



External PhD Opportunity with Professor Payal Arora

Utrecht University

Faculty of Humanities

Focus: Data Sovereignty, Inclusive AI Governance & Global Frameworks for Technology Ethics

What is an External PhD?

An external PhD allows professionals to pursue a doctoral degree part-time while remaining in their current roles. These candidates are typically self-funded or supported by their institutions. Admission into this route is highly selective and at the discretion of full professors. Professor Payal Arora, will be supervising 1–2 external PhD candidates per cycle whose research and professional interests align strongly with her expertise and the vision of the Faculty of Humanities at Utrecht University.

Why This Invitation?

If you are part of the NL Internet Governance Forum (NL IGF) network and are passionate about shaping the future of data governance, AI ethics, and inclusive tech from a global, justice-oriented perspective, this opportunity is for you.

Research areas Prof. Arora is keen to supervise include:

- Data sovereignty, including from the Majority World perspective
- Alternative models of AI governance
- Best practices in tech governance including from beyond the Euro-American sphere
- Comparative studies on inclusive innovation and ethical frameworks

Your institutional affiliation may offer financial support for research degrees, making this a feasible pathway for career-embedded professionals.

Initial Expression of Interest (Deadline: July 31, 2025)

To be considered, please submit:

- A 1-page motivation letter
- A 1-page research idea summary
- CV

Email both as PDFs to p.arora@uu.nl Shortlisted candidates will be invited to prepare a full proposal for one of the quarterly Scholarly Board reviews:

Review Period	Submission Deadline
End of January	13 January
Mid-April	1 April
Start of June	19 May
Start of September	15 August

Full Application Documents (Upon Shortlisting)

1. CV with academic and contact details
2. Academic transcripts (BA and MA or equivalent)
3. 3–5 page research proposal, including:
 - Research question & hypothesis
 - Strategy and timeline
 - Literature overview
4. Statement on why you've chosen me as your supervisor
5. Recommendation letter from a former lecturer/supervisor
6. Proof of English proficiency (no older than two years)
7. Statement of (prospective) funding support

About Prof. Payal Arora

Payal Arora is Professor of Inclusive AI Cultures at Utrecht University and co-founder of [Inclusive AI Lab](#) and [FemLab](#). A digital anthropologist with two decades of field experience, she works to shape inclusive AI designs and policy globally. She is the author of 100+ academic articles and award-winning books including *The Next Billion Users* (Harvard Press). Forbes named her the 'next billion champion' and 'the right kind of person to reform tech.' She was listed in the 100 Brilliant Women in AI Ethics 2025 and received the 2025 Women in AI Benelux Award for her work on diversifying AI. Her latest book with MIT Press, *From Pessimism to Promise: Lessons from the Global South on Designing Inclusive Tech*, is a 2025 Axiom Business Book Awards Silver Medalist and was longlisted for the 2024 Porchlight Business Book Awards. Her work has been featured in 200+ global media outlets including The Financial Times, Fast Company, The Economist, Wired, and BBC. She has advised organizations like UNHCR, Spotify, Google, KPMG, Adobe, GE, IDEO, and serves on the boards of UN EGOV and LIRNEAsia. A sought-after speaker, she has delivered 350+ talks in 85 countries at events such as ACM FACCT, COP26, World Economic Forum, and TEDx.

Website: <https://payalarora.com>