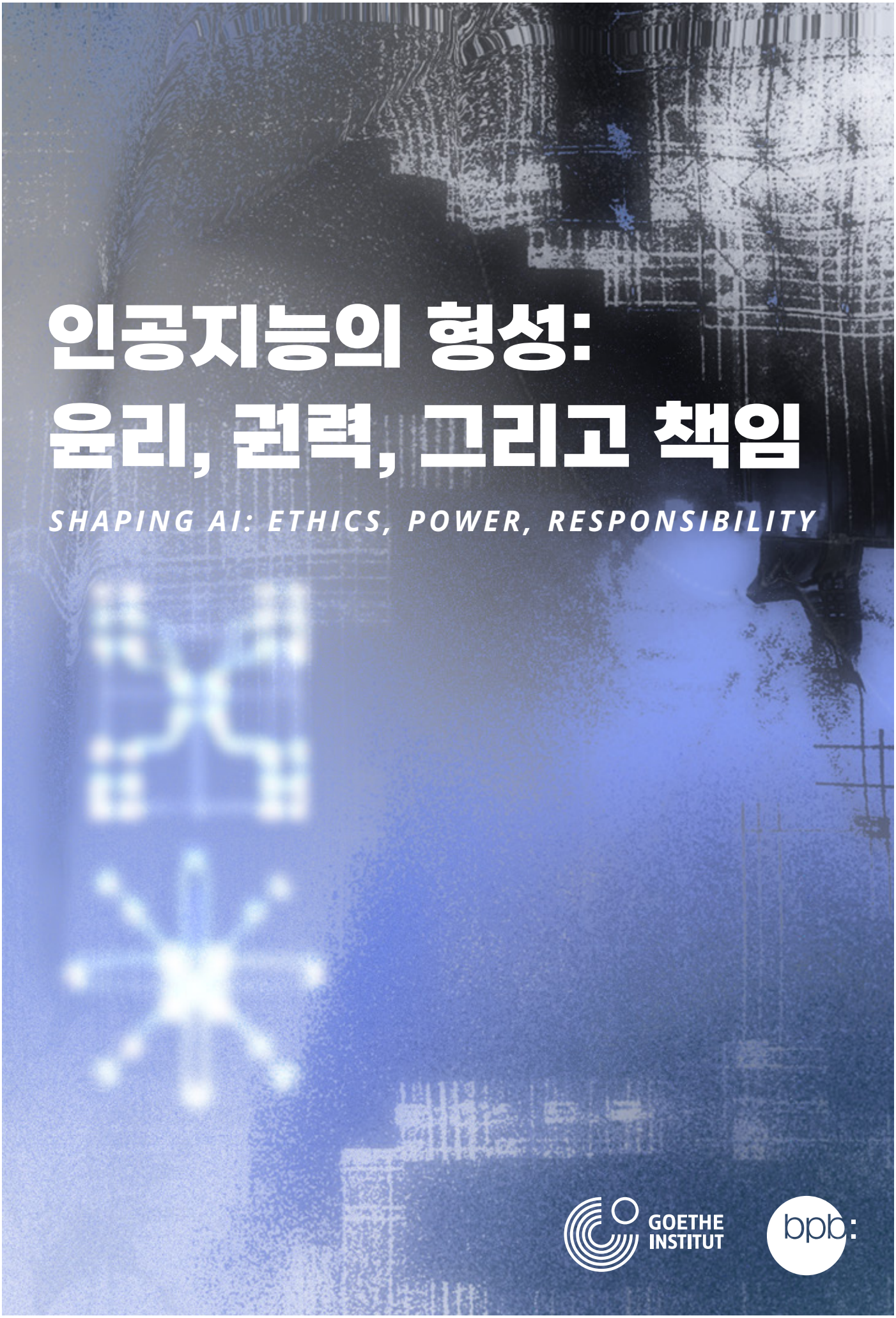

인공지능의 형성: 윤리, 권력, 그리고 책임

SHAPING AI: ETHICS, POWER, RESPONSIBILITY

GOETHE INSTITUT

bpb:

Shaping AI: Ethics, Power, Responsibility

Report

Workshop held:
November 28–29, 2025

Location:
Goethe-Institut Korea, 132 Sowol-ro, Yongsan-gu, Seoul, South Korea

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Day 1:

Moderator:
Chang-hee Lee, *professor of Industrial Design, KAIST*

Speakers: Yeo Kyung Chang, *Executive Director, Digital Justice Network* ; Yubeen Kwon, *PhD student at Seoul National University*; Jooyoung Oh, *artist/researcher (visuality, technology and society)*; Gaya Nadarajan, *associate professor, Library and Information Science, SKKU*; Inhwa Yeom, *media artist, researcher, founder of biotech and art startup BiOVE*

Day 2:

Moderator:
Juyong Park, *professor, KAIST*

Speakers: I.T. Shin, *professor, Political Science and Diplomacy, Yonsei University, CEO of OGQ Corp.*; Hyundeuk Cheon, *professor, Natural Sciences, Seoul National University*; Youjin Jeon, *multidisciplinary artist, representative of Woman Open Tech Lab*; Oul Han, *associate professor, Global Korean Studies, Sogang University*; In-Suk Kim, *Director, Science & Technology, AdeKo (German-Korean Alumni Network)*

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1. Background

When former President Yoon Seok-yeol declared martial law in December 2024 — a move widely regarded as a de facto coup attempt — he triggered a broadly acknowledged political crisis. The UCLA Luskin School of Public Affairs (2025) likewise characterizes this period as one of severe political destabilization[1].

Although Yoon's plan was thwarted and he was removed from office, the incident revealed latent weaknesses in a nation once colonized by Japan and reduced to ruins by war, after which it had emerged from authoritarian rule to become a prosperous democracy with rapid economic growth.

South Korea now enjoys high standing in terms of democratic accountability, public services and national capabilities. But its development and democracy still face formidable challenges. According to several international comparisons, South Korea is one of the world's most politically polarized nations. Despite the success of state-controlled development, it has left a structural legacy that hinders democratic integration: specifically, a weak party system and a stunted civil society. These vestiges of the past exacerbate deeply entrenched social divisions. Besides the political rift revealed by the attempted coup, major differences of opinion persist on matters of foreign policy, economic priorities and gender issues. As shown by a recent study[2], South Korean society is deeply divided along generational, gender-based and regional lines.

The UCLA Luskin School of Public Affairs (2025) points out that South Korea's unstable geopolitical situation makes its foreign policy particularly controversial. The conflict between the US and China, along with the security threat posed by North Korea, has given rise to heated disagreements about the appropriate strategy to adopt. Conservatives advocate a strong alliance with the US and a hardline approach to Pyongyang, while progressives support efforts to improve relations. The attempt to chart a diplomatic course between China, which is at once South Korea's main trading partner and North Korea's most important ally, and South Korea's existing security alliances has become one of the most polarizing issues in South Korean politics.

Polarization on gender issues is another significant cause of domestic contention. It is fueled by structural and patriarchal factors, including one of the widest gender pay gaps among OECD countries, compulsory military service for men, a rapidly aging society and one of the world's lowest birth rates, which is leading to a steep population decline. These factors are putting massive pressure on the sustainability of the Korean economy, social cohesion and the future stability of its workforce.

Furthermore, wealth and economic opportunity remain unevenly distributed. South Korea ranks among the bottom half of OECD countries in terms of income equality and the gap between urban and rural areas is widening as young adults migrate to the cities. This cohort is particularly hard hit by limited social mobility and widespread pessimism, which is further exacerbated by the extremely rigorous work culture in South Korea, where working hours are among the longest in the developed world.

Despite these daunting challenges, South Korea invests a considerable share of its GDP in research and development, ranking second among OECD countries. In 2022, its R&D spending surpassed 5% of GDP, a level of investment it has kept up for over a decade now. This steady commitment has helped South Korea become a global leader in cutting-edge technologies, including artificial intelligence.[3]

It is important to bear all of these factors in mind in order to grasp the new responsibilities and risks that rapid technological progress entails for Korea. As AI becomes increasingly integrated into economic, social and political systems, questions of ethics, governance and accountability are becoming increasingly critical.

Innovation drives progress, but unchecked innovation can exacerbate inequality, reinforce biases and violate privacy. Against this backdrop, the following report looks into the key challenges facing South Korea to ensure that AI development complies with ethical principles, and it considers strategies for creating a framework to harmonize innovation with social trust and fairness.

1 Edward L. Knudsen, Helmut K. Anheier and Joseph C. Saraceno, Progress and Polarization in South Korea: Remarkable Economic Ascent Masks Lingering Fractures, UCLA Luskin School of Public Affairs, Los Angeles, 2025. (luskin.ucla.edu)

2 Asia Pacific Foundation of Canada. 2024. Power Struggles and Polarization Plunge South Korea into Crisis. Available at: https://www.asiapacific.ca/publication/power-struggles-and-polarization-plunge-south-korea-crisis

3 Edward L. Knudsen et al., op. cit.

2. Introduction

The use of artificial intelligence is rapidly catching on in Korean industry, education, media and everyday life, influencing individual lifestyles, working processes in companies and organizations and even decision-making processes in society at large. To address these changes, Korea has enacted a "Framework Act on the Development of Artificial Intelligence and the Creation of a Foundation for Trust" (Act No. 20676), which was adopted by the National Assembly on December 26, 2024, as officially announced by the Ministry of Science and ICT. The law is to take effect on January 22, 2026.

Then again, legal reforms don't automatically generate more social trust. The development and operation of AI tends to be concentrated in the hands of a few big corporations and political decision-making bodies with limited powers which is liable to produce an asymmetrical distribution of benefits and risks in society. Moreover, since AI systems are based on existing data, institutions and cultural norms, they risk reproducing or reinforcing existing biases with regard to gender, social background and cultural differences. So the debate about the necessary conditions for "responsible AI" in the Korean context goes beyond the logic of technological progress to call for a reassessment of the distribution of power and responsibility as well as adherence to the principles of fairness and participation.

To thrash out these various issues, the Goethe-Institut Korea held a workshop entitled "Shaping AI: Ethics, Power, Responsibility". Through discussions covering education, the media, institutions and art, the workshop was designed to explore the ethical, social, technological and political dimensions of AI in the Korean context and to clearly formulate key questions about the future of the Korean AI ecosystem and the establishment of an ethical framework.

As part of an international AI project involving other Goethe-Instituts in Brazil, South Africa and India as well as the German Federal Agency for Civic Education (Bundeszentrale für politische Bildung/bpb), the workshop in South Korea also sought to broaden the scope of the public debate by including experiences and issues in other regions of the world.

The workshop discussions focused on the following questions:

- How can we ensure that AI systems are fair, transparent and accountable?
  What supporting conditions should be put in place concurrently to help communities create and manage their own data sets?
- Who controls AI? What connotations does the dynamic between global technology corporations and local innovators have in the debate about Korea's digital sovereignty?
- How can the public be involved in developing AI so it can become a shared cultural resource that actually serves the public?
- What role should policymakers, developers and private individuals play in developing responsible AI systems that will reflect truly democratic values and cultural norms?
- What educational and legal frameworks are needed to enable ordinary people to understand, assess and, if necessary, reject harmful elements and aspects of AI systems?

The workshop program comprised presentations, discussions and interactive sessions with Korean AI researchers, ethicists, social scientists, technology experts and artists, and was originally held in the Korean.

The following report draws on those discussions and interactions to pinpoint key issues and future challenges for the development of responsible AI in Korean society.

3. Workshop Recap // Day 1

Yeo-kyung Chang (left) and moderator Chang-hee Lee (right) during the kick-off presentation of the workshop on November 28, 2025.

Human Rights and Korea's Artificial Intelligence Act

Yeo-kyung Chang (Executive Director, Digital Justice Network)

Yeo-kyung Chang espouses a "human rights-based approach" to AI based on the UN Guiding Principles on Business and Human Rights (UNGP) as opposed to attempts to deregulate AI in the interest of promoting business interests. Citing examples of call center agents in Korea who were laid off to be replaced by AI technology, and teachers and students targeted by pornographic deepfakes, she pointed out that the use of AI tends to blur the boundaries of accountability for harms inflicted and make it hard for individual victims to prove their case. The same goes for AI malfunctions: when, say, a self-driving vehicle mistakes a white truck for a cloud, it is difficult to assign the blame between drivers, sensors, algorithms and training data, which in turn complicates any attempts at legal prosecution.

What's more, although South Korea's AI law regulates high-risk and high-impact AI, it does not explicitly prohibit technologies with high potential for human rights violations, such as biometric, emotion recognition and surveillance systems. Not only that, but AI used for national defense and security purposes is wholly exempt from the regulations. Even in the event of an accident, liability is divided between model developers, B2B users and end users, making it difficult for victims to sue for damages.

To improve this regulatory framework, Chang argued that assessments of AI impacts on human rights should be regulated by law, and full data disclosure should be made mandatory. Before rollout, every AI system should be assessed for its potential impacts on the groups concerned and the nature of those impacts. The law should also stipulate procedures for the aggrieved parties to file complaints against companies and institutions in the event of an accident and to demand explanations. She added that any persons affected by AI should be recognized as rights holders and that companies and governments should be legally required to ensure transparency and accountability.

Focus on AI Ethics: The Case of "Iruda" and Human-Centered AI

Yubeen Kwon (PhD student at Seoul National University)

Yubeen Kwon presented the concept of "lived ethics" using the example of the Korean chatbot "Iruda". The Iruda 1.0 program, which made use of the KakaoTalk messaging data from a dating assistant service, caused widespread social controversy owing to privacy and hate speech issues and was eventually discontinued. However, the technology was subsequently rendered socially acceptable by putting it through five "loops": technology, market, regulatory authorities, users and ethical guidelines. In her analysis of this process, Kwon argued that the importance of ethics does not lie in their abstract principles, but in their application to "medium-scale interventions" in real-life situations.

She then talked about the history and philosophy of "human-centered AI", which has lately become a key concept in various countries and sectors. She criticized this approach, which centers on human intervention and control, transparency and explainability, because it does not sufficiently reflect the principles of posthumanism, ecological ethics and data work issues. She proposed "relationship-oriented AI" as an alternative: instead of assuming that humans are immutable entities, AI design should focus on the relationships between different living beings and the sustainability of the ecosystems in which these relationships exist.

A "feminist AI framework" should serve not as a concrete agenda, she added, but as a theoretical basis for dissolving exploitative relationships and building relationships based on a relationship-oriented ontology (theory of being). For example, she stressed the importance, when developing models, of taking into consideration not only the convenience of potential users, but also the model's impact on their entire network of relationships, including language communities and minority groups. If a given technology damages the relationship ecosystem, she concluded, it may even be necessary to discontinue its development.

Yubeen Kwon (left) giving her analysis of "lived ethics" and the case of the Korean chatbot Iruda during her presentation.

Reality in the Post-Emotional Age: Bias, Immersion and Inclusive AI

Jooyoung Oh (artist researching the intersection between points of view, technology and society)

As a photo and media artist and researcher, Jooyoung Oh sees AI more in terms of "data sets and archives" than in terms of "models". She has sorted visual patterns using "image similarity networks" to reveal "what is retained as representative and what is omitted". She also presented a chatbot project that uses old literary texts with expired copyrights to illustrate how (written) records and reconstruction were contingent on power and the availability of options to select from before they became technological matters.

The Photo SeMA (Photography Seoul Museum of Art) recently commissioned Oh to produce a commemorative work for its anniversary that involved experimenting with generative AI to "restore" what were deemed significant Korean photographs from the 1920s to the 1980s. She also created an image similarity network to compare their visual landscapes. This network placed similar photos close together and photos significantly different from the overall data-set far apart. One photograph by the artist Bon-chang Koo stood out as "unusual data", as it was placed far away from the other pictures in the data set. This suggested that an artist's distinctiveness can be captured as a visual pattern even without prior knowledge of their work. Oh found that signature features like the position of the oft-recurring "red spot" in Bon-chang Koo's works are linked by similarity.

She went on to talk about her "Machine Evaluation Program", a participatory installation in which viewers select and enter images that are then interpreted and reviewed by an AI. Although human evaluations seem to give learning signals to an AI reviewer, Oh found that we actually perceive AI judgments as equally valid and we often react emotionally, with delight or disappointment, to the machine's assessments. After experiencing such momentary reactions again and again, we eventually slip into a quasi-delusory state of mind in which we lose our ability to make our own judgments. ›

Jooyoung Oh presenting her artistic research on AI as "data sets and archives", including image-similarity networks and generative reconstructions of Korean photographs.

The artist also described a “measurement chart for photographic restoration” that was displayed as part of her “Machine Evaluation Program”. The chart consists of tables for evaluating and comparing the condition of photographs and differences between them when restoring and digitizing film stills for digital archives. They serve to gauge the similarities and differences between a photo viewed with the naked eye and a photo displayed on a screen with a specific light value. However, the chart created by the artist merely borrowed the standard tabular format used in archiving and did not actually exist. She explained that it was a “work distorted in a humorous and almost impossible manner”. For example, the “AI USAF1951 Pattern” created by Oh is supposedly capable of generating a super-resolution group that doesn’t actually exist, but it’s a purely fictional chart.

Oh’s presentation also featured “Literary Girl Chatbot 1974”, a work drawn her own personal experience of learning fairly late in life that her deceased grandmother was a writer. It connects the challenge of creating a data set to the question of how works by female writers are preserved or lost. Photographs in old newspaper articles bear witness to a social climate in which “women who read” were deemed dangerous in the old days. One such article was about a collective suicide by three schoolgirls who were top of their class in the Korean city of Gwangju. The author attributes their desperate act to a “pessimistic worldview caused by reading literary works by the likes of André Gide”. This reminds Oh of the prevailing mindset in those days that made it so hard for her grandmother to write and to leave her works behind for posterity.

Oh began work on the “Literary Girl Chatbot 1974” project by asking herself how best to process the original article. Instead of rewriting or reshaping it, she decided to merely rearrange it without fundamentally altering the original structure – an approach that involves setting a clear boundary: Where should technology intervene and where should it stop?

In closing, Oh observed that not only are women’s written stories missing from the printed page, but their images are often omitted too – or distorted. An AI trained exclusively on girls’ magazine covers from the period of the Park Chung-hee regime in the 1970s repeatedly displayed “women for consumption” – images intended to convey prevailing conceptions of the age – rather than real-life “schoolgirls”. When Professor Sook-ja Park, whose research is on the subject of “schoolgirls and literary girls”, saw these pictures, she is said to have remarked, “These are not schoolgirls.” That prompted Oh to hold a photo contest in a girls’ magazine, which then displayed pictures the participating girls had taken of themselves. Oh concluded her workshop talk with the hope that material of this kind will be shown in more places in the future.

Images from Jooyoung Oh’s approach to AI through image-similarity networks and archival data, including her SeMA-commissioned project comparing and “restoring” significant Korean photographs from the 1920s–1980s.

Gaya Nadarajan presenting her analysis of how generative AI has transformed education in Korean Universities.

Generative AI and Ethics: What Do Students Think?

Gaya Nadarajan (associate professor, Library and Information Science, SKKU)

Gaya Nadarajan discussed the effects of generative AI on education, particularly during the Covid pandemic, as online courses became established along with the concept of the "flipped classroom" (a learner-centered model in which students receive instruction at home through teacher-created videos and interactive lessons, and use class-time to practice and apply concepts through peer interaction and teacher-led problem-solving activities). She observed that the advent of tools like ChatGPT has hugely increased the extent to which students actually complete their writing assignments but it represents a serious threat to academic integrity and critical thinking. Many teachers also rely on AI to rapidly create teaching materials for use in the classroom or lecture hall, added Professor Nadarajan, a development she believes will impair their own independent thinking skills.

To counter these recent developments, she asks her students questions after lectures to make sure they've understood, rather than following up each lecture with the usual traditional format of exercises and homework assignments. Given the absence of any clear-cut institutional regulations for the use of AI, Nadarajan conducted a study comparing students at Korean and Canadian colleges. The Canadian participants tended to view the use of AI as a violation of ethical norms and academic rules, whereas their Korean counterparts had less compunctions about using AI in identical situations. The Canadian students felt strongly that their work should demonstrate "individual originality and responsibility" and were more likely to regard using AI as "cheating". The Korean students, on the other hand, were more inclined to view learning as a collaborative process and AI as a form of support akin to a "cooperative learning aid", which eased their conscience.

On the other hand, both groups increasingly came to regard AI code generation as unethical – a trend that Nadarajan considers a key signal for the future of instructional design. Hence her emphasis on the need for an educational approach that takes cultural differences into consideration and lays down clear-cut guidelines to help students think critically and make responsible decisions. The point is for students to decide for themselves where the boundaries lie between "accepting help and avoiding responsibility", instead of imposing a blanket ban or general assent.

In-hwa Yeom discussing AI technology life cycles, resource distribution, and the representation of Asian women in generative AI.

Media Design with AI: Questions and Challenges

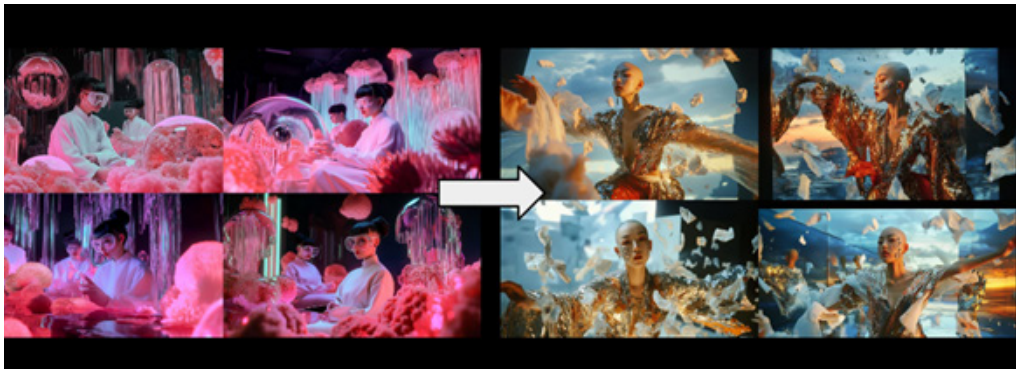
In-hwa Yeom (media artist, researcher and founder of BiOVE)

Based on her experience with generative AI in augmented reality and in the performing arts, In-hwa Yeom spoke about AI technology life cycles and the present-day challenges of resource distribution. Acceptance of tech is rapidly changing nowadays and no longer hinges solely on the "who-got-there-first" principle. While AI does increase productivity and reduce labor costs, it also intensifies competition for resources, observed Yeom, which leads to a greater concentration of capital and power.

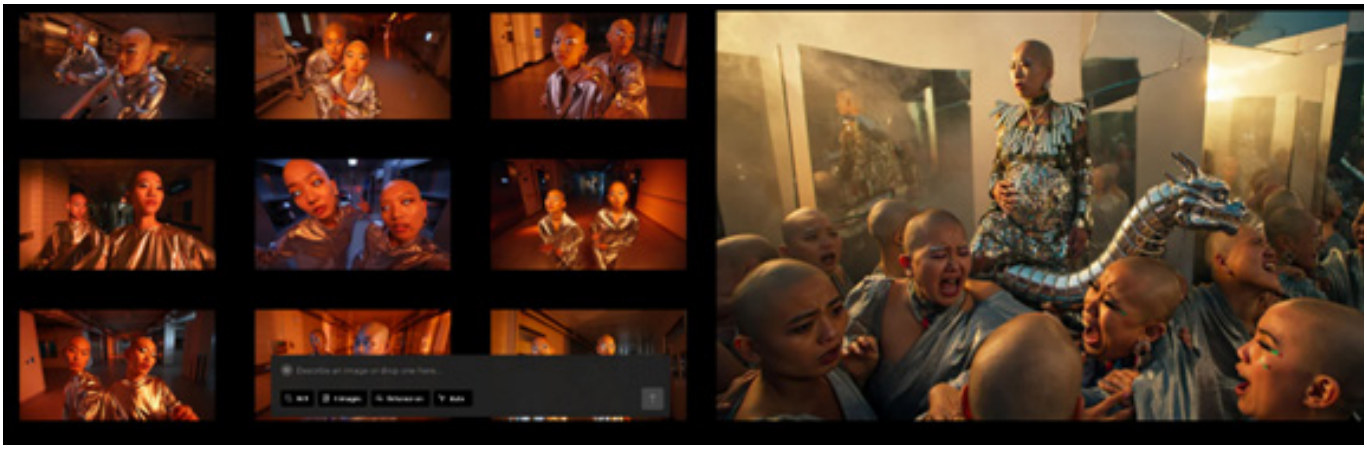
She went on to address the question of "representation". In her work on the representation of Asian women, the author finds that images created using generative AI often resemble K-pop idols: they're idealized, distorted and sexualized. She remarked that this style, which serves as the AI model's "default setting", tends to reduce Asian women to "consumable young bodies". ›

Images generated by entering "Korean girl" in Midjourney AI

Images generated by entering "Asian girl" in Midjourney AI



Test images generated with Midjourney AI for <War Dance> 2025 (by In-hwa Yeom) either beautified or "westernized", "sexualized" thin, white waering make-up, gaze and pose. (left)



Test images generated with Reve AI for <War Dance> 2025 (by In-hwa Yeom). The AI is known for generating "realistic" images.

Yeom pointed out that forgoing AI altogether is no longer a viable option. So the crucial question is: "Who uses AI, for what purpose and under what conditions?" She also suggested that AI should be understood as a tool for redistributing resources – by taking the funds that are freed up as a result of productivity gains and reinvesting them in causes like feminism, neurodiversity or the fight against climate change.

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On Day 1 of the workshop, the participants explored AI from various angles: human rights and legal issues, data and bias issues, and the role of AI in art and education. These perspectives shed light on structural inequalities, invisible labor and ecological costs that are often obscured by the convenience and efficiency of the technology. The talks prepared the ground for the second day's focus on governance, responsibility, the cultural industry and AI ecosystems.

3. Workshop Recap // Day 2

I.T. Shin discussing the challenges of Korean AI sovereignty and the growing impact of low-quality AI-generated content on the data ecosystem.

Trend in the ratio of text written by humans to AI-generated content in online English-language articles (2020–2025). Graphite, "More Articles Are Now Created by AI Than Humans" (2024), quoted from Axios: "Exclusive: AI writing hasn't overwhelmed the web yet" (2025)

Challenges and Opportunities of AI

I.T. Shin (professor, Department of Political Science and Diplomacy, Yonsei University, and CEO of OGQ Corp.)

I.T. Shin spoke about the challenges and opportunities of Korean AI sovereignty. He pointed out that while the government has set up platforms to collect public data, the amount of data actually uploaded is limited and the content often irrelevant, which makes it difficult to use directly on the platforms. Meanwhile, AI-generated images and videos are rapidly gaining ground on the Internet, social media and blogs. Shin also reported that AI-generated books are inundating the market and overwhelming existing proofing and evaluation systems, preventing them from filtering out low-quality content. This proliferation of low-quality mass-produced content, in other words "AI slop", is increasingly polluting the data ecosystem, thereby increasingly distorting the input values for downstream learning in what is becoming a vicious circle.

He went on to show how the lack of any AI ethics gives rise to automated discrimination. Citing experimental results, he made it clear that it is impossible to ensure political and social neutrality in AI models and demonstrated how models based on biased data represent "typical people", "friendliness" and "serial killers": the "typical person" is associated with certain ethnicities, genders and Professor Shin finds that biases cannot be completely eradicated; at most, they can only be "moderated". Hence the urgent need to rapidly develop an ethical data set that reflects the values and context of Korean society. He also suggested that evaluation and screening tools be developed to assess data protection, accountability and social risks when companies or public institutions launch and run AI models. In closing, he presented a web-based prototype for such an assessment system.

Artificial Intelligence, the Accountability Gap and the AI Black Box Problem

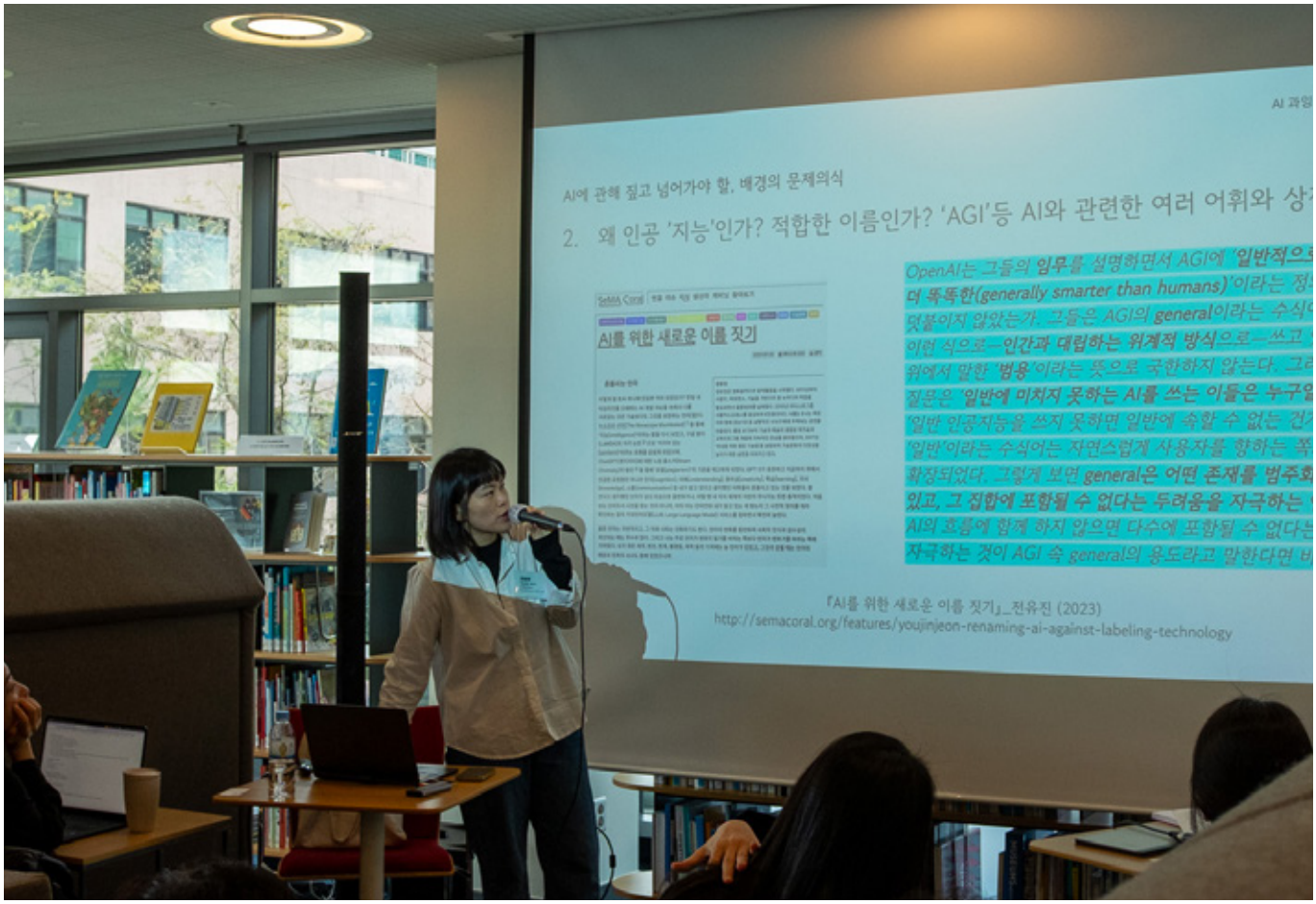
Hyeondeuk Cheon (professor, Department of Natural Sciences, Seoul National University)

Professor Cheon talked about the principles often prioritized in ethical guidelines: transparency, human-centeredness and accountability. He observed that societies that are particularly sensitive to issues of fairness tend to rely heavily on tangible and objective procedures and technical metrics. He warned, however, that value judgments are inevitable once we decide which data to select and how to learn from it. So the notion that technology is "objective" can be dangerously misleading.

He explained the so-called "accountability or retribution gap" caused by the failure or absence of human control and cognition: e.g., in cases where no one is held accountable for war crimes committed by autonomous weapons systems such as drones. He also analyzed the black box problem of machine learning algorithms using Jenna Burrell's three forms of opacity: intentional secrecy, technical illiteracy and the inherent opacity of algorithms.

But explainability and transparency are absolutely essential, he insisted: AI systems used in public administration must be justified by arguments that are comprehensible to the public at large. In closing, he warned against viewing technology as something inevitable and unavoidable, like a natural disaster. On the contrary, he said, it is the result of compromises between different societal values. So we mustn't leave visions of the future entirely up to multinational tech firms.

Professor Cheon discussing key challenges in AI ethics, including transparency, accountability gaps and the myth of technological objectivity.



Youjin Jeon outlining core questions for understanding AI in Korea.

What We Lose Through Excessive Consumption of AI

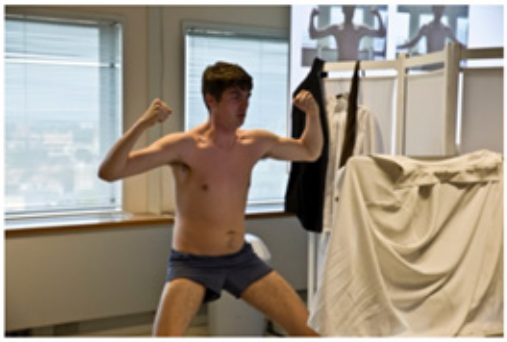
Youjin Jeon (multidisciplinary artist, director of the Woman Open Tech Lab)

Youjin Jeon opened her presentation by raising the key questions to be considered in discussing AI in Korea. Present-day AI is both a service and a product, she said, and the AI in our everyday lives has long since become a consumer good. So, from the users' perspective, we need to ask not only what we stand to gain from AI, but also what we stand to lose.

She listed five key points in this regard:

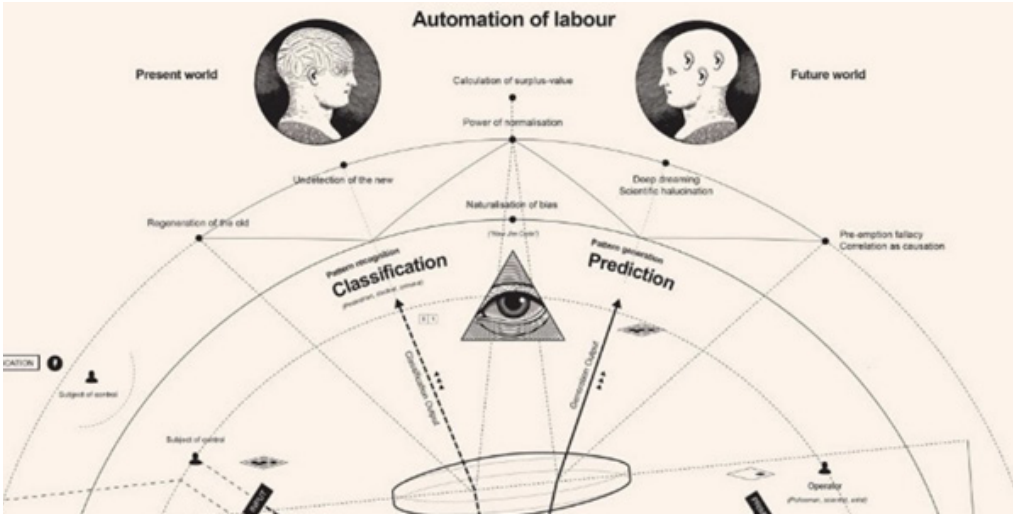
1. Tech is not neutral, but based on prejudices.
2. The very term "artificial intelligence" creates certain symbols and expectations.
3. AI cannot be reduced to a single technology such as LLM chatbots.
4. AI is a long-standing and ever-evolving technology that is prone to opacity and causing alienation.
5. Given the time lag between rapid technological development and commercialization, on the one hand, and public debate, on the other, AI is often introduced without sufficient debate and simply accepted as a fait accompli.

The problem of bias is particularly conspicuous in gender classification. Jeon cited Max Dovey's 2015 computer-assisted image recognition experiment and a case in which even naked male bodies were classified by AI as "female". She used this example to show how biased the technology is: it simply assumes that all naked bodies are female. This error is not simply an instance of misrecognition: it's a result of the conventions on the basis of which data categorize bodies. The training data and labeling processes adopt the rules of a visual culture that defines gender as binary and strongly associates nudes with the category "female". ›



How to be more or less human by Max Dovey (2015)

The "Nooskoop Manifesto": Counter-narratives to the AI hype (13th Gwangju Biennale)



Jeon cited the "Nooscope Manifesto" by Vladan Yoler and Matteo Pasquinelli, which was shown at the 13th Gwangju Biennale, as a striking example of this problem. The manifesto seeks to shift AI from its ideological status as an "intelligent machine" to a "knowledge tool", an instrument that analyzes and explores society. Instead of mystifying machine learning as some magic force, it should be seen as a "knowledge-based magnifying glass" that helps us to visualize characteristics, patterns and connections in vast realms of data that are difficult for humans to access.

Instead of mystifying the technology as a transcendent "intelligence", we are re-interpreting AI as a tool for measuring and classifying social structures, said Jeon. "Companies are also coming to realize they need to get rid of AI's mysterious elements," she added. She referred to Yann LeCun (founding director of Meta AI Lab), who views current-day AI as a technology of "recognition" rather than "insight", and stressed the need to temper the exaggerated expectations fueled by the term "intelligence".

Jeon then turned to linguistic and symbolic dimensions: "Why do we call it 'artificial intelligence'?" She argued that terms like "AGI" ("artificial general intelligence") and "metaverse" conflate practical functions with exaggerated expectations, turning the technology into an opaque black box. Particularly problematic, she observed, is OpenAI's definition of AGI as "AI systems that are generally smarter than humans": the word "generally" suggests a boundary between norms like "normal" and "abnormal". Language that purports to be universal, she warned, can readily become a mechanism of exclusion.

When anthropomorphic verbs like "think", "understand" and "lie" are applied to AI, this should be regarded as a red flag. It gives rise to the misconception that technology is an "actor" rather than a tool, and it is this very misconception that can promote overconsumption and dependence. Furthermore, she pointed out the qualitative difference between data generation by AI and the human processes of reading, reflecting and developing one's own points of view. With increasing dependence on rapid data generation, she cautioned, we risk losing authenticity and self-reflection. ›

A new name for AI:
Didn't OpenAI define AGI as "generally smarter than humans" when formulating its mission? The adjective "general" in "artificial general intelligence" is already being used hierarchically here and against humans, which goes beyond the usual meaning of "general". This raises questions like: Which users of AI fall short of "general" standard intelligence? And if you don't use AGI, does that make you abnormal?

The word "general" applies not only to the technology, but also to its users. Which in turn makes "general" a powerful descriptor that categorizes users and fuels the fear of not belonging. Would it be a stretch to say that the purpose of "general" in "artificial general intelligence" is to instill this very fear: that if you don't go with the AI flow, you won't belong to the mainstream?

왜 인공 '지능'인가? 적합한 이름인가? 'AGI'등 AI와 관련한 여러 어휘와 상징


SeMA Coral

AI를 위한 새로운 이름 짓기

*OpenAI는 그들의 **임무**를 설명하면서 AGI에 '**일반적으로 인간보다 더 똑똑한(generally smarter than humans)**'이라는 정의를 덧붙이지 않았는가. 그들은 AGI의 **general** 이라는 수식어를 이미 이런 식으로—**인간과 대립하는 위계적 방식** 으로—쓰고 있다. 위에서 말한 '**범용**'이라는 뜻으로 국한하지 않는다. 그리고 떠오른 질문은 '**일반에 미치지 못하는 AI를 쓰는 이들은 누구일까?**', '일반 인공지능을 쓰지 못하면 일반에 속할 수 없는 건가?'처럼 '일반'이라는 수식어는 자연스럽게 사용자를 향하는 쪽으로 확장되었다. 그렇게 보면 **general은 어떤 존재를 범주화하는 힘이 있고, 그 집합에 포함될 수 없다는 두려움을 자극하는 언어** 다. AI의 흐름에 함께 하지 않으면 다수에 포함될 수 없다는 두려움을 자극하는 것이 AGI 속 general의 용도라고 말한다면 비약일까?*

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http://semacoral.org/features/youjinjeon-renaming-ai-against-labeling-technology

"What, then, should we call this technology?" she asked. Given that naming things is an inescapable human habit, Jeon argues that in a world in which technological terminology, intertwined with capital and power, undermines knowledge systems and reproduces hierarchies, art can help to replace illusory and dangerous terms with "truthful names".

She went on to point up the discrepancy between the rapid pace of technological development and commercialization and the comparatively slow pace of social debate. Whenever technological changes become the norm faster than we can consciously reflect on those changes, consumers need not be passive users ("weaklings"). Instead, we can take action by unsubscribing from or boycotting services, for example, or choosing alternative tools. She concluded by stressing the urgent need to rethink how "linguistically generated expectations" become permanently entrenched in consumption structures.

The Potential for Connecting K-Content and the Industrial AI Ecosystem

Oul Han (associate professor, Department of Global Korean Studies, Sogang University); In Suk Kim (Director of Science and Technology, ADeKo)

Oul Han analyzed the connection between Korean content ("K-content") and the industrial AI ecosystem. She showed that the Korean content industry, which is characterized by rapid production and distribution as well as simultaneous worldwide releases, depends on an infrastructure that could hardly be maintained without AI. This includes translation, subtitling, fan outreach and text marketing.

She explained that LLM-based translation and text production processes are increasingly setting the "standard" for emotional and cultural expression. This development is giving rise to new emotional norms that are evolving iteratively, influencing, for example, which forms of expression are deemed appropriate and how much detachment is necessary for good comprehension.

Oul Han warned that this process carries a risk of "cultural levelling" in which differences will disappear. She stressed the importance of international cooperation right from the start: Korea can contribute a wealth of case studies and experiments, while countries like Germany can play an important part in developing standards and norms.

Oul Han (left) analyzed how AI underpins the rapid, global distribution of K-content, showing how LLM-based translation and text production are now shaping evolving emotional and cultural norms.

In Suk Kim looked into the use of AI in dealing with urban and public data in Korea. The real problem, she pointed out, is not a dearth of data, but a lack of trust and the concentration of decision-making powers. In other words, data does not get shared because the institutions that possess it distrust those who want to use it.

In Suk Kim (right) examined how AI interacts with Korea's urban and public data sphere.

The loss of trust, she remarked, is mainly due to the fact that those involved in the data process have little influence over the control and use of their data. Which is why intermediaries are crucial in the industrial AI sector, seeing as data providers and users seldom communicate directly with each other. ›

No sectors should be geared exclusively towards providers, she argued. On the contrary, they should be restructured to include other stakeholders, such as consumers, users and taxpayers. She also suggested involving engineers, economists and experts in the humanities (e.g. communications experts) right from the start. She then discussed cooperation between Korea and Germany, comparing Korea's dense digital infrastructure, its speed and expertise in visualization, with Germany's more pronounced expertise in design, e.g. in "intelligent architecture". Combining Germany's expertise in design with Korea's capabilities in matters of implementation could yield faster and more noticeable results – and even pave the way for global expansion.

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The concluding panel discussion revolved around the question of the right preconditions for "good AI" and human sovereignty – and when these goals might be achievable. The speakers stressed the core values of autonomy, accountability, transparency and public involvement and the importance of viewing and treating AI as a tool to expand human capabilities.

But they also expressed concerns that algorithmic recommendations, hyper-personalized marketing and surveillance capitalism could lead to the categorization and quantification of human preferences and human sovereignty. They also debated whether systems like a "universal basic income" could divide society into a "majority that have given up thinking" and a "minority that still strive for individuality".

They also mentioned the risk that conversations with chatbots might foster narcissism and that such all too smooth interactions might cause the loss of the essential human experience of personal growth through exposure to otherness and conflict.

One speaker presented a schematic history of tools along three axes – possession (property), activity (skills/occupation) and being (existence/meaning) – and asked in which direction AI infrastructure is most likely to develop. Others responded that industrial society has so far created tools primarily for possession and activity, whereas art, the humanities and philosophy – which ask questions about the meaning of life and what makes life worth living – could become increasingly important in the future.

Moderated by Juyong Park, the concluding panel on November 29th explored the conditions for 'good AI' and human sovereignty, emphasizing autonomy, accountability, transparency, and public involvement.

The panel came to the consensus that AI standards and ecosystems mustn't be designed solely according to the logic of technology and industry: the goals of a meaningful life and human dignity must also be taken into consideration.

4. Key Takeaways and Recommendations

The workshop made it clear that ethical AI in Korea is about more than technological capabilities and abstract value propositions. For it is closely bound up with rights and obligations, data and representations, education and usage norms, and the structure of social trust.

As the UCLA Luskin School of Public Affairs (2025) pointed out, Koreans have a comparatively high level of education. This foundation serves not only as human capital that drives innovation, but also as a key prerequisite for civic engagement, democratic stability and, as transpired from the workshop discussions, for the development of ethical AI.

The first common denominator of the talks given at the workshop was the shared conviction that ethical AI will be considerably limited if based solely on declared principles or autonomous guidelines. Yeo-Kyung Chang warned that the growing number of exceptions and gray areas in influential forms of AI are likely to increase the risk of infringements of basic rights and to obscure paths to accountability and redress.

Hyeondeuk Cheon also pointed out that the proliferation of black-box systems and agent-based AI tends to obscure responsibility and that automation without explainability can undermine legitimacy in the eyes of the public.

The participants in the discussions made it clear that ethical AI is not merely a matter of declaring moral values. It's about establishing structures to ensure that accountability, transparency and redress mechanisms actually work.

Data and representation were repeatedly highlighted as crucial issues – and not just peripheral aspects – of AI technology. Jooyoung Oh pointed out that the ethics of representation depend on what data sets and archives contain – and what they leave out. The more "plausible" AI-based reconstructions and productions become, the greater the risk of errors and omissions becoming permanently entrenched.

While conceding that the spread of generative AI may be justified for reasons of efficiency and productivity, Inhwa Yeom criticized the failure to address such urgent issues as the concentration of resources and power, as well as the unfair apportionment of the costs involved in AI development and operation.

In other words, ethical AI must not be confined to technical measures designed to eradicate bias, but must also address the underlying structures that cause omissions and imbalances.

The workshop also brought to the fore the challenges facing ethical AI in education and everyday use as well. Gaya Nadarajan underscored that while generative AI can facilitate learning, it also poses risks to educational integrity and critical thinking. She also pointed out that different cultural backgrounds engender different attitudes towards the use of AI.

Youjin Jeon added that anthropomorphic language applied to technology is already a red flag, for it is liable to give rise to extravagant expectations and potentially dangerous dependencies. Oul Han drew on the example of the K-content industry to show that translation, subtitling and fan outreach communication have long relied on AI infrastructures – which could increasingly lead to a levelling of both emotional expression and cultural differences.

The consensus view to be gathered from the workshop is that ethical AI is not merely a matter of approving a given technology, but depends on each country's established usage norms and cultural standards.

AI operation and evaluation were also highlighted as crucial aspects of ethical AI rollout in practice. Yubeen Kwon cited the case of "Iruda" as a cautionary tale of how ethics can easily be undermined if limited to mere lip service. Ethical approaches to the use of AI need to be continuously reviewed and adjusted over the entire course of service design and operation. I.T. Shin added that bias cannot be completely eradicated, but reducing bias is a realistic objective. Verification mechanisms such as ethical datasets, evaluation sets and screening tools are indispensable to this end.

The workshop discussions made it clear that ethical AI is not a matter of intention: it requires an operating structure that allows for measurement and verification. ›

The challenges facing ethical AI in Korea are not confined to individual technologies or systems, but need to be discussed in multi-layered networks and public forums. The various speakers stressed the importance of legal protection, data and representation, education and usage norms as well as evaluation and management in various domains. It was the consensus view that these problems can hardly be solved in isolation.

Hence the importance of intermediary organizations such as cultural institutions: they can connect up discussions between policymakers, the business community and civil society, translate between the various contextual languages, and document and collate these debates.

Political and social divisions complicate the discussion of ethical AI. In a polarized environment, ethical standards can easily be misused to serve as partisan rhetoric and undermine trust in tech policy. As the workshop discussions showed, however, procedural elements such as transparency and accountability can lay the foundation for a shared "legitimacy of process", rather than just reaching agreement on outcomes.

Korea's high levels of education and civic engagement constitute key social preconditions for the public to understand and verify these processes. The workshop itself provided a concrete demonstration of the contentious issues involved and the conditions under which discussions of ethical AI can take place.

5. Profiles of the Workshop Participants

Chang-hee Lee
Professor Chang-hee Lee works in the Department of Industrial Design at the Korea Advanced Institute of Science and Technology as well as at the KAIST institutes of Space Research and AI Research. His own research explores sensory experiences using experimental interfaces and interactive systems. He obtained his PhD from the Royal College of Art (RCA) and taught in the Innovative Design Engineering Program, a joint initiative of the RCA and Imperial College London. He was included on the UK Design Council's "Ones to Watch" list, received an honorable mention in the category "Digital Humanity" at the Prix Ars Electronica (2025) and shortlisted for the British Council Alumni Award.

Yeo-Kyung Chang
Yeo-Kyung Chang is the executive director of the Korean non-profit Jinbonet (Digital Justice Network). She studies the relationship between digital technology and society from a human rights perspective and has been instrumental in introducing the concept of digital rights into Korea's political discourse. She previously served as a non-executive member of Korea's Personal Information Protection Commission and is currently a member of the Digital Rights Expert Committee at the National Human Rights Commission of Korea.

Yubeen Kwon
Yubeen Kwon is a PhD student in science and technology studies at Seoul National University, where she also earned her bachelor's and master's degrees in education. Her research focuses on scientific expertise, human-computer interaction, AI ethics and civic education. She recently published an analysis of the rise and fall of the AI chatbot "Iruda" in the Social Studies of Science journal. Her doctoral dissertation examines ways in which scientific expertise is changing in the age of AI, in particular with regard to a collaborative AI and biology research group.

Jooyoung Oh

Jooyoung Oh is a research-based artist exploring the intersection between visuality, technology and society. Using AI, visual patterns, and recognition systems, her works explore the interaction between human and machine perception, thereby developing new ways of combining art and technology. Her recent works have focused on such issues as the climate crisis, mobility, environmental resources and care, as well as a critical examination of the ethical problems of missing or marginalized data. Oh unearths overlooked stories and invisible data, yielding new perspectives on the ways in which our world is informed by technology.

Gaya Nadarajan

Gaya Nadarajan is an associate professor at Sungkyunkwan University (SKKU) with over twenty-five years' experience in collaboration between researchers and industry in Europe and Asia. Her expertise encompasses image analysis, drug discovery and, more recently, educational technology and research. She has contributed to collaborative online education initiatives to promote intellectual and intercultural exchange between students and teachers from Korea, Canada and the UK. Her research drives innovation at the intersection between data science, education and global cooperation.

Inhwa Yeom

Inhwa Yeom is a media artist, researcher and the founder of the biotech and art start-up BiOVE. At the interface between XR and AI technologies and the performing arts, her works address biocolonialism, the climate crisis and neurodiversity, incorporating a wide range of (non-)human experiences. Yeom is a recipient of the LG Arts Center and LG Electronics Media Artist Award and was a finalist for the Hyundai Motor Group's 6th VH Award. Her works have been shown at the Korean National Museum of Modern and Contemporary Art (MMCA), the Ars Electronica Festival, the Asian Culture Center (ACC) and SIGGRAPH Asia.

Juyong Park

Juyong Park is an expert on complex systems with a PhD in theoretical physics. His research is on art, culture and creativity. He is currently exploring the complex interconnected networks of human creativity that advance culture and science, the two pillars of civilization. He is also looking into the question of whether machines can achieve genuine intelligence through insights into creativity. He holds a bachelor's degree in physics from Seoul National University and a PhD in physics from the University of Michigan. He is currently a professor at the Graduate School of Culture Technology of the Korea Advanced Institute of Science and Technology (KAIST) and a visiting professor at the Korea Institute for Advanced Study (KIAS). He is also the author of a Korean bestseller, "The Future Is Not Created: An Unusual Lecture on Creativity by a Cultural Physicist in the Post-AI Era" (Dong-Asia, 2024), a collection of essays on the convergence of science and culture.

I.T. Shin

I.T. Shin is the CEO of OGQ Corp. and a lecturer on political science and international relations at Yonsei University. He holds a master's degree in technology management from the Korea Advanced Institute of Science and Technology (KAIST) and studied political science and international relations at Yonsei University. Shin has started up several innovative platforms, including OGQ, a platform connecting IP content creators with fans; Docfriends, a personalized healthcare service that connects patients with specialized doctors; and POSDAQ, a platform for political innovation that seeks to introduce daily evaluations of politicians and to impose a three-term limit on holders of political office.

Hyundeuk Cheon

Hyundeuk Cheon is a philosopher of science. His latest research focuses on the philosophical and ethical issues associated with artificial intelligence, especially emotions, understanding, explainability and transparency. He studied physics at Seoul National University and obtained his master's and PhD degrees there in the philosophy of science. Before joining the Philosophy Department there in 2018 and transferring to its newly established Department of Natural Sciences in 2022, he worked at the Graduate School of Humanities at Ewha Womans University. He currently runs the Center for Artificial Intelligence and Ethics (ELSI Center) at Seoul National University's AI Research Institute and is vice president of the Korean philosophy of science society. His numerous publications to date include the books "Thomas Kuhn: The Unfinished Revolution", "What is Science?" (co-author) and "The Ontology of Artificial Intelligence" (co-author).

Youjin Jeon

Youjin Jeon is an artist whose multidisciplinary work includes sound art, performance art, sculpture and new media technologies. She began her career composing film scores and now explores the interplay between narrative and technology in the artist collective Seoul Express. In 2017, she founded the Woman Open Tech Lab in Seoul to promote feminist perspectives and non-hierarchical approaches to technology. She subsequently co-curated the public art project "Zero Makes Zero" and has directed public programs including "The Technology for Resistance". Jeon is the author of "Reading Technology Critically" and co-author of "Caring and Working". Her "Fem Tech Talk" project, launched in 2021, publishes books and articles critiquing technology from various perspectives.

Oul Han

Oul Han is an assistant professor at Sogang University's Institute of Global Korean Studies, where she carries out research on AI-based cultural translation of Hallyu ("Korean Wave") content. She earned her PhD from the Freie Universität Berlin and did postdoctoral research there on AI and language technology. She has practical experience in translating Korean culture and has translated books by Changnam Kim and Kyutaek Lee about the South Korean boy band BTS and Korean pop music, both as a freelancer and as a team leader. She is currently developing research concepts to explain how Korean emotions are transformed by AI.

In Suk Kim

Dr. In Suk Kim is a leading expert on AI strategy and international cooperation. She is a member of the Subcommittee on Global Cooperation for Korea's Presidential Committee on National AI Strategy, the Director for Science and Technology at ADeKo (German-Korean Alumni Network), and CEO of the Handa Forum. She received her BA, MA and PhD in economics from the University of Cologne and a scholarship from the Friedrich Naumann Foundation (FNF). Dr. Kim is actively involved in the development of a global AI ecosystem. As a member of the EU's Gaia-X working group on "geographical extension", she is developing best practices for global collaboration on industrial AI and connecting data rooms in the mobility, smart cities, manufacturing, energy and healthcare sectors.

Soyoung Choi

Soyoung Choi puts out an AI newsletter called "Daily Prompt" that explores technology's potential as a public resource to improve the living conditions of socially disadvantaged and marginalized people. She has a master's degree in design from Hongik University and is currently working on her PhD. She studied art and technology at Sogang University. Her works, which focus on AI-generated media and physical installations, were presented at the Gwangju Design Biennale in 2023 and in her solo exhibition "Low Flowing Water" in 2025. Since her 2023 debut, Choi has gained notice for her unique insights and clear-cut explanations. Her most significant publications to date are "Daily Prompt 101" (2024) and "ChatGPT: This Is How I Write" (2025). She currently teaches in the Department of Digital Product Design at Hoseo University and is planning various projects at the interface between technology and art.

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