



# CALL FOR ABSTRACTS

## GLOBAL DATA ETHICS AND GOVERNANCE SYMPOSIUM

Hybrid (In-person & Virtual)

18-19 SEPTEMBER 2025

THE RIVERSIDE HOTEL, DURBAN, SOUTH AFRICA

<https://riversidehotel.co.za>

### THEME:

### **BUILDING TRUST, PROTECTION, AND ETHICS IN GLOBAL DATA: TOWARDS IMPLEMENTATION OF THE CAPE TOWN GLOBAL ACTION PLAN FOR SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT**

Trust in the integrity of science is dependent on ethical creation, use, and sharing of data. In response to this critical reality, the Committee on Data (CODATA) of the International Science Council (ISC) established a Working Group in 2021, now Data Ethics Task Group (DETG) committed to steering technology toward benevolence and ensuring its enduring benefits to humanity. The DETG is a global multi-disciplinary data ethics stakeholder with the aim of raising awareness about contemporary data ethics issues. The DETG works towards promoting the UNESCO recommendations on open science sets out the foundations for an international standard for open science, by defining shared values and guiding principles. It also seeks to identify "a set of actions conducive to a fair and equitable operationalization of open science for all at the individual, institutional, national, regional and international levels". The DETG promotes the notion that Individual, family and community data rights such as for privacy and rights of representation must be respected throughout the research process; and that data distribution must ensure equal access for researchers in every context, including low resourced contexts and recognizing the importance of fostering equitable partnerships, diversity and inclusion among researchers for achievement of the UN Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs); in particular SDG 16 and SDG 17. The increasing use of computational techniques including Artificial Intelligence and machine learning, by academic researchers demand consideration of data ethics issues that this raises, especially around bias and privacy.

The **Global Data Ethics and Governance Symposium** will convene a diverse, international group of scholars from across disciplines with interest in data ethics to sensitize and raise awareness about ethical issues among early career and emerging researchers from low and middle-income countries related to building trust, protection and ethics in global data. The symposium will also introduce and launch final versions of policy briefs developed by the DETG in response to the UNESCO Recommendation on Open Science and invite wider contributions and engagement around the importance of safeguarding data ethics at the global level.



## Sub-Themes:

We invite individual paper abstracts and panel proposals under following sub-themes:

### 1. Data Ethics and Scientific Integrity

The UNESCO Recommendations on Open Science emphasizes creating the scientific data and knowledge openly available, accessible, and reusable for everyone, thereby helping to ensure the well-established values and norms of the academic community and expand their scope. The UNESCO Recommendation stresses that Open Science and research integrity are inseparable. Research integrity and data ethics are deeply intertwined along the full cycle of research and they are highly dependent on the perspective of multiple stakeholders. Therefore, in the context of data ethics, collaborative efforts to support research integrity need to be further strengthened in areas such as transparency, reusability, and overall quality and impact of research in terms of research data collection, management, interpretation, and dissemination.

### 2. Data Privacy

The UNESCO Recommendation on Open Science (OS) notes privacy as one of several challenges and barriers for the implementation of OS. Indeed, privacy can be a justifiable barrier and proportional restriction for OS. In others, it is listed as an emergent challenge for the implementation of OS amongst stakeholders. In both instances, privacy is mentioned vaguely, often without further development. Various stakeholders have argued that OS needs to consider privacy and its implications in greater detail in order to maintain its values and be successfully implemented. Despite common understandings, privacy is not a univocal concept. It is context-dependent, and the rapid pace of technological development and disruption further complicates privacy. This sub-theme focuses on exploring a more critical definition and usage of privacy in OS governance and policy, so that the values and principles of OS can be better maintained and enacted in the face of technical change and broader social challenges.

### 3. Data Ethics and Structural Inequities in Science

The question of how the UNESCO Recommendation is implemented to realize open and equitable open science in practice must account for the structural conditions shaping research at a national and individual level. Scholars in many national contexts face barriers such as lack of basic infrastructure, unsupportive national policy, problematic incentive structures, the control of the research agenda by funders in high-income countries and the domination of oligopolistic publishers and Big Tech companies. At an individual level, researchers everywhere who do not fit the expected norm of a scholar (white, able bodied, male) face multiple barriers such as conscious and unconscious bias, racism, misogyny, career breaks and societal expectations about caring responsibilities. This sub-theme aims to initiate dialogue on the question of how the UNESCO Recommendation is being implemented to realize open and equitable open science in practice in the context of the structural conditions shaping research at individual, national and international levels.

### 4. Ethics of Indigenous Data Governance

In the era of open data and open science, it is important that data on Indigenous knowledge and practice are ethically. Decisions on what data is to be shared should lie with Indigenous populations themselves, ensuring their autonomy and self-determination. Existing data sharing principles such as FAIR and CARE are reportedly not fully ethical and adequate to deal with indigenous knowledge and data governance. This sub-theme will focus on data principles such as CARE and JUST policies and practice and explore challenges facing Indigenous data governance at the global level and highlight its importance to Indigenous Knowledge Systems.

### 5. Ethical Data Stewardship and Data Colonialism

Ethical data stewardship brings forth trust and equity to foster the innovation ecosystem while data colonialism ensures risk management and inclusivity. The theme highlights the responsible management of data through various channels such as consent and privacy, Transparency, and equity. It refers to highlighting the manifestation of Global Tech Dominance, retaining data ownership, and rising above the regional disparities. The theme will bring challenges such as data-sharing clauses, trust, risking data, and regional exclusion to the table for deliberation to find solutions for ensuring consent, accessibility, and replicability. It will focus upon promoting extractive data practices for resisting structural inequalities existing globally and provide alternative ways for citizen-centric data governance by prioritizing ethical data policy, rights, and reframing participatory data ecosystems.

### 6. Data Ethics and Artificial Intelligence

The rapid growth and integration of AI and machine learning in research and society bring significant ethical challenges related to data bias, surveillance, opacity, and accountability. As AI increasingly informs scientific discovery, policymaking, and public life, there is a critical need to examine the ethical dimensions of how data is collected, processed, and used by these technologies. This sub-theme explores questions around responsible AI, focusing on issues of privacy, transparency, fairness, explainability, and consent, especially in cross-cultural and global contexts. In line with the UNESCO Recommendation on the Ethics of AI, this theme invites contributions that interrogate power imbalances, challenge data-driven discrimination, and propose frameworks for ensuring that AI technologies are human-centred, inclusive, and governed ethically. It also encourages perspectives on how global AI ethics principles can be implemented in diverse local settings, and how to ensure AI systems serve the public good without deepening existing inequalities. This session will examine accountability and global data ethics review guidelines and AI regulatory frameworks as well as engage participants on how to responsibly harness its power while safeguarding human rights and promoting equitable outcomes.

## 7. Data Sovereignty and Intellectual Property Protection

Data sovereignty refers to the legal authority and jurisdiction that a nation exercises over data within its borders. This concept encompasses the right of countries to regulate how data is collected, processed, stored, and transferred, ensuring that foreign laws and jurisdictions do not supersede domestic legal frameworks. Data sovereignty is fundamentally about maintaining national control over information resources and protecting against external interference in domestic data governance. This includes safeguarding personal information, intellectual property, and other confidential data from unauthorized access, use, or disclosure (Schneider 2023). This sub-theme focuses on the growing importance of national control over data and the safeguarding of intellectual property in the digital era. It will explore how countries can assert their data sovereignty ensuring that data generated within their borders is governed by local laws and the mechanisms to protect innovation, indigenous knowledge, and digital assets. The session will highlight the balance between open access, cross-border data flows, and the strategic protection of national and institutional interests.

## REGISTRATION

[Click here](#) to register to participate in-person or virtually.

**Deadline to register: Monday 15 September 2025.**

**Participation is FREE:** In-person participation spaces are however limited.

## ABSTRACT AND PANEL PROPOSAL SUBMISSIONS

We invite **abstracts** and **panel proposals** for the following submission types:

- Abstracts of not more than 300 words and a bio-sketch of the authors (50 word limit).
- Fully constituted panel proposals (of not more than 5 panellists) should describe the topic and relationship between papers in no more than 500 words. Additionally, include 300-word abstracts for each paper on the panel.

*We particularly welcome contributions from Junior/Emerging Researchers and Practitioners from Low and Middle-Income Countries (LMICs) including data regulators, policy institutions, and civil society organizations.*

[Click here](#) to submit an abstract and/or panel proposals

## IMPORTANT DATES:

**Abstract and panel proposal submissions due by - 01 September 2025**

**Abstract acceptance notifications - 08 September 2025**

## EXPECTED OUTPUTS

The DETG examines critical issues that relate to building trust, protection and ethics in relation to data that enables innovation while protecting privacy, confidentiality and other human rights. It is essential in the sharing of data that all stakeholders trust that their data is being used responsibly. It is envisaged that the symposium and launch of the data ethics policy briefs would raise awareness about data ethics globally, particularly among early career and emerging researchers in low and middle-income countries. Selected papers from the proceedings of the symposium will be compiled and published in a special issue of an international journal.



## INTERNATIONAL SCIENTIFIC REVIEW COMMITTEE

### Chair

**Johannes John-Langba**, University of KwaZulu-Natal, SOUTH AFRICA

### Vice Chair

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**Suchith Anand**, University of Exeter, UNITED KINGDOM

The symposium is organized by the Data Ethics Task Group (DETG), Committee on Data (CODATA) of the International Science Council (ISC)

<https://codata.org/initiatives/task-groups/data-ethics/>

Enquiries/questions about the Global Data Ethics and Governance Symposium could be directed to:

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