

## Call for Papers

on the International Conference of the

**DGPuK (German Communication Association) Visual Communication Section**

co-sponsored by the

**Visual Communication Studies Division of the International Communication Association**

20.-22.11.2024

at the **ZeMKI (Centre for Media, Communication and Information Research)**

of the University of Bremen

### **Generative Images - Generative Imageries:**

#### **Challenges of Visual Communication (Research) in the Age of AI**

Societal discourse about the benefits, risks, and challenges of artificial intelligence (AI) is in full swing. To date much of the debate has focused on text-to-text generators such as Chat-GPT, Bing, or Bard (for a recent overview see Sachs-Hombach et al. 2023). Yet, rapid AI development is also fundamentally changing visual communication: With *Stable Diffusion*, *Dall-E* or *Midjourney*, powerful AI generators of images and image sequences have long been available whose output is impressive in terms of diversity, richness of detail and image complexity. AI-generated images have long been used in a variety of media, social, and political contexts - even for strategic persuasion and political propaganda - and without the generative origin being obvious to users or being disclosed.

Generative images - generative imageries (GI) - thus offer enormous potential to fundamentally change the production, use, reception and handling of images. At the same time, little light has been shed on what it actually means for our understanding of imagery when images are increasingly produced generatively. Does this mean the “end of truth” as the established German news magazine *Der Spiegel* headlined in July 2023 emphasizing the challenges of generative imagery?

Against this background, we would like to use the upcoming *international* conference of the Visual Communication section of the DGPuK (German Communication Association) in Bremen and online to explicitly focus on taking stock of, reflecting on, discussing, and further developing our scientific understanding of generative images. In the context of the conference **Generative Images - Generative Imageries** we would like to explore the emerging field of tension around generative imagery and examine AI-generated images from **four interrelated perspectives**:

1. From an **object-centered perspective**, in which we invite submissions, which address the specific characteristics, the specific communicative potentials and challenges of generative images in comparison to non-generative images. With regard to ‘photo-realistic’ generative media: How and, if applicable, under which conditions are images still “taken for true” in the age of their AI generativity? Is there a fundamental change in the communicative potentials that images bring to discourses? Do images lose originality and intrinsic value through the loss of the photographic representation of reality? Do they lose visual salience and attention-capturing power? With regard to non-realistic images: Which new or hybrid image genres emerge having which characteristics? And on the level of meta-reflection: How is the “cultural distinctness” of AI-generated images constructed in scientific, media-public and private discourse contexts? Which cultural imaginaries – from disruptive power, to evolutionary continuation within the history of image manipulation, to new creative potentials – accompany the advent of generative images? Which risks and opportunities are highlighted under which perspectives and premises? In which thematic contexts are the potentials and risks of generative images discussed?
2. from a **production-centered perspective**, we seek contributions focusing on the production and presentation contexts of generative images in order to better understand routines and biases of the use of generative images. Submissions in this area could address questions such as: What are techniques, motives, and routines that favor the production and communicative use of AI-generated images? Which affordances and options for action do (different) AI image generators offer? Which are the commercial goals of the tech companies developing AI tools? How do they work and train their engines? Which data practices are linked to the production of generative images? : How far are generative images biased? What leeway for critical action on media algorithms exists? Which routines of action do laypersons and professional communicators develop in the context of the production and use of AI-generated images (e.g., “prompt engineering”)? To what extent do they reflect the artificial character of AI-generated images and possible consequences for visual communication (e.g., open questions of ownership)? Which – if any - transparency practices are exercised by the communicators themselves, highlighting the generative origin of pictures? By means of which authentication strategies (e.g. fact-checking; source-checking) do communicators check source material with regard to concrete AI generated and/or AI-augmented image elements?
3. from a **reception- and usage-oriented perspective**, asking how people appropriate generative images: How do they encounter, distribute and discuss generative images, e.g. in social media? How do recipients recognize generative images? With which attitude of reception do they face (different forms and genres of) generative imagery? Through which reception-related practices, identifiers and conventions do recipients evaluate for themselves what claim to reality and what (symbolic) credibility generative images have? Which special visual or media literacy skills do users acquire when dealing with AI-generated images? Which ones do they lack in order to gain a reflective attitude of use and reception when dealing with AI-generated images?
4. from a **methodological and research-ethical perspective**, we aim to discuss questions such as: Which (innovative) methodological approaches and procedures can we use to capture the particularities of AI-generated images? How can we empirically grasp their communicative production and presentation contexts? With which established and innovative methods (combinations) can we empirically illuminate their impact potentials? How and for which goals can we integrate generative images into existing or new visual research designs and strategies (e.g. as stimulus material)? What new challenges and

questions arise with the use of AI in visual contexts? What new opportunities and functionalities are revealed? How to deal with open questions regarding copyright and protection of privacy? How to fight the abuse and harmful use of generative AI? How should the use of AI visuals be characterized in different contexts, such as art, politics, education etc.)?

The aim of the **international conference** is to discuss these and other questions on phenomena of generative imagery with national and international experts from the background of visual communication and media research, image science, as well as audience research and media effect studies, to situate them in the context of current approaches to analyzing the potentials and limits of communicative AI (Hepp et al, 2022) and make them accessible for further scientific analysis. In addition to a clear commitment to the international and interdisciplinary orientation of visual communication research, the conference aims in particular to initiate and encourage conversations between visual communication research and other fields concerned with the impact of generative AI. Provided that they enrich the discussion of **Generative Images - Generative Imageries** in a broader sense, "creative", "unconventional" contributions to the conference theme are also welcome. Therefore, in addition to traditional submissions of academic presentations, **submissions for innovative session formats with workshop character are** encouraged, in which conference attendees can actively participate in advancing theoretical, conceptual and methodological reflection in creative settings. Aiming to establish common ground for interdisciplinary discussion, we kindly ask submitters to briefly outline their understandings of what generative images are, and from which approaches they look at the specific areas of interest.

The DGPuK (German Communication Association) Visual Communication section is particularly interested in **promoting early career researchers**. Therefore, we would like to explicitly encourage early career scholars and PhD students to submit. A **best paper award will recognize** outstanding contributions by emerging academics.

### **Submission Details**

The contributions to be submitted should be original research and must not have already been published or presented in identical form; this must be explicitly stated on the cover sheet of the submission.

The conference language is English to allow inclusive discussion in a rapidly evolving and highly international research area. Presentations in alternative languages are possible, but must be prerecorded using English subtitles and slides. For the coordination of the conference, it should be noted on the abstract submission if the presentation will be pre-recorded in another language.

Please send your proposals for presentations (duration of the presentation: 15 minutes), full panels or creative sessions in the form of an "Extended Abstract" (800 words) as a pdf document via e-mail to the following recipients by **July 15, 2024**.

#### ***For the organizing institute:***

**Prof. Dr. habil. Stephanie Geise**

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**For the DGPuK (German Communication Association) Visual Communication Section:**

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**Review process**

All proposals will be reviewed in an anonymous review process. Therefore, we ask that you add a separate cover sheet to the abstracts that includes the information (1) paper title and (2) name and contact information of the submitters. Please also remember to anonymize the file. In the review process, submissions will be judged on the following five criteria: (1) contribution to the conference topic, (2) plausibility of theoretical foundation, (3) appropriateness of approach (including methodology, if applicable), (4) clarity and conciseness of presentation, and (5) contribution to the research field (relevance & originality). Feedback on acceptance to the conference will be provided no later than August 2024.