



SCHLOSS DAGSTUHL
Leibniz-Zentrum für Informatik

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Schloss Dagstuhl:

AI for international development and humanitarian work

Experts on artificial intelligence (AI) are meeting with not-for-profit organizations (NGOs) at Schloss Dagstuhl this week. Together, they are working to employ the power of AI for humanitarian and development work.

Experts on artificial intelligence (AI) from industry and academia are meeting with international not-for-profit organizations (NGOs) at Schloss Dagstuhl in northern Saarland in Germany this week. Together, they are trying to find ways to employ the power of AI for good in the fields of humanitarian and development work.

Building on the successful meetings in 2019 and 2022, experts on artificial intelligence are meeting for a third time with not-for-profit organizations for the AI for Social Good seminar at Schloss Dagstuhl this week. The objective is to establish partnerships and build trust, to iterate on concrete problems in a hands-on hackathon, and to demonstrate what is feasible today with AI.

Since 1990, Schloss Dagstuhl has been hosting computer scientists in so-called Dagstuhl Seminars. This week, the center opened its doors to representatives of a sector that is much less represented at the Schloss: the international development and humanitarian sector. The represented organizations are CIRAD and Droits Quotidiens Legal Tech from France, Zero Hunger Lab, Propel, the World Wide Fund for Nature, Doctors Without Borders, Analytics for a Better World, the Netherlands Red Cross, and Oxfam Novib from the Netherlands, the German Red Cross and Machine Learning for Peace and Internews from the United States of America. They came to challenge the AI experts from companies and various prestigious universities from around the world, including Imperial College London and University of York (UK), RIKEN (Japan), Google (UK and Switzerland), Universität Freiburg, CISPA, and Ruhr-Universität Bochum (Germany), and Umass Amherst and UPenn (USA) to help them with the global problems they are trying to solve.

“The force of the seminar is the mix of people from not-for-profit organizations and academia. We can interact with people that we usually do not speak to, especially not in a way such as it is facilitated here in Dagstuhl. This seminar stands out among other conferences. Academics can get to understand real-world problems and needs of not-for-profit organizations. This can and should drive the development of AI methods, so that they serve the needs of end-users that not-for-profits work for and with. And for these organizations the benefit is clear: they can get in touch with AI experts and discuss solutions to their problems. The seminar is very interactive and the mood is relaxed, which allows us to work together and be productive.” – Roberto Interdonato from CIRAD

“It is a great starting point to put practitioners and data scientists together that would normally not encounter each other. This helps them to understand each others’ dreams and challenges and to see how we can learn from each other and collaborate. We talked a lot about alignment on responsible AI, principles for digitalization, and how AI could do good and not do harm. Looking forward, I see potential for collaboration beyond this seminar, for instance through a community of practice that lives on outside our seminar room. I can’t wait to see the outputs that we will develop together in 2024.” – Andrés Roure from Propel



“This seminar has been an enriching experience. It is really interesting to see the diversity of AI problems presented by the not-for-profit organizations. And I have equally enjoyed hearing from experts in the field of AI. Personally, my main takeaway is the difference between how the AI community evaluates success and what success means for a real-world application.” – Daphne Ezer from the University of York

“The collaborative atmosphere of this Dagstuhl Seminar is really special. It fosters an environment for sharing ideas and learning from each other, in both directions. I really appreciate that. We are building connections between people who are working on similar problems, and we are creating a bigger sense of community: we’re in this together.” – Virginia Partridge from the University of Massachusetts - Amherst

“I gained new insights into advanced AI methodologies of the development process. It was especially insightful to work alongside AI experts, which deepened my understanding of how to craft effective AI solutions. This collaboration taught new coding techniques and ways to approach AI development, all aimed at creating impactful predictions and forecasts for non-profit challenges.” – a participant from Internews

The *AI for the social good* seminar at the Schloss Dagstuhl – Leibniz-Center for Informatics had 27 people from 7 countries on 3 continents convene for a week to live together and work on forming collaborations. The first two days focused on cracking each other’s code. Discussions focused on the NGOs’ most pressing challenges, and on what techniques of artificial intelligence are currently available to help solve them. On days three and four, the AI experts and the not-for-profit organizations held a hackathon to build concrete prototypes for AI applications for social good. The last day was used to plan for the future of the created collaborations.

This Dagstuhl Seminar is organized by:

- Claudia Clopath (Imperial College London, Great Britain)
- Ruben De Winne (Oxfam Novib – Den Haag, The Netherlands)
- Jacopo Margutti (510 / Netherlands Red Cross – The Hague, NL)
- Mohammad Emtiyaz Khan (RIKEN – Tokyo, JP)

More information about the seminar 24082 – “AI for Social Good” can be found at <https://www.dagstuhl.de/24082>

Background:

During the whole year, Schloss Dagstuhl invites scientists from all over the world to come to northern Saarland in the south west of Germany to debate the newest scientific findings in informatics. More than 3,500 computer scientists from universities, research institutions and industry take part in various scientific events at Dagstuhl each year. Since 2005, Schloss Dagstuhl is a member of the Leibniz Association, which connects 96 leading non-university research institutes and scientific infrastructure facilities all over Germany. Because of their national importance, the federal government and the state governments jointly fund the institutes of the Leibniz Association.

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