wylie](#). [Dark Matters Lab and Future of Good](#)

Nov 20, 2021. *Times of India* Article: [Girls online have hacks against patriarchal wall](#).

Nov 8, 2021. *GlobalDev* Blog: [Will e-commerce revive Bangladesh’s artisanal economy?](#)

Oct 24, 2021. *D+C Development + Cooperation* article: [The vast majority does not get any kind of sex education](#).

July 27, 2021. *Recliner Designer* podcast with Adobe UX team Lance Shields and Laura Herman.

June 25, 2021. *Aawaz Next Billion Innovations* podcast: Demystifying the NBU segment.

Mar 11, 2021. *Mashable* Interview: What to expect when you're expecting 8 billion internet users

Mar 5, 2021. *Rest of World* Op Ed: AI isn’t going to save us:

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 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 Confidencial* (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.

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

Teaching Nominations/ Awards

2017-2018 Nominated for the ISO (Interurban Student Consultation) 'Teacher of the Year' in higher education across the Netherlands. [ISO is the largest national student organization in the Netherlands and represents over half a million students of universities and universities of applied sciences.]

2017-2018: Awarded the 'University Education/ Teaching Prize' for best teaching at the university-wide level

2012-2013: Nominated for the 'Best Lecturer' in the International Bachelors Program in Media and Communication (IBCoM) at Erasmus University Rotterdam

2011-2012: Nominated for the 'Best Female Teacher' for the International Bachelors Program in Media and Communication (IBCoM) at Erasmus University Rotterdam

2010-2011: Winner of the 'Best Female Teacher' for the International Bachelors Program in Media and Communication (IBCoM) at Erasmus University Rotterdam

Media endorsements

“Arora shows that many of the world’s poor don’t seek out the Internet as a tool to become more productive, but as a welcome outlet for economically ‘unproductive’ play... That the Internet fails as a magical cure-all for historical circumstance may be unwelcome news to techno-utopians and overzealous development practitioners, but there is hope in its capacity to augment and expand human leisure beyond the realm of material advancement.” - The Nation

“The most interesting, thought provoking books on science and technology we can find” - Engadget (Top 5 in the "Technorati top 100" and reported by Time for being one of the "best blogs" on tech)

“This powerful book explores actual online lives in China, India and Brazil and asks why many of us in the West are surprised and sometimes offended by the fact that the impoverished are just as committed as we are to the search for “moments of pleasure and joy”. - Times Higher Education

“Superb... uncomfortable, myth-busting and compelling, *The Next Billion Users*’ challenges our collective superiority complexes and questions the way we see technology in the connected world.” - Engineering and Technology magazine

“The conventional storyline around the transformative effect of technology on people’s lives often doesn’t ring true... Any leader whose company sees the global poor as a key market will find its reality-based view of the intended customers bracing and useful.” - Theodore Kinni, Strategy + Business

Academic endorsements (of past books)

“*The Next Billion Users* is a feat – insightful, poignant, riveting. Through detailed case studies and interviews, Payal Arora rewrites the story of our relationship to digital technology from a truly global perspective. Her conclusions are as surprising as they are revealing about the future of social media,

gaming, mobile phones, and online commerce and education.” - Marwan Kraidy, Author of The Naked Blogger of Cairo

“This is a brilliant navigation of worlds that are not usually brought in conversation: digital space and thick situated struggles engaged in claim-making in the urban sphere. Payal Arora has deep knowledge and experience of both these worlds. Out of this encounter comes a concept the author deploys in diverse ways to mark digital space: the leisure commons.” - Saskia Sassen, Columbia University and author of Expulsions: Brutality and Complexity in the Global Economy

“Few efforts to do so are more successful than that of this book. Payal Arora takes on a research task that few have sufficiently valued and far fewer have accomplished: becoming one with a community and its people, gaining their trust, examining how they make use of technology according to their own context and needs, and revealing that to the world in all its nuance, biased by neither sentimentality nor judgment.” - Mark Warschauer, Professor of Education and Informatics, University of California, Irvine.

“In every age, innovative technology has been met with an awkward mixture of enthusiasm, indifference, skepticism and hostility. The advent in our time of cheap, mobile computing and cellular telephones has drawn a similar response, especially in the international development community. In Dot.Com Mantra, Payal Arora goes beyond the familiar juxtapositions to show how poor individuals and communities actively negotiate their engagement with twenty-first century technology, documenting the conditions under which they use, abuse and reject it in their everyday lives. The result is a book that is fascinating in its own right, but also highly instructive to a new generation of development policymakers, in rich and poor countries alike, caught between an imperative for easy answers and the reality of messy complexity.” - Michael Woolcock, Senior Social Scientist at the World Bank and Lecturer in Public Policy at the John F. Kennedy School of Government at Harvard.

Industry endorsements

“Whether you are a government agency seeking to bring public goods and services to underprivileged citizens, a multinational corporation entering emerging markets, or an NGO implementing aid, The Next Billion Users is mandatory, data-driven reading that will guide your digital and real-world strategies.” - Shaun Wiggins, President and CEO of Soteryx

“Payal’s participation at our leadership summit was inspirational, impactful and insightful. She was able to distill complicated, in-depth research and deliver a presentation that was engaging and easy to follow. All of our participants from across the Caribbean and Latin America felt Payal’s presentation was right on the mark and exactly what we were looking for as our company strives to build momentum and reach the next billion users.” Michael Coakley, VP, Head of Communications, Liberty Latin America Telecom

“Payal is a great speaker, who gave stunning insight into a topic, our congress attendees - most of them senior IT-executives - normally are quite unaware: How is a large part of mankind using Internet and IT, what are the needs, wishes and hopes of the Next Billion Users? Many thanks for this inspiring look outside the western box.” Robert Gammel, Executive Producer Hamburger IT-Strategietage

“Payal presented to our audience of strategists and marketing professionals with unique insights into the lives of the "next billion users". Through her contributions, she gave listeners the opportunity to diversify their views on what users around the world are doing online and the impact the Internet and

data are having on their lives. She has a very engaging appearance on stage and has a lively way of presenting figures and statistics.” - Juliane Hennig, Project & Event Manager, NEXT conference Hamburg

Humanitarian/non-profit endorsements

“Payal kindly agreed to give a talk at the India Science Festival and also join the discussion on the Keynote Panel. She is one of the few researchers who deeply understands technology and society. Her talk and thoughts illuminate how these two should interact to create the most benefit for all of us. The importance of this topic cannot be overstated and Payal's clarity of thought is the need of the hour.” - Varun Aggarwal, Co-founder, Aspiring Minds, India Science Festival

“Payal Arora’s Keynote for the FoME Symposium was inspiring and eye-opening. It was a convincing appeal to the Media Development Community to rethink their assumptions on how to work in the Global South. We really need to understand better the needs of the people we working for. We can’t just impose our beliefs on them. One key phrase for me was that she reminded us that people don’t make judgments based on just facts. That is a very rational perspective but decision-making doesn’t work that way.” - Steffen Leidel, Senior Consultant, Deutsche Welle (DW)

“Payal is one of these rare speakers that is both a great storyteller and comes with knowledge that is backed by comprehensive academic research” - Martin Thörnkvist, Curator, TechFestival Copenhagen