

Welcome to this garden on the world wide web

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This is my personal space on the web. Inspired by the visions of some of the early pioneers of the various networks that made up the early internet, as well as Tanya Basu's article (2020) in the MIT Technology Review, at one point it felt like a good idea to set this up to be a producer on and cultivator of this open internet that many of us dream of revitalising. This site will contain some of my otherwise unpublishable thoughts on my research areas. Nothing secret or super revelatory (this is the public Internet, after all).

My official research profiles and bios are hosted by my employers/affiliations:

- <https://researchportal.vub.be/en/persons/jamal-shahin>
- <https://www.uva.nl/profiel/s/h/j.b.shahin/j.b.shahin.html>
- <https://cris.unu.edu/jamal-shahin>

and activities of the research teams I am 'active' in are at these links:

- [ARTES, UvA, research cluster digital networks, communications, and technologies](#)
- [CD2I, Brussels School of Governance](#)
- [Digital Governance Cluster, UNU-CRIS](#)

I am lucky enough to work with the most amazing people. Two of my closest colleagues are [Trisha Meyer](#), and [Claske Vos](#). Our team working on digital sovereignty issues is also (obviously) brilliant: [Clement Perarnaud](#), [Sophie Hoogenboom](#), [Orsolya Gulyas](#), and UNU-CRIS Digital Governance Cluster Co-coordinator [Nadia Tjahja](#).

I have a complex love/hate relationship with the first person (possessive) pronoun and determiner. I either use it far too much, or not at all.

We have a cat. When not talking about (our) children, the cat is often the subject of conversations at academic conferences. No photos of her are on social media networks, as we wish to let her lead a fulfilling life in our garden and environs, and not on the internet.

My first choice of career was rock star, but my careers advisor in Sixth Form¹ told me I should be a monk (or a data analyst).

I am rather disorganised, which I have now come to terms with. I spend approximately 27% of my life trying to get other people to come to terms with it as well².

¹I was born and raised in the UK. Moved to the Netherlands (well, Maastricht) in 2000, and then Belgium (well, Brussels) in 2005. Inbetween NL and BE, I spent six glorious months in Lebanon, learning about [UN-ESCWA](#).

²I made that number up.

According to some students, I write boring long emails that contain no pictures, colour, or bold font. I am not a 'multimedia' person, preferring the power of the written (and spoken) word over all else.

I often despair at the state of the world. This leads me to escape into alternative realities in my 'free' time, where science fiction keeps me tethered to this world. Try Iain M. Banks, Ted Chiang, Umberto Eco (science fiction?), Dave Hutchinson, Neal Stephenson, Ursula Le Guin, Cixin Liu, and Margaret Atwood: these authors - in no particular order - make you think about the potentials for our own ← only ← lonely world.

As a self-confirmed pseudo-nerd, I have built this website using [quarto](#).

I find it very difficult to keep in touch with people: it's not because I am not thinking of them, it's rather that I don't want to bother them. I once read that my way of maintaining relationships is called 'transactional', but this is not true: I just need 'an excuse' to catch up with people.

If I could change one thing about the way we use the internet, it would be to find a way to stop people sending me emails that are not responses to my own. Email and grading are my two weak spots. I hope to address these at some point before retirement.

If you give me five minutes, I tend to take eleven.

I love my fountain pens. I wish I could use them more.

On paper

Some recent publications. But before, a word of reflection. I am not a prolific writer, and do struggle with writing clear and exciting texts. Formal publications should be well written, and would like to think I try to set the bar quite high³. I prefer to publish when I can contribute something useful and new to ongoing and new debates, but I often end up not practising what I preach in this area. Works published in my name should have impact not solely on my career (sigh), but rather on academic debates and public discussions. Niche, these discussions may be, but they are vitally important! I often swim in self-doubt and am very insecure about this approach.

Writing only happens when inspiration hits. Inspiration often hits when I am not near a keyboard. Many of these pieces would not exist without co-authors who actually respect deadlines.

- Shahin ([2024](#))
- Shahin et al. ([2024](#))
- Shahin ([2022](#))
- Potjomkina, Orbie, and Shahin ([2023](#))
- Tjahja, Meyer, and Shahin ([2021](#))

On tour

I'll be presenting, moderating (or just plain speaking) at the following events. Maybe they have already past, I do not know how often I will update this site. You may find some reflections on these events in my blog, but I wouldn't hold my breath.

2025

- [Gig-Arts](#)
- [Giga-net annual symposium](#)

2024

- [Digitally Aware Elections discussion series, Brussels School of Governance](#)
- [ReMIT conference, Leuven 16-17 May](#)

³This is not a formal publication.

- GIG-ARTS Conference, Leiden 3-4 June

In class

See the [teaching](#) page for my courses. I take pride in my course manuals, and wish people would put in as much effort in reading them as I do writing them. Of course, writing a detailed course manual does not a good educator make, but I like to think it's 60% of the job.

Teaching (for lack of a word that explains better what I do) is at the core of what I do. I use the classroom as a space for experimenting in how to communicate knowledge. This does not make me the best or the most popular lecturer in the programme, but I hope that it opens up avenues for research in the student body.

There's so much more effort needed to make (university) teaching relevant to the twenty-first Century. Together with colleagues in Amsterdam and Brussels, we are working on what universities should be doing about the challenges brought about by digitalisation, diversity, and climate change. You will be able to read more about this as the semester goes by.

Basu, Tanya. 2020. "Digital Gardens Let You Cultivate Your Own Little Bit of the Internet." MIT Technology Review. September 30, 2020. <https://www.technologyreview.com/2020/09/30/1007716/digital-gardens-let-you-cultivate-your-own-little-bit-of-the-internet/>.

Potjomkina, Diana, Jan Orbie, and Jamal Shahin. 2023. "Forging Their Path in the Brussels Bubble? Civil Society Resistance Within the Domestic Advisory Groups Created Under the EU Trade Agreements." *Cambridge Review of International Affairs* 36 (3): 352–71. <https://doi.org/10.1080/09557571.2020.1855110>.

Shahin, Jamal. 2022. "Coping with New Technologies." In *State of the European Union*, edited by Anand Menon and Simon Usherwood. London: UACES. <https://ukandeu.ac.uk/wp-content/uploads/2022/06/UKIN-State-of-the-EU-Report-1.pdf>.

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Shahin, Jamal, Sophie Hoogenboom, Carlota Morais, and Mauro Santaniello. 2024. "Regional Digital Governance." In *Handbook of Regional Cooperation and Integration*, edited by Philippe De Lombaerde, 108–22. Edward Elgar Publishing. <https://doi.org/10.4337/9781800373747>.

Tjahja, Nadia, Trisha Meyer, and Jamal Shahin. 2021. "What Is Civil Society and Who Represents Civil Society at the IGF? An Analysis of Civil Society Typologies in Internet Governance." *Telecommunications Policy* 45 (6): 102141. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.telpol.2021.102141>.