

B'AI Global Forum Activity Report: Key Initiatives and Achievements over the Past Six Years

About B'AI Global Forum

The B'AI Global Forum is a research initiative established on July 30, 2020, within the Institute for AI and Beyond, a collaborative project between the University of Tokyo and Softbank Corp. Our mission is to advance the development of Artificial Intelligence (AI) and other digital technologies to foster a gender-equal society and protect minority rights.

The 'B' in B'AI Global Forum symbolizes our commitment to exploring the historical narratives and representations before AI, the diverse competing interests behind AI's development, and the underlying social structure beneath AI to understand our society beyond AI. The name reflects our dedication to conducting multi-perspective analyses on the historical and social structures that drive and support modern technologies like AI, envisioning a society that extends beyond AI's reach.

With the ultimate goal of establishing a world-class forum based in East Asia, this research project has systematically advanced its research and initiatives over the past six years. We have critically examined the societal impacts of AI and other digital information technologies through the lens of intersectionality—focusing on social attributes such as gender, disability, nationality, and ethnicity. Our aim has been to contribute, both theoretically and practically, to the formation of a fair and inclusive space for public discourse and expression in Japanese society. The B'AI Global Forum will conclude its activities as of March 31, 2026.

Our Goals and the Four Pillars

Our Goals	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ① Critically and self-reflexively examining the relationship between society and digital information technologies including AI ② Realizing fair and just discourse in the public sphere
The Four Pillars	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> (1) Analyze discrimination and violence against women and minorities by the digital information technologies, including AI (2) Design a diverse and inclusive mediascape by the digital information technologies, including AI (3) Create an interdisciplinary global forum where young researchers, entrepreneurs, practitioners, and other citizens come together to discuss issues related to AI and society (4) Reconceptualize ethics for digital information age and practice inclusive education based on those ethics

Major Achievements

○ Publication of our book “Understanding AI in Society: How Technology Exerts Power” (2023, University of Tokyo Press)

This book comprises contributions from researchers across these diverse fields, discussing AI and related technologies not only from technical perspectives but also from political, social, and cultural viewpoints. By analyzing how the development and implementation of AI technology are closely intertwined with power structures such as social institutions and economic systems, the book illuminates both the possibilities of AI and the problems it harbors. Through this approach, we aim to create an opportunity for dialogue about AI that transcends the traditional boundaries between humanities and sciences, as well as the walls between different academic disciplines, enabling many people to participate in discussions about AI.

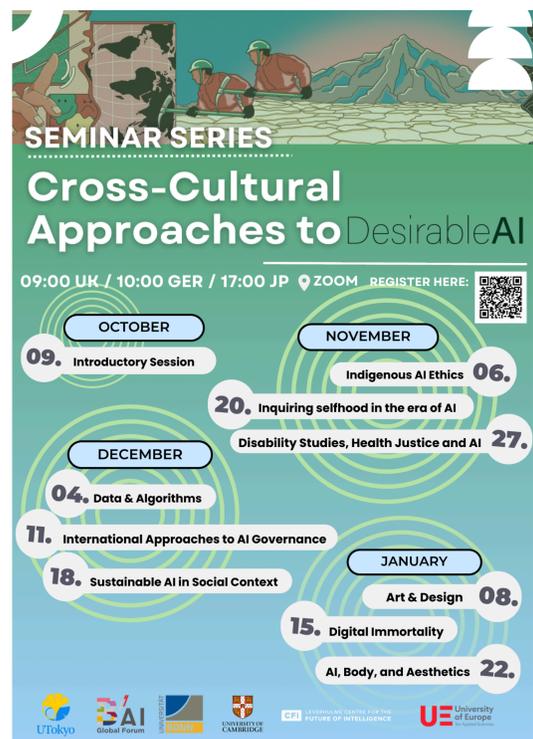


○ The Dialogue for Desirable AI Project received the AI ELSI Award (Perspective Division) from the Japanese Society for Artificial Intelligence

The AI ELSI Award recognizes diverse activities related to AI ethics and the relationship between AI and society. The selection process was carried out by a judging panel composed of members of the JSAI Ethics Committee and experts from both within and outside the academic society.

Project Title: “Dialogue for Desirable AI Project”

This project was a collaborative dialogue-based initiative jointly organized by the University of Tokyo’s B’AI Global Forum, the Center for Science and Thought at the University of Bonn, the Leverhulme Centre for the Future of Intelligence at the University of Cambridge, and the University of Europe for Applied Sciences. From October 2024 to January 2025, it hosted a 10-part online seminar series entitled “Cross-Cultural Approaches to Desirable AI”, attracting a wide range of participants from both academia and civil society.



Research Exchange

We have engaged in research exchange with 48 institutions, primarily universities in Japan and worldwide, involving a total of 116 researchers (as of March 2026).



Selected Examples:

- College of Communication, National Chengchi University (Taiwan)
- IT for Change (India)
- National Open University of Nigeria (Nigeria)
- New York University (USA)
- Scottish AI Alliance (Scotland)
- CulturlA, Agence Nationale de la Recherche (France)
- University of Europe for Applied Sciences (Germany)
- Center for Science and Thought, University of Bonn (Germany)
- Leverhulme Centre for the Future of Intelligence, University of Cambridge (UK)

Educational Activities

Selected Lectures:

- The University of Tokyo: "Specialized Seminar"
- Shanghai Jiao Tong University: "Proposal to Utilize Digital Transformation to Promote Gender Equality"
- Fukuoka Prefectural Chikushigaoka High School: "Artificial Intelligence and Society"
- Sapporo Daiichi High School: "Artificial Intelligence and Society"

A Six-Year Journey

FY2020



November 2020: MeDi (Media and Diversity Forum) begins its activities as a unit under the B'AI Global Forum

December 2020: Launch of BAIRAL, a study session led by research assistants

March 2021: Launch Event "Gender Justice in the AI Era: A Dialogue on Engagement and Activism"

FY2021



May 2021: Start of the B'AI Book Club, a reading group focused on English-language books on AI/technology

June 2021: Trauma Reporting Study Group begins its activities

S-Semester 2021: Offering of the "Specialized Seminar" (Held regularly thereafter)

FY2022



May 2022: Visit and discussion at the Miraikan Special Exhibition "You and Robots: What Is It To Be Human?"

November 2022: Visit and discussion at SoftBank Headquarters

March 2023: Publication of the edited book "Understanding AI in Society: How Technology Exerts Power" (UTokyo Press)

FY2023



June 2023: Launched "Women in Tech Lunch"

June 2023: Launched the "AI/Algorithms and Gender Inequality" research group

September 2023: Held the exhibition "PERCEPTIONS: Reconstructing AI Narratives"

FY2024



June 2024: Co-authored research paper published in the international journal "AI & Society," in collaboration with the Hiromi Yokoyama Lab at Kavli IPMU

October 2024: Research presentation by the "Location Sharing Among Youth: A Comparative Study Across Cities" research group

November 2024: 5th Anniversary Symposium "AI and DEI: The Future of Digital Humanitarianism"

FY2025



May 2025: Co-organized "BAITEQ @ SoftBank: Headquarters Tour & Networking Event 2025"

June 2025: Co-organized the CulturIA & B'AI Symposium 2025 "AI and Art"

March 2026: Co-organized the Joint Workshop with the University of Cambridge LCFI "Pro-Justice: Cross-Cultural Approaches to AI Ethics"



Detailed activity reports for each project are available on the B'AI Global Forum official website: <https://baiforum.jp/en/report/>

Director Messages



Kaori Hayashi
Founding Director, B'AI Global Forum
Professor, Interfaculty Initiative in Information Studies,
The University of Tokyo
Executive Vice President, The University of Tokyo
Director: July 2020 – September 2022

Six Transformative Years of the B'AI Global Forum

In the autumn of 2019, I applied to an internal university call for proposals to establish the B'AI Global Forum, just before the COVID-19 pandemic began spreading worldwide. Soon thereafter, the virus spread rapidly, and in April 2020 the University of Tokyo shifted entirely to online classes and restricted access to campus¹. The pandemic drastically transformed communication around the globe: face-to-face interactions declined, while social media expanded dramatically, permeating every corner of our lives².

Nearly six years have passed since then. Although the pandemic has come to an end, our society has become deeply dependent on digital communication. The vast amount of digital traces generated through our everyday activities are accumulated by major platform companies and successively utilized as training resources for artificial intelligence, fueling rapid technological development. In recent years, generative AI has spread explosively as a new tool, widely adopted in schools, workplaces, and even homes. We now inhabit a world in which our ways of learning, working, and even living are guided by algorithmic analysis that shapes our choices and judgments.

At the same time, fake news and online harassment have intensified in digital spaces, undermining the foundations of democracy and eroding social trust. Platform revenue models facilitate the spread of extreme and emotionally provocative discourse, amplifying discrimination and violence. Attacks against women and members of marginalized groups, in particular, are not merely incidental events but have been structurally reproduced.

In light of these developments, the recognition that “technology is not neutral,” which the B'AI Global Forum has repeatedly emphasized since its inception, has become visibly manifested in a series of negative real-world phenomena. Technology does not merely reflect existing power relations and inequalities; it functions as a social apparatus that can embed itself as a subtle form of power throughout everyday life and reinforce those discriminations and inequalities. The Forum's original objective—“B'AI is a research group dedicated to the development of Artificial Intelligence and other digital technologies to achieve a gender equal society that guarantees minority rights”—can no longer remain merely aspirational. It must now be translated into concrete implementation and institutional design.

Addressing both theoretical refinement and practical challenges, over the past five years the B'AI Global Forum has steadily built its activities through research projects, courses, symposia, and publications in Japan and abroad, thanks to the dedication of each of its members. After I assumed the position of Executive Vice President in April 2021, Professor Yuko Itatsu succeeded me as Director and placed the project on a firm footing. She was subsequently succeeded by Associate Professor Ai Hisano, who further advanced its research. One of the project's significant achievements was the publication titled “Understanding AI in Society: How Technology Exerts Power,” edited by the two directors, published by the University of Tokyo Press. Throughout this period, Professor Yujin Yaguchi and Ms. Midori Isoda consistently supported the smooth operation of the Forum and sustained its administrative foundation.

Artificial intelligence is often portrayed as a glamorous and innovative technology. In reality, however, it quietly permeates the mundane aspects of everyday life, exerting influence as it intertwines with social structures and values. The key to guiding AI in a direction beneficial to human society does not lie solely in advanced technological development or eye-catching commercial products. Rather, it lies in the reflective thought cultivated throughout human history and in common sense grounded in fundamental human rights. The activities of the B'AI Global Forum have been an attempt to organize these perspectives academically, to theorize them, and to continually raise questions to society. Today, this endeavor forms part of the broader global movement known as Critical AI Studies.

Looking ahead, with the support of SoftBank Corp., the Forum will embark on a new chapter within the Interfaculty Initiative in Information Studies at the University of Tokyo. Its spirit will undoubtedly be carried forward. For AI research to establish itself as a comprehensive academic field, it must deepen beyond mere technological development and evolve as interdisciplinary scholarship rooted in the humanities and social sciences, sustained by a clear sense of social responsibility. This is the task before us as researchers: to transform AI into a public good that serves the future of humanity.

1 The UTokyo Coronavirus Task Force “Kokuritsu Daigaku Hōjin Tōkyō Daigaku Shingata Koronairusu Taisaku Taisho Kiroku: 2020 nen 2 gatsu 28 nichi – 2024 nen 3 gatsu 31 nichi [Response Record of the University of Tokyo's Measures Against COVID-19: February 28, 2020 – March 31, 2024]”, March 2024.

2 According to the National Survey conducted by the NHK Broadcasting Culture Research Institute, since 2020 the proportion of people aged 16–29 who engage daily with online videos and social media has surpassed those who watch television every day. Even among older age groups, the everyday use of YouTube and social media has expanded. See Watanabe Yoko and Namiki Mai, “Changes in Media Use Since the COVID-19 Pandemic and the Underlying Attitudes: Findings from the ‘National Survey on Media Awareness 2022,’” *Hōsō Kenkyū to Chōsa* (Broadcasting Research and Survey), July 2023.

Similar trends have been observed overseas. For example, a study conducted in Australia reports that the proportion of children who use social media on a daily basis surged from 26% in 2019, before the pandemic, to 85% in 2022, after the pandemic. See Zhou M, Maher C, Brinkman S, Cools J, Dumuid D. Postpandemic After-School Activities Among Youths in Australia. *JAMA Netw Open*. 2025;8(11):e2543637. doi:10.1001/jamanetworkopen.2025.43637

Director Messages



Yuko Itatsu
Professor, Interfaculty Initiative
in Information Studies, The University of Tokyo
Director: October 2022 – March 2025

From AI Rhapsody to a Concerto

The B'AI Global Forum has maintained a consistent message since its inception: Artificial Intelligence is a tool wielded by humans to exercise power.

Much has been said about the arrival of the “age of AI agents” in 2026. Yet, a critical void remains in this narrative—the question of whose desires are driving this transition, and to what end. One cannot meaningfully evaluate the implications of AI agents without scrutinizing the motivations of the human “agents” (subjects) who are orchestrating their integration into society.

The B'AI Global Forum has consistently adopted a critical lens toward AI discourse. Our mission has been to interrogate whether the anxieties currently articulated in society are truly the most pressing, while striving to uncover the underlying concerns that demand our collective attention.

The true legacy of B'AI lies in the growing community of collaborators who resonate with this inquiry. This includes project assistant professors, project researchers, research assistants, graduate student members, undergraduates who enrolled in our courses, high school students who visited our Hongo campus for mock lectures, our audience, and practitioners and researchers from across the globe. Only when these voices reach a critical mass will it be possible to steer the current trajectory away from a blind pursuit of capitalist profit and toward AI technologies that genuinely benefit humanity.

Whether the “AI Rhapsody” can be transformed into a harmonious “Concerto” by 2030 remains the ultimate test. The true value of the B'AI legacy will be measured by our collective ability to effect this change.

Director Messages



Ai Hisano
Associate Professor, Interfaculty Initiative
in Information Studies, The University of Tokyo
Director: April 2025 – March 2026

Closing Reflections: The B'AI Global Forum

Over the past six years, the B'AI Global Forum has worked collaboratively with scholars across disciplines, institutions, and national contexts to examine the societal implications of AI, ranging from governance and labor to ethics, culture, and everyday life. From the outset, we have been guided by a central mission: to reconceptualize ethics and an inclusive society in the age of AI. To this end, we have explored a simple yet pressing question—how should we live with AI?

What does it mean for AI to exist as part of our social infrastructure? Not merely as a tool that we occasionally use, but as a presence that increasingly shapes decision-making, knowledge production, and everyday life itself. AI reorganizes how power is exercised, how responsibility is distributed, and how futures are imagined. The B'AI Global Forum has functioned as a “forum” for critically reflecting on these transformations before they become fully normalized or taken for granted.

B'AI has consistently emphasized the importance of designing AI systems that more equitably support diverse ways of living through its various activities. Accordingly, we have analyzed AI and society through intersectional perspectives, paying close attention to how gender, race, disability, nationality, and other axes of difference shape both technological development and the ways technologies are used. At the same time, we have questioned modern institutional and value systems that have often prioritized market efficiency and unilateral technological progress.

Through these efforts, we have advocated for a critical approach to AI—Critical AI Studies. Here, being “critical” does not mean simply rejecting AI or approaching it with skepticism alone. Rather, it entails attentiveness to the social contexts, power relations, and historical conditions surrounding AI technologies, as well as a willingness to imagine alternative ways of developing and governing AI.

Critical AI Studies does not focus primarily on reactive rule-making or technical fixes. Instead, it examines the processes through which AI presupposes particular worldviews and conceptions of the human, and how these assumptions come to be naturalized as social common sense. The goal of this field is not to establish a single definitive standard for “desirable AI.” Rather, it seeks to make visible which values become normalized as AI spreads throughout society, whose perspectives and experiences become obscured, and how the criteria for what counts as “desirable” are themselves constructed. In this way, ethics is not reduced to a constraint on technological development or a compliance checklist, but becomes an intellectual framework for integrating social questions into the very design and development of technology and for fundamentally rethinking the role of AI in society.

In March 2025, shortly after I unexpectedly assumed the role of Director of B'AI, it was decided that the Forum's activities would conclude within one year. As this final year unfolded in ways none of us had anticipated, I would like to express my deepest gratitude to my colleagues at B'AI, who have guided and sustained our work over the years. B'AI's activities would also not have been possible without the tireless contributions of Assistant Professor Sunjin Oh, Assistant Professor Minjoo Lee, Researcher Honoka Kato, and Midori Isoda. I want to take this opportunity to express my sincere appreciation to all four.

Members of B'AI Global Forum*
(Includes former members)

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Administrative Staffs	Nao Futagami, Midori Isoda

* Titles are as of March 2026 or the time of resignation

Navigating the Future AI Society

Advancing Critical AI Studies

It is essential to establish and advance "Critical AI Studies" as a new academic field: a research framework that critically examines AI technology from the perspectives of social theory, ethics, cultural history, and representation, and bridges these insights with technical verification and social practice.

Collaborati- on among East Asian Countries

While technological initiative has long been concentrated in the Global North, particularly within the Big Tech companies of Silicon Valley, recent years have seen a surge in AI development and a rise in competition for hegemony among Asian nations. It is imperative to establish an intellectual foundation that not only provides a critical response to the power relations reproduced by technology but also envisions alternative possibilities for technological and institutional design.

Continuing Interdisci- plinary Dialogue

It is essential to institutionalize a platform for continuous and equitable dialogue and collaboration between researchers and practitioners at the forefront of AI development and social implementation, and those in the humanities and social sciences, to ensure sustainable cooperation.

Launching the Social Corporation Program to Succeed the B'AI Global Forum

Leveraging our established domestic and international research networks and insights from Critical AI Studies, we will shift our primary focus toward education starting in the 2026 academic year. Through the newly established Social Corporation Program, we aim to deepen discussions on the political, social, and ethical dimensions of AI.

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