



## **Media Release**

### **SMU's Centre for AI and Data Governance launches new research, policy and community outreach initiative to improve human-AI exchanges**

*The 'AI in Community' project will promote public acceptance and utility of the technology especially during post-COVID recovery*

Singapore, 16 June 2021 (Wednesday) – [Singapore Management University](#) (SMU)'s [Centre for AI and Data Governance](#) (CAIDG), has launched a research initiative "AI in Community" to locate AI and Big Data within communities, as part of effort to make Singapore a global leader in the race for Human-Centred AI. The outcomes would transform the relationship between AI designers and the community, such that AI technology would not only be customised for AI clients, but designed for the community in mind.

Modelled after the [Stanford HAI](#) (Human-centred artificial intelligence), this new research, policy and community outreach initiative builds on CAIDG's rich experience in target topics of public interest, namely Trustworthy AI<sup>1</sup>, Grassroots Ethics<sup>2</sup>, Responsible COVID Surveillance Technology, Fair Platform Economies<sup>3</sup>, Safe Automated Vehicles, Open Finance<sup>4</sup>, Care Robotics<sup>5</sup>, Citizen-centric Smart Cities, and People-focused Personal Data.

The research will identify AI as a trusted tool to nurture positive community perspectives and to improve the public's understanding of it. By exploring the way that AI and data can be a part of the community, CAIDG aims to debunk the public's perception that benefits and risks associated with AI and mass data sharing are beyond their control. AI would no longer be seen as a problem, but as a solution to current and future sustainability matters.

### **Current issues**

Many aspects in society, for example public transport, health service delivery, schooling, banking, on-line purchases, public utilities, and food delivery apps rely on AI-assisted technology and produce big data. CAIDG's research will address the community's central concern about AI – *how can people relate to new technology so that life is better, safer and more sustainable?*

**Professor Mark Findlay, Director, CAIDG** cites some examples, "If people do not trust AI (as with TraceTogether in the early stages) they are less likely to cooperate. However, if the AI is explained in ways people understand, with the risks and benefits made clear, with community attitudes influencing the design of AI apps, then trust can be generated. Trust is a difficult thing to measure. Why are people happy to get onto the Downtown MRT train without a driver but fear an autonomous taxi? The answer may lie in what people see as beneficial and understandable."

He said, "AI In Community is designed as a people-first research commitment in CAIDG to ensure the expansion of AI and mass data use in Singapore and beyond, and progresses with much more than

profit in mind. Communities should be involved in the important stages of AI creation and deployment to ensure that technology sits comfortably within the societies in which we prefer to live.”

### **Solutions the initiative will provide**

*AI in Community* allows people to see where AI is, what it does, why it is doing what it does, and have a say in the data it produces. For example, recent MRT outages have caused much inconvenience to commuters. In part this is because the AI that assisted in train maintenance and the warnings it was revealing were not openly known and understood by commuters. Another example would be job applications processed by AI that are rejected without explanation, on information that was incorrect. *AI in Community* would **reveal these problems and allow timely corrections**. If you want to move from one bank to another, *AI in Community* can ensure that **your personal data travels with you**. You might be happy to have a robot assist your surgeon in performing a delicate operation, but how many of you would go to a robot dentist? *AI in community* will **offer opportunities to discuss and determine when AI is appropriate and when it is not**. How often have you been frustrated by chatbots that never seem to listen or have the right answers? *AI in Community* can **help develop chatbots that service customer need and not just streamline enquiry administration**.

**Professor Findlay** said “This new initiative is especially significant for post-COVID recovery. For years now we have heard discussions about principled design, ethical AI, responsible data management and more recently, trusted technology. Much of this work could be said to have missed the mark when it comes to dealing with what people think is important.

Our work on building trust and ensuring AI-to-humans accountability has clearly shown that public confidence in AI depends on answering social concerns and explaining risks. CAIDG has taken on the challenge to listen to these fears and work towards solutions.”

### **The *AI in Community* initiative will focus on 5 key areas:**

1. Kampong Ethics – Locating AI in communities (social, industrial, commercial) so that humans and machines are linked by relationships of trust where technology essentially contributes to public good.
  2. Smart Cities and AI/Big Data – Singapore’s Smart Nation policy has a citizen-centric core. Consistent with this commitment is the need to position AI and Big data alongside the community to improve the quality of life.
  3. Digital Self-determination – In a world drowning in data it is time to ensure that data subjects have management of their data in safe data spaces
  4. Open Finance – The days of paper money are almost over. Along with digital finance in every aspect of commercial activity, it is critical that open finance brings the ecosystem closer to true customer-centricity.
  5. Positive Surveillance – COVID-19 has introduced us all into a new normal where our movement, association and daily habits are monitored. How can we be confident that surveillance and privacy are not in conflict?
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**Media Contact:**

Audrey Chan  
Senior Manager, Corporate Communications  
Office of Corporate Communications & Marketing  
Singapore Management University  
Mobile: + 65 9005 1615  
Email: [audreychan@smu.edu.sg](mailto:audreychan@smu.edu.sg)

**About SMU Centre for AI and Data Governance**

Established in September 2018 at the Singapore Management University School of Law, the Centre for AI & Data Governance (CAIDG) conducts independent research on policy, regulatory, governance, ethics and other issues relating to AI and data use. The Centre is supported by the National Research Foundation and the Infocomm Media Development Authority of Singapore, and forms part of the national ecosystem driving the development of responsible AI in Singapore.

The Centre has three goals, namely conduct academic research to inform AI and data governance in Singapore and beyond, with a particular focus on legislation and policy; convene and facilitate dialogue across academia and industry, especially between organisations in the Asia Pacific region; and share its research and learn from other organisations and the wider public.

**About Singapore Management University**

A premier university in Asia, the Singapore Management University (SMU) is internationally recognised for its world-class research and distinguished teaching. Established in 2000, SMU's mission is to generate leading-edge research with global impact and to produce broad-based, creative and entrepreneurial leaders for the knowledge-based economy. SMU's education is known for its highly interactive, collaborative and project-based approach to learning.

Home to over 11,000 students across undergraduate, postgraduate professional and post-graduate research programmes, SMU, is comprised of six schools: School of Accountancy, Lee Kong Chian School of Business, School of Economics, School of Computing and Information Systems, School of Law, and School of Social Sciences. SMU offers a wide range of bachelors', masters' and PhD degree programmes in the disciplinary areas associated with the six schools, as well as in multidisciplinary combinations of these areas.

SMU emphasises rigorous, high-impact, multi- and interdisciplinary research that addresses Asian issues of global relevance. SMU faculty members collaborate with leading international researchers and universities around the world, as well as with partners in the business community and public sector. SMU's city campus is a modern facility located in the heart of downtown Singapore, fostering strategic linkages with business, government and the wider community. [www.smu.edu.sg](http://www.smu.edu.sg)