



# ROADMAP

2024-2026



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GLOBAL NETWORK OF **INTERNET AND SOCIETY** RESEARCH CENTERS

The Global Network of Internet & Society Centers (NoC) is a collaborative initiative among leading academic centers with a focus on interdisciplinary research on the development, social impact, policy implications, and legal issues concerning the Internet and emerging technologies. Over the past years, the NoC has engaged in a broad range of activities, including the development of clinic models, incubation of new centers, formation of expert councils and missions, collaborative research projects, as well as the advancement of policy development and the hosting of global conferences, among many other contributions.

Based on the outcomes of the consultation process facilitated by the NoC Secretariat, a series of shared objectives have started to crystallize for the next phase of institutional collaboration, including the objective to (1) increase the visibility and impact of the NoC and its contributors in tech policy conversations regionally and internationally; (2) bridge existing and growing information asymmetries regarding emerging technologies (VR, AI, etc.) across private and public sectors; and (3) enhance multi-disciplinary and multi-region work in collaboration with decision makers. This roadmap outlines the strategy to achieve these shared goals.

In operational terms, the NoC benefits from a dynamic approach, highlighting the work and activities of participating centers and their research. Creating additional opportunities for engagement among NoC Centers is important, as is forming a team to foster increased collaboration both within the network and with external stakeholders.

On the substantive front, focusing on a number of thematic areas that resonate with a significant number of NoC Centers – without compromising the diversity that makes the NoC unique – will make it possible to offer stronger support for collaborative efforts and work towards a more equitable and efficient research ecosystem.



# I. Five Main Areas of Engagement

Entering the Roadmap 2024-2026 phase, the Network's aim is to broaden its impact while maintaining the foundational framework of engagement activities. Based on the 2017-2018 roadmap, the five main areas of engagement remain almost the same:



The planned activities within each area have been amended to reflect better collaborative efforts that emerged over the last few years (e.g., desk swapping) and enable a larger number of Centers to actively participate in and take on leadership roles.

1	<b>Internal Collaboration and Engagement</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Updated Online presence</li> <li>• Newsletter and email list</li> <li>• Buddy system</li> </ul>
2	<b>External Engagement</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Policymakers</li> <li>• Incoming Issues and Case Studies</li> <li>• Regional Hubs</li> </ul>
3	<b>Shared Knowledge</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Skills Shares and Learning Calls</li> <li>• Educational Initiatives</li> <li>• Open Educational Resources</li> <li>• Data Sharing Mechanisms</li> <li>• Desk Swaps</li> <li>• Summer Schools</li> </ul>
4	<b>Research</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Global Research and Commentary</li> <li>• Substantive Sets of Recommendations</li> <li>• Research Capacity Building</li> <li>• Interface to Advocacy and Future Research Leaders</li> </ul>
5	<b>Events</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• NoC Annual Meeting</li> <li>• Satellite meetings</li> <li>• Themed Event</li> </ul>

Below are the key considerations discussed during our September 2023 meeting for each of the five areas.



# 1

## Internal Collaboration and Engagement

### *Updated Online Presence*

Enhancing the NoC's online presence and information sharing will be a priority over the next two years. An initial project is to update and redesign the Network's website to provide a more attractive and easily operable format. The redesign of the site will include more readily accessible information about the mission, vision and activities of the NoC and increase the visibility of the Centers driving these efforts. ITS Rio has kindly volunteered to help develop a version of the NoC's website. The creation of a dedicated space on the site for blog entries or short articles, where various Centers can participate, is being considered, and the NoC Secretariat welcomes any other ideas or contributions you think will add value to our online presence and support your work. The NoC is also exploring increased engagement on social media (e.g., on LinkedIn, Instagram, etc.) to reach a broader audience.

### *Newsletter and Email List*

The Secretariat proposes a (monthly) LinkedIn newsletter to highlight the NoC's current research initiatives, publications, educational opportunities, and activities. Additionally, the Secretariat is updating the Network email list for easier use and hopes to provide NoC Centers direct access to a consolidated email directory to promote the exchange of ideas and resources.

### *Buddy System*

The proposed "buddy system" is a linking of Centers to facilitate the creation of joint research initiatives and new areas of study via continuous flow of shared knowledge and achievements. NoC Centers in Southeast Asia and Africa have already expressed their desire to participate in the buddy system to design innovative research agendas, with a focus on the implications of generative AI. The Secretariat welcomes inputs and suggestions as it finalizes the model buddy system.



## 2

### External Engagement

#### *Policymakers*

In recent years, numerous NoC Centers have expanded their engagement with policymakers and international organizations. Collaborations across North America, Europe, Latin America, and Asia have included work with international organizations, cooperation agencies, development banks, and government entities, among others. From these experiences, several Centers expressed the need to be agile when responding to real-world challenges and translating research across contexts.

Building upon these successes, the roadmap proposes the development of an innovative, rapid-response mechanism specifically designed to meet the dynamic landscape of technology and societal issues. Possible formats could include policy laboratories, applied policy practices, legal clinics, and regulatory sandboxes. Such platforms could assist researchers in transforming their proposals into tangible governmental actions.

Active engagement in expert panels or working groups can also significantly enhance the Network's impact. For example, in Latin America and Africa, several governments have requested assistance from our Centers to evaluate their AI policies, legislative proposals and regulatory agendas and to assemble experts from diverse fields for this purpose. With this in mind, the NoC Secretariat aims to proactively facilitate such groups with the involvement of topic experts from the participating Centers.

#### *Incoming Issues and Case Studies*

NoC Centers have developed various methodologies to identify relevant issues and case studies in an agile manner. One jointly developed methodology is the “research sprint” format: a method of crafting detailed case studies and identifying subjects that appeal to a broad range of stakeholders. Past Research Sprints, convened among several NoC Centers, used a participatory



## External Engagement

approach to address emerging issues in rapidly evolving fields, such as educational innovation and democratic reform. Each Sprint produces unique, actionable outcomes tailored to the specific stakeholders involved, while also offering practices that can be more broadly applied, moving beyond mere case study analysis. NoC Centers have expressed an interest in knowledge exchange formats concerning such innovative methodologies. Toward this goal, the Secretariat will offer skill shares and mentoring opportunities to bolster the Network's capacity in this realm.

### *Regional Hubs*

The establishment of regional hubs – with the Digital Asia Hub and the European Hub as initial models – can help build capacity, increase visibility, and bolster impact by creating connections among Centers in a given region and enhancing cooperation. Different stakeholders have expressed enthusiasm for the creation of new NoC Hubs in Africa and North America. NoC Centers in other regions are also encouraged to consider how a Regional Hub model can further their reach and impact with the active support of the NoC Secretariat.



## 3

### Shared Knowledge

#### *Skill Shares and Learning Calls*

Network Centers have expressed a desire during recent consultations to host more regular NoC learning calls to augment the shared understanding of the research conducted across Centers. Over the next two years, the Secretariat is looking forward to working with Centers to organize learning calls on a broad range of topics, also with an eye toward experimenting with different formats to broaden engagement, increase participation, and enhance learning outcomes.

#### *Educational Initiatives*

NoC Centers have been at the forefront of pioneering educational projects, particularly by offering open resource portals, developing new approaches to knowledge sharing, and launching executive courses, recently supplemented by more agile and targeted learning experiences and formats. NoC Centers expressed an interest in exploring the development of joint programs, bringing different expertise and perspectives together, with the Secretariat as a facilitator.

#### *Open Educational Resources*

The universe of educational materials developed by NoC Centers is vast, including, but not limited to, videos, podcasts, documents, presentations, syllabi, and complete courses. While efforts have been underway to enhance the visibility and reusability of Open Educational Resources (OER), participating Centers have suggested making it a priority for the NoC in the next few years to make accessible and promote such resources. Experiences to build upon include joint efforts aimed at curating educational resources in the field of AI, with [AprendelA.org](https://aprendelA.org) as a recent use case involving NoC Centers.

#### *Data Sharing Mechanisms*

Several Centers have access to considerable amounts of data and information, collected over years of academic research and across multiple jurisdictions, from which other Centers can benefit. In accordance with previous roadmaps, the Secretariat was encouraged to explore mechanisms to enhance data sharing across the NoC. Projects like Lumen already offer a networked approach to share insights into content moderation practices across NoC Centers and might inspire additional or new efforts across the Network.





## Shared Knowledge

### *Desk Swaps*

Desk swaps - a format in which colleagues interchange their regular academic workspaces for a period of time - have been explored by some Centers as an approach to foster collaboration, break down silos, and encourage new perspectives. Building upon these initial experiences, NoC Centers are encouraged to explore a range of settings for desk swaps, including online or virtual options, and also consider this format as a means to complement existing collaborations, such as mentoring or buddy system projects among colleagues.

### *Summer Schools*

Summer Schools will serve as platforms for interaction, enabling students to meet new individuals and exchange experiences within an intensive and dynamic learning environment. This format has already been used by various Centers on numerous occasions, with a diverse group of Centers participating in these projects. Summer schools could be centered around a flexible teaching concept that emphasizes a modular approach, ensuring the curriculum is interdisciplinary and highly adaptable to the evolving digital landscape. By focusing on urgent and current topics, the program could encourage a bottom-up learning process that is both inclusive and transformative.

In 2024, NoC Centers will organize the 'Platform Regulation and Democracies Summer School,' an event bringing together a diverse group of scholars and students from countries including India, Brazil, and Germany. The program will focus on the global effects of internet and AI regulations at national and continental levels, offering a comprehensive learning experience through lectures, discussions, and interactive exercises. Participants will have the opportunity to delve deeper into the complexities of regulations such as Brazil's Marco Civil and the European Union's Digital Services Act (DSA), examining the unique challenges countries face in regulating the digital sphere.



## Research

### *Global Research and Commentary*

NoC Centers continue researching emerging technologies, gathering and sharing insights that benefit the Network's collective expertise, visibility, and impact. Centers are expected to contribute to international discourse on technology policy areas and actively engage with global organizations on various challenges and opportunities. Recently, for instance, NoC Centers' contribution to the World Health Organization's (WHO) 2024 landmark publication, "Ethics and Governance of Artificial Intelligence for Health: Guidance on Large Multi-modal Models," illustrates how to synthesize and showcase NoC's expertise and vision. The Secretariat invites ideas and suggestions along these lines and seeks to explore ways to support similar opportunities going forward.

### *Substantive Sets of Recommendations*

NoC Centers expressed the intention to craft recommendations based on research findings to improve practices, policies, or understanding in areas such as internet governance, digital rights, and AI policy, among others. Working with NoC Center representatives, the Secretariat seeks to provide feedback on new legislative proposals involving emerging technologies based on NoC Centers' studies. These efforts will inform the development and implementation of policies that will govern the development and use of AI and other emerging technologies.

### *Research Capacity Building*

Building upon previous efforts, the NoC Secretariat aims to help enhance the capacity of individuals, organizations, and communities to conduct high-quality research on technology and society issues across domains, disciplines, and geographies. NoC Centers are invited to promote new methodologies that can be shared across various platforms, similar to the consideration given to innovation research programs. For example, several NoC Centers have started the development of a methodology for mapping well-being frameworks.





## Research

This preliminary mapping allows other Centers to contribute their knowledge and expertise, transforming it into a uniquely global effort. These initiatives represent a strategic effort to foster collaboration and knowledge exchange in research innovation.

### *Interface to Advocacy and Future Research Leaders*

Work is envisioned and already underway to strengthen the interface between NoC Centers, advocacy organizations, and future leaders in research and practice. For instance, several Centers have recently worked with the Secretariat to develop the "HEMISPHERES" funding proposal, an initiative aimed at bringing together an interdisciplinary team of researchers from European, Latin American, and Caribbean higher education institutions to stimulate research and strengthen collaboration with advocacy organizations around technological regulatory and policy developments. In addition, the proposed initiative will support junior researchers from Latin American and Caribbean academic institutions. It will enable junior researchers to collaborate with various professionals, from peers to industry leaders, and prepare them for future academic and professional roles.





## Events

### *NoC Annual Meeting*

NoC Annual Meetings are dedicated to fostering global dialogue and strengthening collaborative initiatives. Post-pandemic, the expressed preference among NoC Centers who contributed to the roadmap is to organize these meetings annually in a variety of international locations. The 2024 event will likely be held in Bangkok in the second half of 2024, thanks to the gracious hosting of the Digital Asia Hub in Thailand. Proposals for venues are welcomed for the 2025 and 2026 meetings.

### *Satellite Meetings*

Satellite meetings have been suggested as a means to bolster collaboration regionally, with NoC Hubs in each region potentially serving as conveners. They also serve as an approach to increase participation, for instance by accommodating Centers that may not be able to attend the NoC Annual Meetings or other international events.

### *Themed Events*

Several NoC Centers expressed a desire to contribute to thematic events that showcase the wealth of expertise of the NoC, for example, featuring new research trends, academic projects, policy questions, or technological advancement and emerging social issues. The Secretariat continues to serve as a resource when asked for assistance in organizing themed events or nominating diverse speakers and experts from the NoC. Recently, several authorities in Latin America expressed interest in facilitating or participating in events to learn more about the latest AI governance proposals and what their impact may be in their region – an opportunity for NoC collaboration and engagement.



## II. Proposed Focus Areas

Based on the consultation process and inputs received over the past few months, this section outlines a series of focus areas that might be at the core of an agenda for the 2024-2026 term. Some topics are more broadly framed than others to invite a range of perspectives, research methodologies, and possible outcomes. The following areas are only a small subset of the many topics that NoC Centers around the world might collaborate on, and are intended to stimulate further engagement.

### 1 Emerging Technologies and their Impact on Society and Governance

#### *Generative AI*

The rapidly changing field of generative AI presents an opportunity for the NoC, as interest grows in establishing governance frameworks across countries and cultural contexts. The NoC Secretariat considers the development of interoperability and coordination mechanisms that take into account the diversity of institutions and cultures that will participate in this process. Exploring the impact of AI governance models from various academic disciplines, mirroring the diversity of NoC Centers, can offer unique insights. Additionally, there is a pressing need to increase our understanding of AI inclusion-related challenges. The NoC is well-positioned to inform strategies and approaches that seek to conceptualize and foster inclusion in Gen AI environments, and what steps are necessary for policymakers, educators, and companies to work towards this goal.

#### *Quantum Technologies*

Quantum technologies have advanced remarkably in recent years and come with the potential to transform our lives, interactions and disrupt established processes. Exploring the social implications of quantum computing, sensing, or simulation across diverse sectors and communities, and understanding the interventions needed to guide these developments in ways that benefit humanity and the planet, has been mentioned as a compelling area of research and outreach for the NoC. Several NoC Centers have started to investigate the wide-ranging potential impact of quantum technologies and anticipate their interactions with society, with the goal of developing ethical, legal, and educational frameworks.



## 2 Impact on Specific Spaces, Sectors, Areas, or Communities

### *Spatial Computing*

Spatial computing has captured significant interest among NoC Centers, particularly regarding the unique experiences it enables for many users. Exploring the implications of this technology on user engagement with reality and potential ramifications for fundamental rights, such as privacy, presents an intriguing research avenue. Centers are already exploring the metaverse and other similar technologies, indicating a field ripe for further investigation. Collaboration among NoC Centers in this thematic area could provide critical perspectives on how spatial computing shapes our interaction within digital environments and the accompanying ethical considerations.

### *Labor*

NoC Centers have started to analyze how digital technologies influence the development of new professions and shape labor relations. This topic is examined from various angles, including the envisioned future of our interaction with technology and the skills that will be required for those in the labor force. This thematic area offers NoC Centers the opportunity to integrate multidisciplinary perspectives on what work-related interactions with technology will entail in various contexts and develop new methods to track and understand their impact.

### *Electoral Processes*

There is a growing concern about the impact of advanced technologies such as Gen AI on electoral processes and the development of democratic elections. Research seeking to understand better the benefits and risks technology poses for democracies is an area that several NoC Centers have identified as a priority. While several Centers are already investigating the impact of technological advancements on elections, there is a particular opportunity for engaging in joint and comparative analyses, along with the sharing of evidence, data, and outcomes across multiple countries.



## 2 Impact on Specific Spaces, Sectors, Areas, or Communities

### *Well-Being*

Another thematic area flagged as an opportunity space from the NoC perspective is how technology can be deployed to enhance human well-being, and how stakeholders across disciplines and institutions can engage to develop appropriate tools, protections, and policies. Some Centers are prioritizing the investigation of how humans form relationships online and engage with autonomous technologies, taking into account cultural and contextual factors. Initial studies also analyze efforts to close the gap in communication between humans and technology and the impact this may have on social well-being. Together, these activities offer a launch pad for various NoC Centers to collaborate.

### *Children and Youth*

Safeguarding children and young people in the digital environment has become an area of concern, with the potential to drive transformative changes in digital platform usage in the near future, including on social media. NoC Centers have investigated these challenges over many years, accumulating a wealth of expertise. They are ideally positioned to contribute to a meaningful global conversation on this topic and could develop a research agenda aimed at addressing the specific challenges and opportunities presented by digital technologies' impact on children and young people.



### 3 Innovative Approaches

#### *Regulatory Experimentation*

Several NoC Centers have expressed interest in exploring technology regulation and governance from a multidisciplinary approach, focusing on developing new models of regulatory experimentation. Approaches identified as areas of further research and evaluation include regulatory sandboxes, policy prototypes, and innovation testbeds, with room for suggesting additional methodologies for further study. Embarking on a collective research journey could potentially establish new academic disciplines and theoretical models to inform the evolution of regulatory policies. The NoC is well-positioned to assist this shift in discussion beyond conventional legal interpretations, and foster a broader comprehension of the progression of technology regulation.

#### *Creative Practices To Build Understanding and Change Perspectives*

The creative arts, spanning writing, image and video-making, physical and interactive arts, can expand and reinterpret our understanding of technology's impact on society. Both the inquiry and outputs of the creative arts can engage our minds differently, allowing us to reframe our understanding and question what we believe. Creative arts can be productive tools for experimentation, allowing people to ask "what if" and "how might why" where they may not do so when faced with the constraints of their disciplines. They can also shape public understanding, touching people in ways technological, social or policy approaches will not. Bringing creative practices into early stage technology design and development can help to understand the range of possibility and risk well beyond the technologies' commercial applications. NoC Centers already engage in various creative practices that help us to rethink policy and change communities' minds and hearts. These include speculative writing practices in policy and social contexts, public art that challenges our understanding of technology's role in society, and creative outputs of multiple media that demonstrate the range of what technology can do. As we consider how the Network can expand its influence for public audiences, engaging in these practices, including with artists and museums, may be one area to consider expanding.

Should you have any questions or comments about this draft roadmap, please do not hesitate to reach out to Armando Guio Espanol, Executive Director, [arg911@harvard.edu](mailto:arg911@harvard.edu).





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