



# IKMZ Speaker Series

## When Do We See Evidence? Towards a Framework of How Modality Affects What People Believe

**Monday, 16 March 2026,**

**Time: 12.30 – 13.30**

**Room: AND-4-02**

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#### Biography

Tilo Hartmann is Professor for Virtual Reality and Communication at the Department of Communication Science at the VU Amsterdam. Tilo obtained his PhD at the Hanover University of Music, Drama and Media. He has worked at the Annenberg School for Communication at University of Southern California Los Angeles, and communication departments at the University of Erfurt, and University of Zurich. In his work, he applies media psychology and related approaches of Communication Science. In the past, he examined users' subjective experience of media, and particularly their perceptual illusions and their sometimes biased sense of reality. Extending this work, Tilo now focuses particularly on Immersive Technologies like Virtual Reality in his research. His core aim is to understand the determinants and effects of the experience of presence in highly immersive media like Virtual or Augmented Reality. In a second line of research, Hartmann examines how people use media for entertainment and their personal wellbeing.

#### Abstract

Beliefs are affected by evidence, and mediated communication plays a central role in providing evidence and shaping individuals' beliefs about the world. Recent developments in generative AI and immersive media complicate this process, as fabricated yet realistic content such as deepfakes or lifelike XR-experiences increasingly circulate alongside authentic footage and journalistic material—thus producing what may be considered “fake evidence.” These developments revive a longstanding question in communication science: How does the modality affect belief updating? Existing research on belief formation emphasizes source, message, and contextual characteristics. By contrast, the role of modality in belief updating has received comparatively limited and fragmented attention. Prior work points to indexical or iconic qualities (e.g., in semiotics), vividness (in persuasion research), or “seeing-is-believing” heuristics. However, a systematic framework is missing that explains the extent to which people treat information as “evidence” depending on the modality through which it is encountered, and that explicates the mechanisms through which modality might influence belief updating. In this talk, I propose an initial conceptual framework for how communication modality shapes belief updating.

**Please join us for this talk of the spring semester 2026!**

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