# PRESS RELEASE

## Five fully AI-generated doctoral theses and what they mean for science

**26 August 2026** — Five doctoral thesis manuscripts whose texts were produced entirely by generative AI have been registered as i-DEPOTs with the Benelux Office for Intellectual Property (BOIP). Together, the five works form the research programme *AI-Driven Knowledge Production*, which examined what happens to scientific knowledge production when AI is used not merely as an aid, but takes over the actual production of the text.

The manuscripts were produced under human curation. The research questions, research architecture, methodological choices, selection and rejection of generated output, verification and ultimate scientific responsibility remained with the researcher.

With the programme, independent researcher Dr Remco Schimmel aims to broaden the debate about AI in science. Much of that debate understandably focuses on prohibition and regulation. “We went one step further and asked: what happens when AI is systematically exploited for scientific knowledge production?”

Four different forms of science were used as stress tests: design-oriented research, interpretative research, historical reconstruction and natural-science research. A fifth study analyses what the four experiments mean for AI-driven knowledge production as a whole.

One important outcome is the speed of production. Within the programme, generating an academically mature doctoral thesis typically took around fourteen days. This was not a push-button method: the manuscripts were built paragraph by paragraph, chapter by chapter and version by version, with repeated review and revision.

AI was also used not only as a writer, but as a *critic and controller*: for fact-checking, checking arguments, assessing whether scientific sources were used correctly and verifying whether references fabricated by AI actually corresponded to existing publications. This made it possible to scrutinise hundreds of pages of text and large numbers of sources systematically, on a scale that would be difficult for a single human supervisor to achieve.

The method was not error-free. In long and complex assignments, language models can lose track of the larger task, forget earlier agreements or introduce unwanted changes. Human curation therefore remained necessary. In practice, however, the problems proved manageable, while the gains in speed remained very large.

The most radical stress test is Columba Loquens. This natural-science thesis on cognition and navigation in homing pigeons was deliberately designed as an exercise in scientific illusionism and as a Turing test for science. The experiments described in the thesis never took place and its observations and empirical datasets were synthetically generated by AI.

At the same time, the manuscript closely follows the stylistic and methodological conventions of mainstream empirical research. It avoids bizarre claims and pseudo-scientific exaggeration,

while recognisable stylistic traces of AI generation were systematically reduced or removed. In other words: plausibility can be designed.

The experiment therefore raises a different detection problem. Establishing who or what produced the scientific prose does not establish whether the experiments actually took place or whether the data have an observational provenance. Textual provenance and empirical provenance are two different questions.

Scientific integrity consequently requires attention not only to the production of the text, but also to transparency about the research process, the provenance of data and sources, and the question of who ultimately bears scientific responsibility.

According to Schimmel, the programme points to three broader opportunities: *faster knowledge production, greater scope for multidisciplinary synthesis, and verification on a scale that is difficult to achieve through human labour alone*. The central question is therefore not only which uses of AI should be prohibited or regulated, but also which parts of scientific work can responsibly be transferred to AI.

The Dutch-language versions of the five studies had already been registered with BOIP. The newly registered English-language doctoral thesis manuscripts are being made publicly accessible. The studies are also accompanied by methodological reflection reports documenting how they were produced, corrected and verified.

BOIP registration does not constitute peer review or scientific assessment. It provides an independent, dated record and public access to the research documents.

**About the researcher:** Dr Remco Schimmel received his PhD from the University of Twente in 2007 and has worked for many years as an independent researcher.

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