MINDEROO
CENTRE FOR TECHNOLOGY & DEMOCRACY

ANNUAL REPORT
2022-2023

CONTENTS

FOREWORD

Prof. Gina Neff, Executive Director

At the Minderoo Centre for Technology and Democracy, we produce critical research to reimagine society's relationship to digital technologies through evidence-based change.

Our work uses research to build society's capacity to hold tech power systems to account in order to create a just future.

Over the last year, our team accelerated our agenda through academic research, policy engagement, and real-world reach and impact.

We have continued engaging closely with legislative developments globally, such as the Online Safety Bill in the UK and regulatory developments in the USA, including with the Federal Trade Commission on commercial surveillance and data security.

Our researcher Evani Radiya-Dixit's tremendous work examining the complexities and challenges that exist when police forces use facial recognition technologies has received global interest. Through Evani's work, we now have a set of tools that extend beyond policing to help advance public conversations about the values that we as a society should seek to protect.

The year ahead promises to be our busiest yet as new projects come on stream including the Digital Good Network, a consortium of 10 partners exploring the digital good; AI4Trust, a 17-partner HORIZON Europe collaboration to tackle mis- and disinformation; and the Humanitarian Action Programme, a new collaboration between CRASSH at the University of Cambridge and the International Committee of the Red Cross. This ground-breaking programme will examine how digital transformation and new technologies are impacting or are likely to impact in the future humanitarian action.

This annual report covers the period April 2022 to March 2023 and outlines our achievements and future plans.

It is imperative that we build a just digital society. The Centre will continue to deliver on this goal in the year ahead, and we look forward to expanding our programmes and partnerships to do so.

YEAR IN REVIEW

OUR YEAR IN NUMBERS

30000+	**WEBSITE VIEWS**
10000+	**WEBSITE VISITORS**
4000+	**FOLLOWERS ON SOCIAL MEDIA**
3000+	**ATTENDANCES AT OUR HOSTED AND PARTICIPATORY EVENTS**
8	**CORE TEAM MEMBERS**

REPORT LAUNCHES

We have published three reports over the last year:

ACADEMIC PUBLICATIONS

From nudging behaviours, AI bias and data-driven election campaigns, our research team has published across a breadth of topics towards a just society this year:
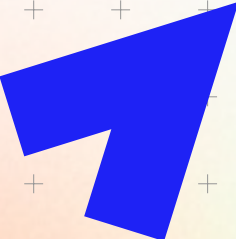
*Co-authored publication

MEDIA ENGAGEMENT

Over the last year, our team and research have been featured on the BBC, CBS, The New York Times, the Guardian and The Times.

Our research team has written editorial articles in publications, including the Observer and WIRED, and appeared on several podcasts, amplifying our research agenda.

Azeem Azhar

Gina Neff

EVENTS

We have led and participated in a rigorous programme of over 45 events, reaching over 4000 attendees in the last year, including:

COGX FESTIVAL 2022:
Emerging online harms facing women

THOMSON REUTERS FOUNDATION:
Trust Conference

BRITISH SCIENCE FESTIVAL 2022:
Crip AI: disability led design

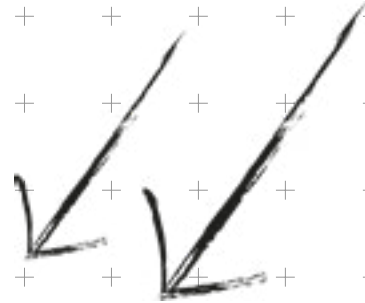**FRANCES HAUGEN:**
Can we trust tech?

AZEEM AZHAR:
Exponential

MEET THE TEAM

Gina Neff
Executive Director

Hunter Vaughan
Senior Research
Associate

Louise Hickman
Research Associate

Hugo Leal
Research Associate

Julia Rone
Research Associate

Irene Galandra Cooper
Researcher Project
Administrator

Jeremy Hughes
External Affairs
Manager

Francesca Barraud
PA to Prof. Neff

CRASSH

The Minderoo Centre for Technology and Democracy is hosted within CRASSH (Centre for Research in the Arts, Social Sciences and Humanities).

The Centre for Research in the Arts, Social Sciences and Humanities (CRASSH) was established in 2001, with the objective of creating interdisciplinary dialogue across the many departments and faculties of the School of Arts and Humanities and the School of Humanities and Social Sciences, and to forge connections with science subjects. Since then, CRASSH has grown into one of the largest humanities institutes in the world, with a global reputation for excellence.

CRASSH serves to draw together disciplinary perspectives in Cambridge and to disseminate new ideas to audiences across Europe and beyond.
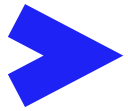
2022-23 ACHIEVEMENTS

We would like to highlight five signature achievements in the past year:

► POLICY ENGAGEMENT: UK ONLINE SAFETY BILL

This year, we continued working with civil society groups, policymakers, and civil servants on securing effective legislation in the Online Safety Bill.

Our engagement around the Online Safety Bill has included collaboration or conversations with many organisations, including members of the UK Parliament, civil servants at the Department for Culture, Media and Sport, Bumble, the Royal Society, Carnegie UK, The Alan Turing Institute, UKRI, RESET, AWS, Glitch, Luminate, Public, World Wide Web Foundation, Metaphysic and Witness.

Three case studies to highlight are:

► Researcher access to data

► Tackling AI enabled intimate image abuse

► Frances Haugen: Can We Trust Tech?

RESEARCHER ACCESS TO DATA

We have worked with UK and international scholars to build support for strengthening the provisions for researchers' access to data in the Online Safety Bill. We are uniquely qualified to do this work, with both research and policy engagement roles in our mission.

We have coordinated meetings with UK Research and Innovation staff, supported their work to press for better policy, liaised with RESET as one of the lead signatories and shapers of a letter to the Government that called for changes to provisions in the Bill.

Our team held a number of meetings with civil servants from the Cabinet Office and the Centre for Data Ethics and Innovation to deepen understanding and engagement on this issue.

John Naughton, Frances Haugen and Gina Neff at Frances Haugen: Can We Trust Tech? May 2022

FRANCES HAUGEN: CAN WE TRUST TECH?

In May 2022, we hosted a day-long programme of events in Cambridge with Facebook whistleblower, Frances Haugen. This included:

▶ Campus meeting: 20 key stakeholders from across the University of Cambridge, exploring the role of universities in training data scientists

▶ Public event: 200 people attended an event with Frances Haugen, in conversation with Gina Neff and John Naughton. This event was covered by national news stories in The Sun and CityAM

▶ High-level, closed-door conversation: 15 attendees with Frances Haugen

TACKLING AI-ENABLED INTIMATE IMAGE ABUSE

We worked to scope and define the harms from emerging AI-nudification tools (so-called 'deepfake' tools) and used these definitions to 'future proof' the Online Safety Bill.

Currently many of the harms from such content do not meet criminal standards, even though they are exceedingly harmful to people who are targeted by them.

By using the case of AI-enabled intimate image abuse, we were able to provide policy evidence on how the Online Safety Bill could be strengthened.

On 6 June 2022, we organised a workshop to hear from 25 policymakers (including two MPs from the UK parliament), industry, and civil society on the topic of AI-enabled intimate image abuse. This followed an earlier scoping session in April.

These two workshops led to a policy paper and a panel discussion at the UK's biggest tech conference, CogX, in June 2022. These were followed by the publication of a short report with recommendations for amendments to the Online Safety Bill.

At the panel 'Emerging online harms facing women' Prof. Gina Neff was joined by Nima Elmi, Head of Public Policy Europe, Bumble; Sophie Gallagher, Deputy Features Editor, i newspaper; and Henry Ajder, Expert and Advisor on Deepfakes, Disinformation, and Emerging Cyberthreats.
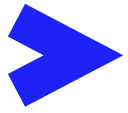
> ASSESSING POLICE USE OF FACIAL RECOGNITION TECHNOLOGY

With a backdrop of the developing Public Order Bill in the UK, and increased scrutiny of facial recognition technology, a **report** by Visiting Fellow Evani Radiya-Dixit developed "minimum ethical and legal standards" for the governance of police use of facial recognition technology in England and Wales.

In the report, Evani Radiya-Dixit tested three British police deployments of facial recognition—with all three failing.

The audit was based on extensive research as a tool to help:

▶ Reveal the risks and harms of police use of facial recognition

▶ Evaluate compliance with the law and national guidance

▶ Inform policy, advocacy, and ethics scrutiny of police use of facial recognition

The deployments did not incorporate many of the known practices for the safe and ethical use of large-scale data systems.

Alongside the main report, a **scorecard** was developed and used to audit the three deployments. This scorecard is available as a standalone tool for civil society groups to use to examine police use of facial recognition technology. The Minderoo Centre for Technology and Democracy began engagement with these groups regarding potential uses of the toolkit.

In writing this report, Evani Radiya-Dixit engaged with a range of key stakeholders in the sector, including Ada Lovelace Institute, the Royal Society, Liberty, the Biometrics and Surveillance Camera Commissioner, Fair Trials, Privacy International, Unjust, the European Disability Forum, the College of Policing, and the West Midlands Police and Crime Commissioner's Office.

On publication, the report appeared as an exclusive the Guardian: **UK police use of live facial recognition unlawful and unethical, report finds**. Subsequently, the story was carried by **The Times**, **Politico**, **Tech Monitor** and many other press and trade publications. The report has also been added to the **National Police Library**.

The report was launched with an online panel, bringing together report author Evani Radiya-Dixit, Gina Neff, Fraser Sampson, the UK Biometrics and Surveillance Camera Commissioner, and Nour Haider from Privacy International.
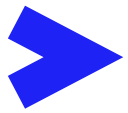
WEB3 AND COMMUNITIES AT RISK

Refugees, low-income populations, and other communities with restricted socio-economic access, rights, and protections are now absorbing the risks and costs of Web3 technological development. Is this how we build a just society?

This report from Margie Cheesman, an affiliate at the Minderoo Centre for Technology and Democracy, built on her extensive research on changes in money and identity infrastructures, especially in global migration governance. This included the impacts of novel payment systems, demonetisation, biometrics, and decentralised ID on socio-economic inequalities.
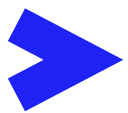
CRITICAL DATA POLICY RESEARCH

How can we democratise decision-making on digital policy?

Over the last year, Research Associate Julia Rone approached this question through three distinct strands of research and impact activity. These have provided different angles and solutions to this underlying question.

DATA CENTRES: Julia Rone researched data centre contestation in the Netherlands. Her work has demonstrated how key concerns for local activists and politicians have been the lack of transparency and opportunities for democratic participation in decision-making over data centres. This work has been amplified through an **academic publication** in the journal New Media and Society, an **article** for the Thomson Reuters Foundation and events with researchers, policy makers and industry members.

DIGITAL SOVEREIGNTY: This programme of research and events explored the recent turn in European policy discourses towards defending digital sovereignty. This work included coordinating a panel discussion at the Council of European Studies conference in Lisbon.

DATA-DRIVEN ELECTIONS: This workstream explored decision-making in digital policy, developing research on the intersections between data and democracy, and exploring data-driven campaigning in UK elections. This work included an academic publication the journal Media and Communication titled: **Beyond Brexit? Public Participation in Decision-Making on Campaign Data During and After Referendum Campaigns**
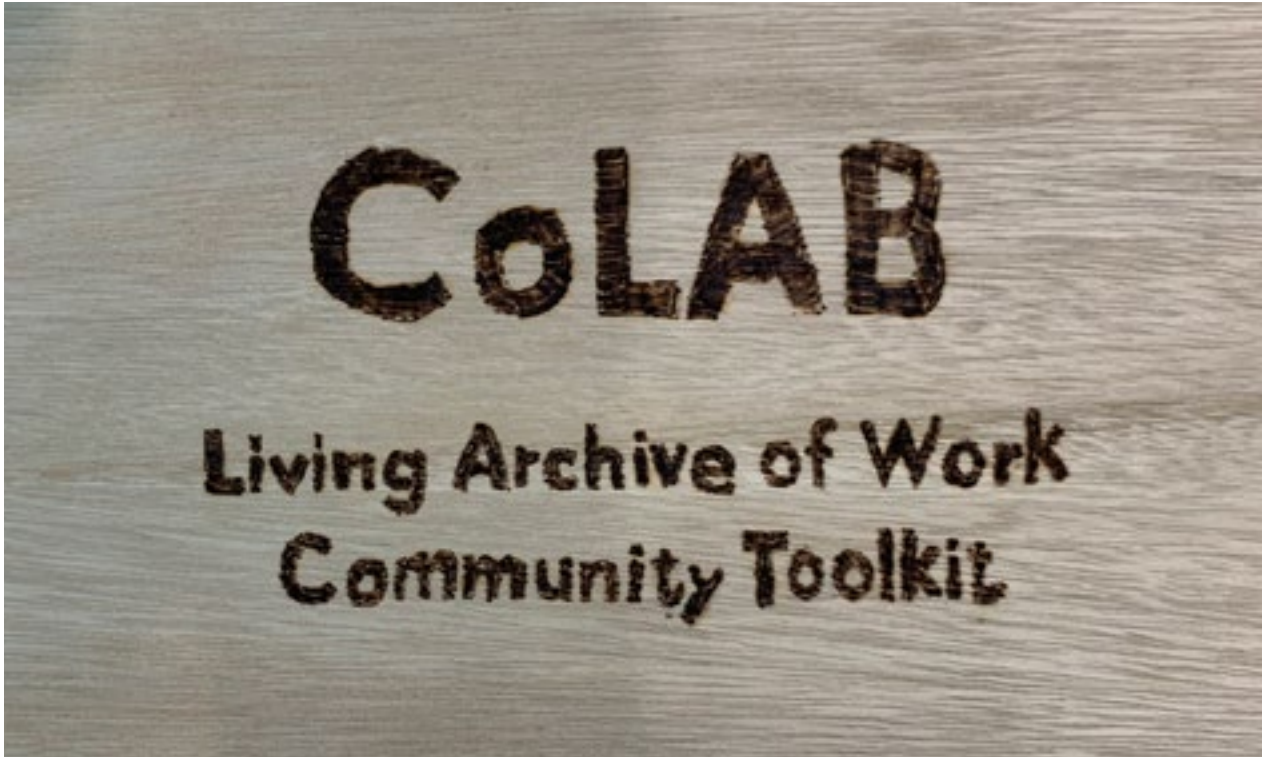
CoLAB, a collaborative project between artist Kaitlin Ferguson, Kettle's Yard, Louise Hickman, Minderoo Centre for Technology and Democracy and community collaborators

CoLAB: KETTLE'S YARD COLLABORATION

Louise Hickman worked alongside an artist-in-residence at Kettle's Yard gallery in Cambridge, to allow visitors to engage with the future of work and technologies, and the potential this can evoke in public spaces like the gallery.

During the project, called '**CoLAB**', the artist designed a series of objects using sustainable materials with a 3D printer. This evoked questions about open-source software and sustainable printing practices of assistive devices for disabled people in their homes. As a prototype, this process highlighted the artist's relationship with the printer and the limitation of replicating this practice at home.

The final toolkit, a combination of tactile objects and accessible media, was designed to increase participation with the gallery, fostering further conversations around the use of technology both at home and in the workplace.

2023-24: OUR YEAR AHEAD

Building a just digital society is at the core of our mission.

As we progress into the next stage of our development, we will imagine alternatives and concrete solutions to society's relationship with digital technology that will benefit society and our planet.

New projects:

▶ DIGITAL GOOD NETWORK

The Minderoo Centre for Technology and Democracy has joined the Digital Good Network. This £4 million multidisciplinary and cross-sectoral network will explore how to ensure that digital technologies benefit people, society, and the economy.

The Digital Good Network is funded by the Economic and Social Research Council (ESRC), part of UK Research and Innovation (UKRI). This is as part of the 'Living with Technology' strategic priority, and the 'Digital Society' priority in the 2022 plan. With a management team led by the University of Sheffield, the Digital Good Network has partners including BBC R&D and Birmingham Museums Trust.

Over five years, it will provide funding, training and capacity-building opportunities to Digital Good Network affiliates, to enhance our collective understanding of what the 'digital good' should look like and how it can be achieved.

AI4TRUST

Gina Neff and Hugo Leal have joined AI4TRUST. This is an Horizon Europe consortium of 17 organisations led by Fondazione Bruno Kessler, developing advanced AI to combat disinformation. Other participating organisations include Universita Degli Studi di Trento, Sky Italia and Euractiv Media Network.

Increasing evidence shows that disinformation spreading has a non-negligible impact on our society at individual and collective levels. From public health to climate change, it is of paramount importance to timely identify emerging disinformation signals such as content from known unreliable sources and new narratives, especially from online social media, to provide media professionals and policy makers with trustworthy elements to extinguish disinformation outbreaks before they run out of control. However, monitoring and analysing large volumes of online content is well beyond the capacity of human ability only.

AI4TRUST will work to develop a hybrid system, where machines cooperate with humans, relying on advanced AI solutions against advanced disinformation techniques to support media professionals and policy makers.

The Minderoo Centre for Technology and Democracy will lead policy and 'human-centred AI' research for the consortium, delivering a programme of work that will help AI4TRUST build a tool that journalists and policy makers can use in their work for combating mis- and disinformation.

HUMANITARIAN ACTION PROGRAMME

The International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC) has funded an Humanitarian Action Programme at CRASSH (Centre for Research in the Arts, Social Sciences and Humanities) at the University of Cambridge. Led at Cambridge by Gina Neff, the Humanitarian Action Programme will be a home for new research that will:

▶ Study how digital transformation and new technologies are impacting or are likely to impact future humanitarian action, as well as communities affected by humanitarian emergencies

▶ Examine the impact of new technologies and digital transformation on the capacity of humanitarian organisations to continue serving affected communities in a neutral, impartial, independent and exclusively humanitarian manner

▶ ICRC PERCEPTION STUDY

The International Committee of the Red Cross has funded a second short-term research project at CRASSH aimed at exploring how affected populations perceive and understand the humanitarian use of digital technologies and their data handling practices.

Led by Gina Neff, the Perception Study will inform the ICRC's and potentially other humanitarian organisations on the implications of digitalisation from the perspective of affected populations, and to use this knowledge to shape its interpretation of data protection principles and requirements, policies, programming and responses on the field.

DIGITALISATION OF ACCESS WORK

A project by Research Associate Louise Hickman will explore the digitalisation of access work. This has been awarded from the Digital Future at Work Research Centre's Innovation Fund.

The project, 'The Digitalisation of Access Work: fiction to policy recommendation' will partner with Grand Union, Birmingham, a gallery and artist studio space.

The project will focus on how access work is changing, from the perspectives of workers themselves. It will offer new models for perceiving, participating in, and potentially regulating workplace digitalisation and automation in respect to disability and the future of work.
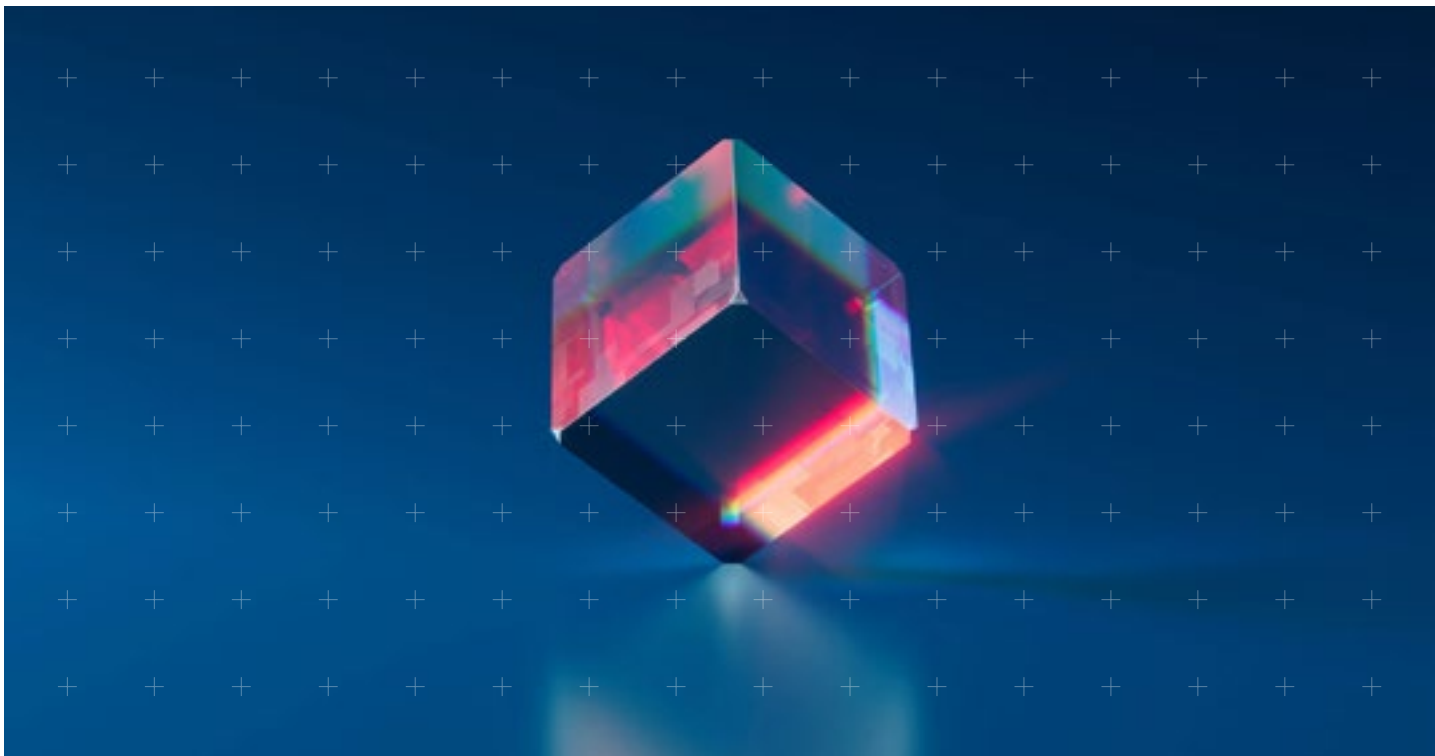
FURTHER KEY RESEARCH FOR 2023

EXTENDED REALITY (XR)

This research project will explore the political economy of the extended reality (XR) data and hardware ecosystems and how to address prospective harms that may arise.

ENVIRONMENTAL CONSEQUENCES OF FINTECH

This research project will examine what good environmental, social and governance (ESG) looks like for crypto, Web3 and blockchain technologies.

DEMOCRATISING DECISION-MAKING ON DIGITAL POLICY

This research project will further develop research on expanding democratic accountability in digital policy. This work will examine how the EU can foster public participation in decision-making on issues including digital sovereignty and data centre construction.

ACCESS

This research project expands the category of work to include the broader remit of accessing work and employment by both disabled and non-disabled workers. The work draws on a series of case studies including autonomous delivery devices, on-demand driving and autonomous vehicles.

GOVERNANCE

ADVISORY BOARD

EMILY BELL
Founding Director, Tow Center for Digital Journalism,
Columbia Journalism School

STEVEN CONNOR
Director of Research of the Digital Futures Institute,
King's College, London

DIANE COYLE
Bennett Professor of Public Policy, University of Cambridge

RICHARD DANBURY
Senior Lecturer in Journalism, City University of London

SHEILA HAYMAN
BAFTA and BAFTA Fulbright winning documentary filmmaker,
Director's Fellow, MIT Media Lab

JOHN NAUGHTON
Emeritus Professor of the Public Understanding of Technology,
Open University, Director, Wolfson Press Fellowship Programme,
the Observer's Technology columnist (Chair of the advisory board)

DAVID RUNCIMAN
Professor of Politics, University of Cambridge

FINANCIAL REPORTING

2022/23

INCOME	ACTUAL
Balance Brought Forward	£369,876.40
Contribution from Minderoo	£800,000 *(Funds added this period)*
Other Income	£7,570.22 *(Bank interest)*
Other Income	£105,000 *(ICRC funding for the Humanitarian Action Programme)*
TOTAL INCOME	**£1,282,446.62**

Personnel	£649,221.03
Events	£12,163.42
Communication	£3,531.03
Project-specific expenses	£10,612.38 *(Includes consumables and website maintenance)*
Travel	£17,019.77
TOTAL EXPENDITURE	**£692,547.63**

RECONCILIATION	**£589,898.99**

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