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## BIENNIAL REPORT 2020–2022

CG+HR

CENTRE OF GOVERNANCE  
AND HUMAN RIGHTS



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UKRAINE





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# Co-Directors' Welcome

## Dear CGHR community,

**W**elcome to our 2020-22 biennial report! These two years have seen us into our second decade as a research centre, have seen our team grow, and have seen our work consolidate and head in new directions. Of course, the background to all this has been the tumultuous time of the Covid-19 pandemic, which presented a raft of challenges to our Centre to maintain community, conduct research and convene exchanges and learning. Like others, we adapted, discovered new ways of working and sought, above all, to support each other and our partners and colleagues through trying times. We are really proud of how our community came together, while also somehow finding time to engage in crucial research and policy engagements that supported our wider world. These ranged from examining Covid-19-related state surveillance in Africa to thinking through how freedoms of expression and assembly manifest and are challenged and promoted online. In this introduction, we outline a few more highlights of a very busy two years.

We have opened an exciting new chapter at CGHR with the establishment of our Postdoctoral Scholar programme, building off past co-funded posts in recent years. With Sebastián Lehuédé's appointment, CGHR gained an energetic, exciting and highly sympathetic colleague who takes our mission forward in new directions. Sebastián researches digital technologies

from a global social justice perspective grounded in Latin American decolonial thought. Alongside his project at CGHR on the geopolitics of digital rights, he works with Ella and Sharath on a collaborative praxis-research inspired project entitled, 'Provocations for Human Rights Practitioners: Technology, Power and Voice'. This project has already produced a new blog series to be launched shortly. This is exactly our hope with the postdoctoral scholar programme: that it gives a foothold in academia to amazing early career scholars, whilst periodically refreshing and renewing our agenda.

In April 2022, the Carr Center for Human Rights Policy at Harvard University's Kennedy School of Government awarded Ella, Sharath and Sebastián Technology & Human Rights Fellowships for the academic year ahead. They will use these fellowships to develop practitioner-oriented tools and academic outputs from their project on provocations for practitioners at the intersection of human rights and technology.

It was a time to say hellos, with Sebastián joining us – as well as our youngest CGHR member, Coordinator Jenna Anderson's new daughter Bea. Nuala Macallister was a wonderful coordinator while Jenna was on maternity leave, and we recently welcomed our new Coordinator Anusha Arumugam when Jenna moved overseas. It was thus also a time to say goodbyes. Very sadly, in March 2021, the human rights world lost one of its most pioneering leaders and kindred souls with the untimely

# Co-Directors' Welcome

death of Christof Heyns. CGHR mourned a very dear friend as well as a close and longstanding collaborator who was there at our Centre's founding and inspired its collaborative ethos. In this report, we remember Christof and celebrate our work partnering with him over many years. He will always be close to our hearts.

In the following pages, we also outline the main activities of our major research themes: human rights in the digital age; digital media, voice and power; justice and accountability; and violence, conflict and peacebuilding. These include, for the first theme, new research projects at the student Digital Verification Corps surfacing digital evidence for human rights advocacy, a new course on Open Source Investigation for Academics, and new and bigger collaborations at The Whistle, under Ella's leadership, working to support asylum-seekers and against everyday racism. On digital media, voice and power, we highlight collaborative projects researching on, but also designing and deploying, new technologies during the pandemic response across Africa. Katikati, a new venture borne of pandemic response needs that builds on CGHR spin-out, Africa's Voices, has developed unique conversation software for global South contexts based on relationship-centred design. On justice and accountability, we highlight Dr Thomas Probert's work advising and advocating for reform on police use of force worldwide, including in the context of peaceful assemblies. And on violence, conflict and peacebuilding, we celebrate Sharath's recent monograph, *When Peace*

*Kills Politics: International Intervention and Unending Wars in the Sudans*, alongside highlighting the policy impacts of the Politics after War network co-led by Dr Devon Curtis.

CGHR's focus on praxis research means we connect our findings and arguments with practices in the wider world. In these two years, we did this through informing policy at venues including the United Nations Human Rights Committee, the House of Lords and the UK Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Office. We also did this through CGHR's spin-out projects: Africa's Voices, Katikati, and The Whistle. For more about praxis research and how it fits into our mission statement for our second decade, please read on!

We send our best wishes to all of you for the years ahead and thank you, as always, for your friendship, collaborations, and innovations.



**Sharath Srinivasan & Ella McPherson**

# Our Mission

## CGHR thinks critically and innovatively to foster citizen voice and solidarity-building towards a just, inclusive, and better world.

Across the world, societies and polities face rapid transformations in technology, alongside upheavals in climate, health, conflict, and global order, as well as demands to address historical and new injustices. Our challenge is to more sharply understand these dynamics and their implications and to improve how research supports progressive change and those who drive it.

**Thinking with practitioners, at CGHR we are reimagining how justice, solidarity and citizen voice can flourish *with or against* technology.**

Academic research centres committed to praxis have a crucial role to play. At their best, they combine independence and freedom of thought, rigorous and innovative research, and patient and deep exchanges with practitioners.

In our work, we have learnt that the crucial spaces for new thinking and action on justice, well-being, and citizen voice challenges lie at intersections and in interactions between practice and scholarship, between disciplines, and between individuals and institutions across the world.

**Through critique, innovation, and collaboration, and with a focus on the role of technology and communications, CGHR's praxis research fosters processes of voice and solidarity-building towards better societies.**

**CGHR's distinctive approach, developed from empirical and theoretical innovation during our first decade, follows these tenets:**

- Social sciences-led critical thinking, informed by deep interdisciplinarity;
- Student-led initiatives manifesting collaborative and inclusive knowledge generation – across disciplines, education levels, and institutions;
- Deliberate bridge-building between scholarship and practice;
- Close collaborations with practitioners to identify issues and problems as well as design solutions and innovations starting from a grassroots level;
- Design-fuelled research and research-fuelled design;
- Reflexivity around the role of the academy in the world today and the politics of scholarship.



# Praxis Research Spotlights

## Introduction

Central to our mission at CGHR is the relationship between research and practice within and beyond the academy. Praxis research is about co-designing research in collaboration with the practitioners, activists, and citizens whose worlds we study so that it supports mutual understandings of a better future. It is about design and research moving forwards in a dialectic, where research informs design and design informs research. It is about making interventions that advance scholarship, make spaces for conversations, and address problems. At CGHR, we have come to appreciate praxis research as a rich, ongoing, collaborative learning journey grounded in the aim of meaningful action in the world. This section spotlights some of the key praxis research projects at CGHR.

## The Whistle

### The Whistle

The Whistle is an academic start-up that supports the use of digital evidence for social and institutional change. We work with grassroots partners, using a slow tech approach and a methodology of solidarity, to support them and their communities in developing and using technology on their own terms for their own aims. In these two years, we have focused in particular on two technology and solidarity projects: one supporting anti-racism advocacy and community building, and the other helping asylum seekers in the UK navigate the complex informational terrain around their rights.



Here at Cambridge, The Whistle continued to collaborate with the End Everyday Racism project to build a collective case against racism in the university community using an anonymous testimony form for witnesses and active bystanders (<https://racismatcambridge.org>). We received a [University Diversity Fund](#) grant to develop this work, focused on directing attention to structural racism and reminding us that we all have a responsibility to eradicate racism in our communities. We also began partnerships at

the University of Oxford and the University of Essex to support these institutions in developing their own versions of the End Everyday Racism project, which will be launched in 2022-23.



In 2021, The Whistle team kicked off a collaborative project, funded by an ESRC Impact Acceleration Account grant, with Humans for Rights Network (HfRN). Our background research, as well as HfRN's extensive experience working with asylum seekers, demonstrates that

one of the key challenges facing asylum seekers is an 'information desert' with respect to understanding the systems, challenges, and opportunities they face. This chatbot, which will be launched in 2023, provides basic information and links to further resources on topics such as the asylum-seeking process, accommodation, healthcare, rights, education, and employment.

## Africa's Voices



[Africa's Voices Foundation](#) is an award-winning citizen engagement and social research non-profit based in Kenya and also a UK charity. It spun out of research at CGHR going back a decade and has grown to a team of over 20 that has delivered over £5m in impactful social programmes. The journey has given co-founder and CGHR co-director Sharath Srinivasan valuable insights into the complexities of achieving social impact through applied socio-technical research.

For a start, compared to an academic proof of concept, any spinout entity needs to be financially sustainable to have lasting impact. It thus needs access to funding. With Africa's Voices Foundation, the choice was made to 'sell' the unique method as a citizen engagement and social research solution to development, humanitarian, and governance organisations. Yet becoming a 'service provider' in this way also meant foreclosing using the method as means of direct

# Praxis Research Spotlights

action in the world. In the end, Africa's Voices reverted to being more programmatic and towards achieving social outcomes, though still aid donor-funded.

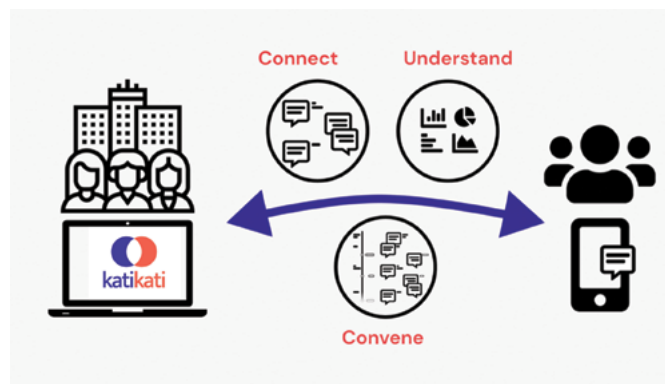
Africa's Voices also faced the decision about becoming a registered charity. This allowed for donation funding early on, but that type of funding was hard to sustain, and the non-profit status subsequently constrained the ability to generate surpluses to invest in innovation. Further, a 'real-world' solution has to make compromises to meet programmatic and user needs of paying 'clients'. Soon, the original concept morphs into something different that achieves different things. These praxis experiences are richly insightful and can be brought back into research and design to open up new investigations.

When CGHR researchers Sharath and Luke Church finally exited the day-to-day leadership of Africa's Voices, handing over to Samuel Kimeu and the Africa's Voices team in early 2020, they faced a new challenge of maintaining advisory support for sustaining socio-technical quality and innovation, whilst not overshadowing the team's independence. For praxis academics, lasting impact in the world requires letting go in deliberate, generous, and thoughtful ways.

## Katikati



In 2020, Sharath Srinivasan and Luke Church drew on their years collaborating on Africa's Voices to found [Lark Social Impact](#). Combining deep expertise in computer science and contextual social science, Lark Social Impact seeks to embed into its technical solutions the ability for people and organisations to renegotiate their relationship with data and technology, so as to better seize the opportunities that they afford.



### Katikati connects human-led conversations at scale, with real-time integrated insights

Their belief is that, while the critiques of the role of digital technology in society are valid, insufficient attention is given to reimagining how technology can achieve positive social change. [Katikati](#) is their first foray in this new journey - a relationship-centred conversation software that enables organisations to build stronger, more valuable relationships with the people that matter to them. Africa's Voices used Katikati in 2020 as part of their SMS response to the Covid-19 pandemic in Kenya and Somalia, together with UNICEF, UK FCDO, UNDP and others. Alongside this, Cambridge researchers collaborated with colleagues in Kenya to use Katikati to conduct remote social research with displaced communities in Somalia on how lockdowns were impacting their lives (see more in the *Digital Media, Voice and Power* section).

Since then, Katikati continues to partner with Red Cross societies in several African countries and innovative social change organisations such as Shujaaz in Kenya.

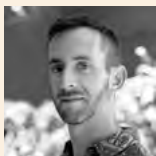


Poster wall at the Electronic Ranch hacklab in Mexico City, taken by Sebastián on fieldwork





# CGHR Postdoctoral Scholar



**CGHR's inaugural postdoctoral scholar, Dr Sebastián Lehuedé, joined us in October 2021, quickly becoming an active member of the CGHR community. Besides his research, he convenes the student-run *Declarations* podcast, and has been working collaboratively with Ella and Sharath on their 'Provocations' project. Sebastián is also supervising students and teaching at the Department of Politics and International Studies and the Department of Sociology.**



**Photo taken at an open workshop Sebastián co-organised with digital and environmental rights activists in Santiago, Chile**

Sebastián has been a super active scholar at CGHR. During his stay, he has conducted fieldwork in Latin America, organised a conference, designed and taught a course at Cambridge, supervised students, received a conference award, presented at academic and non-academic conferences and published in top academic journals.

Sebastián's current research looks into the geopolitics of digital rights, exploring how digital rights organisations make sure that their work speaks to the needs and visions of the local context. Supported by CGHR, in 2022 Sebastián conducted fieldwork in Chile, Mexico, and Costa Rica, co-organising workshops and establishing different types of collaborations with activists in Latin America. This project sits within his wider work investigating digital technologies from a global social justice perspective inspired by Latin American decolonial thinking.

Turning to an emergent issue in the field of digital rights, Sebastián organised the *Contested Data Territories* conference in September 2022, which discussed cases of grassroots resistance against the expansion of data infrastructure. Hosted by CGHR, this bilingual series of two panels brought together environmental and digital rights activists, researchers, and practitioners from both the South and the North, and incorporated live interpretation in English and Spanish. The funding for this event stemmed from Sebastián's Post-Doctoral Enrichment Award granted by the Alan Turing Institute.

In the summer of 2022, Sebastián supervised an undergraduate intern, Daniel Newton from the University of Westminster, as part of the School of the Humanities and Social Sciences' SHARE programme. This programme granted a six-week, paid summer research experience and aimed to enhance diversity and inclusiveness within the social sciences. At CGHR, Daniel gained familiarity with qualitative research in the social sciences, assisting Sebastián in the coding of the data stemming from his fieldwork in Latin America.

# CGHR Postdoctoral Scholar



**Sebastián receiving the AoIR Dissertation Award**

Sebastián's doctoral thesis, which he submitted right before joining CGHR, was recognised with the 2022 Dissertation Award from the Association of Internet Researchers (AoIR). This thesis focuses on the governance of astronomy data in Chile, proposing a model of data governance inspired by decoloniality. The Award statement said: 'Dr. Lehedé's research shows the limits of Eurocentric concepts of open data and data sovereignty from the proposition of a collective autonomy of data, making thus an important contribution to the ongoing debates on postcolonial foundations of datafication and data governance.' We are also proud that CGHR research associate Rebekah Larsen's doctoral thesis on the right to be forgotten was recognised with an Honorable Mention in the same award.



**Flyer for the Contested Data Territories talks**

During his period at CGHR, Sebastián has published articles in prestigious journals such as *New Media & Society* and *Big Data & Society*, touching on themes such as data infrastructure, indigenous worlds, and global data flows. Sebastián is currently working on a monograph on data and development from a decolonial perspective and has co-edited a special volume on the 'terrestrial internet' in the journal *Tapuya: Latin American Science, Technology and Society* along with Dr Marcela Suárez from the Freie Universität Berlin. He has also presented his work at academic events, such as the 2022 International Communication Association (ICA) conference in Paris, and in public talks hosted by organisations such as Oxfam International and the Open Knowledge Foundation. Sebastián has contributed original research and strengthened and expanded the CGHR community. CGHR looks forward to maintaining our collaboration with him during and after his time with us.

# Student Spotlight: *Digital Verification Corps*

As we approach a half decade of collaboration with Amnesty International on the Digital Verification Corps (DVC), our Cambridge DVC team has discovered and analysed a range of crucial human rights evidence. In the past two years, our volunteer student researchers have supported Amnesty's Citizen Evidence Lab with open source investigations into: violations related to the misuse of tear gas and police batons; coalition airstrikes in Yemen; abuses against protestors, migrants, refugees, and the elderly; and the war in Ukraine.

The student leads of Cambridge's DVC team in 2020–21 were Ray Adams Row Farr and Dylan Rogers, with Ella as faculty lead and Sam Dubberley as DVC Manager at Amnesty International. The Cambridge team worked alongside DVCs at the universities of Hong Kong, Pretoria, Toronto, Essex, Mexico, and Berkeley. Because of the Covid-19 pandemic, activities over the entire year were held remotely, with the team innovating new ways of collaborating from afar.

We started 2020–21 by updating Amnesty's *Tear Gas* platform, which maps the abuse of this weapon. Our new recruits worked on the situation in countries such as Haiti, Nigeria, Hong Kong, Peru, Poland, Tunisia, and Uganda, adding to collaborative work across the DVCs. In all, the DVCs compiled and verified over 500 pieces of online content showing the indiscriminate and dangerous use of tear gas by state agents across 31 countries. In 2021, Amnesty won a prestigious Webby Award – described by the *New York Times* as 'the internet's highest honor' – for this platform in the category of the best activism website worldwide.

The rest of the academic year was spent contributing digital evidence to two Amnesty projects. Tools of Torture is an investigation into the use of blunt force by the police and the misuse of police batons and related equipment. Our team did research into this type of violation in a range of countries, including Denmark, France, the Netherlands,



## DVC students at work

Poland, and Russia. For the second project, we collected and verified footage of abuses against protestors in Myanmar. This footage featured in Amnesty's report denouncing the 'protest crackdown' that occurred following the military coup in February 2021.

At the end of the academic year, our student leads graduated, with Ray joining Amnesty's Citizen Evidence Lab (which happily means she continues to work with our DVC) and Dylan joining UN Watch as a Fellow. Laetitia Maurat and Nik Yazikov took over as student DVC leads in 2021–22.

In 2021–22, the DVC launched its new team with ongoing work updating the *Tear Gas* platform, then moved onto a project finding digital evidence of human rights abuses committed against elderly



# Student Spotlight: *Digital Verification Corps*

civilians in Nagorno-Karabakh. This formed part of a wider project at the Citizen Evidence lab investigating the under-reported impact of conflicts on the elderly population. The team was also tasked with looking into civilian casualties resulting from coalition airstrikes in Yemen. This research will be used in a forthcoming court case against the UK government, led by the Coalition Against Arms Trade.

In Lent Term 2022, our DVC worked with Amnesty and Forensic Architecture on the horrific practice of migrant and refugee 'drift-backs' in the Aegean Sea, where Greek authorities push migrants and refugees back out to sea on unnavigable rafts, which float on the current back to Turkey. This was a complicated piece of research requiring new skills, as the DVC had to analyse footage mostly filmed at sea and so lacking in geographical landmarks that often help us verify evidence. Forensic Architecture published the work in their interactive platform, *Drift-backs in the Aegean Sea*.

Starting in February 2022, the Cambridge DVC also provided support to Amnesty's Crisis Response Team in its efforts to collect and verify evidence of human rights abuses in Ukraine. This was also a unique project, since the DVC does not often work on such current conflicts that feature so prominently in mainstream and social media. The team was glad to be able to help the Evidence Lab with the huge amount of footage and contribute to Amnesty's current and forthcoming reports on the war.

Over the summer of 2022, the team also began a project investigating surveillance technologies in the Occupied Palestinian Territories. In September, our partner university in Mexico, Universidad Iberoamericana, held a cross-DVC summit – the first after a two-year hiatus due to the pandemic. The team enjoyed meeting with other DVC leads and learning new skills in order to hit the ground running for the 2022-23 academic year.



**Part of Forensic Architecture's interactive platform *Drift-backs in the Aegean Sea***

# Human Rights in the Digital Age



## PEOPLE

Ray Adams  
Row Farr  
Isabel Guenette Thornton  
Jamie Hancock  
Lisa Klaassen  
Dr Rebekah Larsen  
Dr Matt Mahmoudi  
Laetitia Maurat  
Dr Ella McPherson  
Saide Mobayed  
Dr Thomas Probert  
Louis Slater  
Nik Yazikov

## Introduction

The years 2020-22 saw the human rights in the digital age theme going from strength to strength. The pandemic lockdowns highlighted the importance of understanding both how human rights practices are increasingly relying on technologies, particularly in lockdowns when the only evidence that fact-finders could gather was digital, and how the exercise and protection of human rights manifest in the digital age. Participants in this growing research theme investigated both these topics through praxis research, including the development of new tools for practitioners and publics as well as new publications.

Some highlights from these two years include: The Whistle project's ESRC Impact Acceleration Account grant to develop an informational chatbot for UK asylum seekers in collaboration with Humans for Rights Network (see Praxis Research Spotlight on page 7); the expansion of the End Everyday Racism digital testimony project to other universities; Ella's work as Special Adviser to the Freedom of Expression Online inquiry at the House of Lords; the DVC's investigative work for Amnesty's Teargas and Tools of Torture projects, and the development of a new online course on Open Source Investigation for Academics; Lisa and Jamie launching their respective Human Rights Digital Toolkit and Social Life of Data experience at Cambridge and at the United Nations' Human Rights Office of the High Commissioner; Ella's development of a new

research project on Neo-Luddism at Cambridge's CRASSH; and Ella, Isabel, and Matt winning the International Studies Association 2021 Best Paper award in the Human Rights section for their [\*Digital Witness\*](#) chapter on '[Open Source Investigations and the Technology-Driven Knowledge Controversy in Human Rights Fact-Finding](#)'.

## The Freedom of Expression Online

The Human Rights in the Digital Age theme extended its work understanding how human rights and their protections manifest in digital spaces. In 2020-21, Ella was Special Adviser to the House of Lords' Digital and Communications Committee for their inquiry into the [Freedom of Expression Online](#). The inquiry's findings were based on an understanding of the sometimes zero-sum nature of the freedom of expression, where one person's ability to express themselves may have a chilling effect on others' freedom of expression. The resulting report's central concern and recommendations addressed social media platforms' profit-driven control over who has freedom of expression about what – and who does not. Ella's work built on the research that CGHR did in 2019-20 on the freedom of assembly online for Professor Christof Heyns and the UN Human Rights Committee.

# Human Rights in the Digital Age

## Neo-Luddism

In Lent Term 2022, Ella held a Cambridge Early Career Fellowship at the Centre for Research in the Arts, Social Sciences and Humanities (CRASSH). This was to develop a new project: 'Neo-Luddism in the Digital Age: Resisters, Quitters, Destroyers and Visionaries against Contemporary Technologies'. This research was inspired by the resistance and innovation Ella and her research team have observed among human rights fact-finders as well as in grassroots data justice projects. The project looks empirically and autoethnographically at practices and communities of Neo-Luddism, and also considers Luddism as a productive and polemical metaphor used by activists, the corporate sector, and the media.

## Digital Human Rights Toolkit and The Social Life of Data Experience

Digital media and data have transformed the ways in which human rights abuses are experienced, documented, and investigated. An ever-growing volume of data which potentially captures evidence of abuses has become openly available online (as 'open source' data). In turn, techniques for analysing such data have become increasingly central to the work of human rights investigators and journalists: from war crimes in Syria to police violence in the United States and the ongoing conflict in Ukraine, open source investigations have become a site of both knowledge-making and political controversy. The CGHR's partnership with Amnesty International's Digital Verification Corps is one example of this trend.

But the proliferation of open-source investigation has also brought problems. As context is collapsed and meanings shift, online content may slide from 'fact' to 'fiction' depending on where it is located and how it is framed. It can be difficult to sort through the torrent of data such content represents. Alongside this data, there has been a proliferation of tools available for investigators. To ensure trust and credibility, it is important for practitioners to be confident in the origins and workings of the tools they use. It can be hard to know where to turn. Moreover, in an online space where unverified and unreliable information abounds, it becomes especially vital to examine critically the bases on which claims about truth are made.

In the summer of 2020, team members from The Whistle sought to assist practitioners in navigating these contexts through two projects: the *Human Rights Digital Toolkit* (HRDT) and the *Social Life of Data* (SLoD). The tools are intended to complement one another: where the HRDT is a decision-tree guiding users to tools available for different uses, the SLoD is an interactive experience which encourages users to question the ways facts are made and unmade online.

The HRDT and SLoD were developed by CGHR interns Lisa and Jamie, respectively, with leadership from Ella as well as guidance from fellow Whistle team members Saide and Matt. The projects were conducted as a collaboration with the United Nations' Office for the High Commissioner for Human Rights (UN OHCHR) Section on Methodology, Education and Training.

Each project was intensely collaborative and involved detailed research. For the HRDT, Lisa, Saide, and Ella conducted interviews with practitioners about their needs and preferred tools; Lisa then added desk-based research on different tools, including documentation of their use-cases, histories, limitations, and workings (where available). Meanwhile, Jamie based the SLoD on a literature on critical epistemologies and experiments with choose-your-own-adventure structures. The end result is an experience in which you 'become' data as it journeys through digital spaces. It is centred on a series of case studies which deconstruct specific open-source investigations adapted from real-life events. The SLoD also includes a 'training mode' for those interested in improving their investigative skills.

The team presented their work at the CGHR's event '(Un)settling Digital Epistemologies' in October 2020. The *Human Rights Digital Toolkit* is available here: <https://thewhistle.soc.srccf.net/the-human-rights-digital-toolkit/>. The *Social Life of Data* can be explored here: <https://sociallifeofdata.org>.

# Human Rights in the Digital Age

## New Online Course:

### Open Source Investigation for Academics

Chances are, you've recently encountered the buzzword 'open source investigation' or OSI. OSI is exactly what our [Digital Verification Corps](#) (see page 12) does. Our student team discovers and verifies digital evidence of human rights violations by sifting through and analysing data from the broad pool of public information flowing through social media channels.

As DVC faculty lead (Ella) and student leads (Ray, Nik, and Laetitia), we realised that knowing how to address the volume and verification problems of (big) digital data was a useful skillset for many more members of our community than we could accommodate in the DVC. Open source investigation is relevant for research in several disciplines and on many projects. It is also valuable for investigative careers like journalism and, more broadly, for being a citizen in today's information ecosystems. For these reasons, we decided to build a Cambridge course on [Open Source Investigation for Academics](#).

This course, developed at CGHR in partnership with [Cambridge Digital Humanities](#) and the [Social Science Research Methods Programme](#), foregrounds a critical and reflexive approach to open source investigation. Students learn practical skills to evaluate social media content, online databases and satellite images, whilst integrating considerations of ethics and power. The eight-week course, delivered by DVC leads and a variety of expert guests via pre-recorded lectures and hands-on Zoom seminars, covers the following topics: introduction, vicarious trauma, discovery, verification tools and tactics, geolocation, digital footprints, archiving/data curation, and ethics.

How is OSI for academics different from OSI for practitioners? First, it provokes the question of epistemologies, or ways of knowing. Practitioners working for truth-claims institutions, like human rights organisations or newsrooms, will know that their employers and audiences will expect them to establish evidence using certain methodologies following increasingly standardised practices and norms of digital verification. In this approach, data is triangulated against trusted datasets to answer the questions: who, what, where, when, and why? The idea is to reach as watertight a conclusion as possible. However, this involves assigning a degree of objectivity which can overlook ambiguities and obscure nuances in the data. In OSI for Academics, we introduce this epistemology but also put it

into dialogue with a diversity of epistemological approaches within and beyond our various disciplines. We consider the implications, in terms of power and voice, of the orthodoxy of OSI epistemology. We denaturalise this epistemology and thus create space to reflect on its tradition, where it comes from, who benefits from it, and who is left out. A second advantage of learning about OSI in an academic context is that we can engage in thought-provoking dialogue with the academic research norms and practices on which we already rely. For example, in the course, we ask: How does open source investigation help us think about the ethics of visibility around our own research subjects?

Accordingly, our OSI for Academics course follows three principles. First, we relish the [knowledge controversy](#) that these new methods bring to research, namely the newness that throws into question all of our taken-for-granted assumptions about how we create knowledge. Knowledge controversies can be unsettling and unstable, and our inclinations are often to standardise and thus close them. In these unstable moments, however, the norms that shape our epistemologies become clearer, as does the intersection of power with knowledge, opening them to critique. Therefore, we encourage our students to sit in knowledge controversies and get comfortable with the discomfort.

A second principle is acknowledging rather than resolving dilemmas. In the same vein, we know that the production of knowledge – particularly of fraught and sensitive knowledge – creates dilemmas. We face dilemmas all the time as researchers. Rather than rushing to solve them, we acknowledge them and frame dilemmas as an entryway into exploring power relations.

Finally, our third principle is paying attention to affect. Over the years at the DVC, we have spoken often of affect – as in how the work of OSI makes us feel. This can be a source of tension; for example, the thrill you can feel when getting closer to the geolocation of a piece of evidence can be followed by feeling guilty for slipping into the gamification of a real-life situation. Following the principles of autoethnography, then, what can we learn from what we feel as we do OSI?

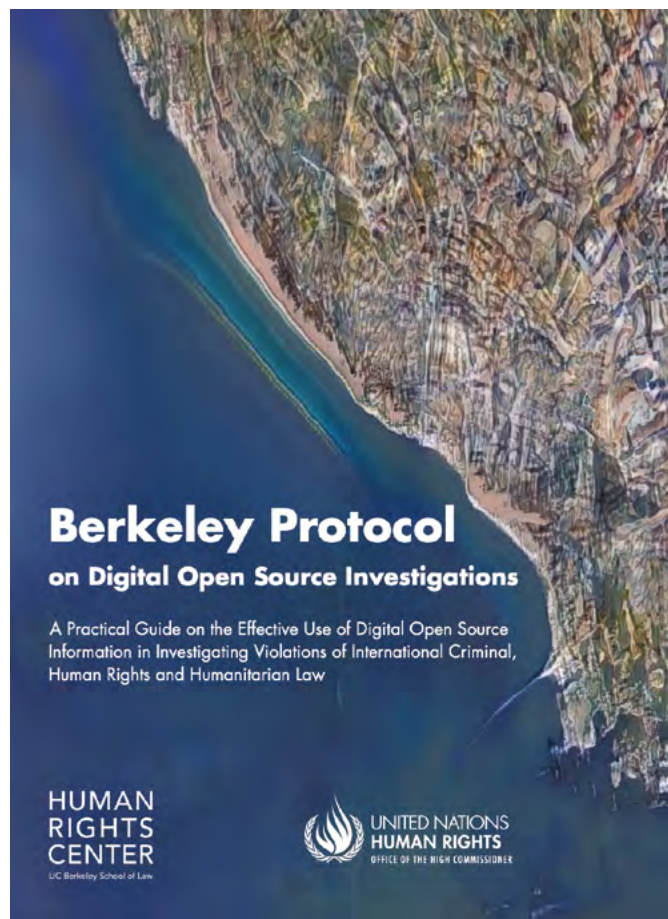
OSI for Academics ran for the first time in Michaelmas Term 2021 and will run twice a year for the foreseeable future. It is open to all Cambridge staff and students.



# Human Rights in the Digital Age

## Contribution to the Berkeley Protocol

Thomas was part of a large expert panel that advised on the development of the Berkeley Protocol on Digital Open Source Investigations, which was publicly launched in December 2020 to coincide with the 75<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the Nuremberg Trials (in which video evidence had played an innovative role).



## Publications

Axster, S., Danewid, I., Goldstein, A., Mahmoudi, M., Tansel, C.B. and Wilcox, L. (2021) '[Colonial lives of the carceral archipelago: rethinking the neoliberal security state](#)', *International Political Sociology*, 15(3), pp. 415–439.

Hamilton, M., McPherson, E. and Srinivasan, S. (2022) '[Deal with me, here I stand!](#)': presence, participation and the equal protection of online assemblies', in Viljoen, F., Fombad, C., Tladi, D., Skelton, A. and Killander, M. (eds) *A Life Interrupted: Essays in Honour of the Lives and Legacies of Christof Heyns*. Pretoria: Pretoria University Law Press, pp. 327–346.

Larsen, R. (2022) 'Information pressures' and the Facebook files: navigating questions around leaked platform data', *Digital Journalism* 10(9), pp. 1591–1603.

Larsen, R. (2020) 'Mapping right to be forgotten frames: reflexivity and empirical payoffs at the intersection of network discourse and mixed network methods', *New Media and Society*, 22(7) pp. 1245–1265.

McPherson, E. (2022) '[Witnessing: iteration and social change](#)', *AI + Society*.

# Digital Media, Voice and Power



## PEOPLE

Dr Dorien Braam

Luke Church

Dr Stephanie Diepeveen

Dr Josh Platzky Miller

Antoine Sander

Dr Sharath Srinivasan

Through collaborative work primarily on the African continent, our work on Digital Media, Voice and Power encompasses diverse lines of enquiry, ranging from algorithmic biases and changing digital public spheres to the impact of digital technologies during Covid-19 and design innovations in digital research methods.

During the Covid-19 pandemic, Sharath collaborated with Josh to study how African states were collaborating with foreign technology providers to experiment and expand their governance capabilities using digital tech, as well as civil resistance to these new encroachments on livelihoods and political freedoms. This work, for the Public Health, Surveillance, and Human Rights Network convened by the Social Sciences Research Council in New York, fed into the SSRC's landmark report, *Surveillance and the 'new normal' of Covid-19: public health, data, and justice*. They subsequently worked with POLIS PhD student and CGHR podcast team member, Antoine Sander, on an article, 'Control, extract, legitimate: Covid-19 and digital techno-opportunism across Africa', published as part of a debate in *Development & Change* on the Covid-19 crisis. Alongside this work, CGHR-affiliated researcher and former Deputy Director Stephanie, worked with former CGHR research associate Iginio Gagliardone and others on a study that critically reappraised the Covid-19 'infodemic' in Africa, illuminating the agency and judgement of African publics in navigating misinformation.

CGHR's work over many years on technology, media, and citizen engagement in Africa spawned the successful spin-out non-profit, Africa's Voices Foundation. Ongoing collaborations between CGHR and Africa's Voices during the COVID-19 pandemic also led to innovative



**Sharath explaining the implications arising from the disconnect between the record that is written and actual socio-political reality in his keynote lecture, 'Politics in Language, Language in Politics'**

collaborations with Cambridge infectious diseases researchers investigating the impact of lockdowns on livelihoods and community worldviews about the virus. This work, using the Katikati conversational research platform co-created by Luke Church, Sharath, and their team at Lark Social Impact, was written up in the leading journal *Conflict and Health* with CGHR Research Associate Dorien.

The project helped prove concept on a distinctly new approach for remote social research in which multi-language SMS conversations between researchers in Cambridge and displaced persons in Somalia were held over a number of months following a semi-structured-interview based research design. This pioneering of new social research

# Digital Media, Voice and Power

methods using media and digital communications builds off earlier advances achieved with Africa's Voices Foundation's interactive radio-SMS mixed methodology, evaluated in an article published in 2021 in the prestigious *Journal of Mixed Methods Research*.

In new directions under this research theme, Sharath, Luke, and Antoine are investigating a longer history of communication technology and politics, seeking to combine disciplinary insights from political science and computer science to unravel how the possibilities for encoding of meaning in artefacts has, since early civilisation, been shaped by, and then reshaped, political power. Sharath was invited to give a keynote lecture on this theme at The International Conference on the Art, Science, and Engineering of Programming—or «Programming» as it is known—which he titled, 'Politics in language, language in politics'. This talk proposed that, seen within a longer history of language, politics, and the artefacts of communication, computer programming language design has a distinct, under-appreciated set of political influences and implications. As our political world is increasingly mediated by digital communications, and as programming languages are increasingly centralised and privatised into a few corporate hands, the possibilities and limits of politics are being significantly shaped by the political economy of technology. Yet programming language designers, like scribes and printing houses before them, have a distinct role to play in enabling how our digital worlds are shaped by software designers and experienced by 'users'. This line of thinking resonates with recent work by Stephanie on predictive language technologies and global power imbalances between Western big tech and multilingual internet users in the Global South. Such investigations also have contemporary applied significance at CGHR, for example in how Luke and Sharath seek to learn from them in the socio-technical design work of Lark Social Impact.

## Publications

Braam, D., Srinivasan, S., Church, L., Sheikh, Z., Jephcott, F. and Bukachi, S. (2021) 'Lockdowns, lives and livelihoods: the impact of COVID-19 and public health responses to conflict affected populations-a remote qualitative study in Baidoa and Mogadishu, Somalia', *Conflict and Health*, 15(1), pp. 1–11.

Chonka, P., Diepeveen, S. and Haile, Y. (2022) 'Algorithmic power and African indigenous languages: search engine autocomplete and the global multilingual Internet', *Media, Culture & Society*.

Diepeveen, S. (2022) *Hidden in plain sight: how social media infrastructure shapes gender norms*. ALiGN: Advancing Learning and Innovation on Gender Norms, ODI, London.

Gagliardone, I., Diepeveen, S., et al. (2021) 'Demystifying the COVID-19 infodemic: conspiracies, context and the agency of users', *Social Media + Society*.

Platzky Miller, J., Sander, S. and Srinivasan, S. (2022) 'Control, extract, legitimate: COVID-19 and digital techno-opportunism across Africa', *Development and Change*.

Riha, J., Abreu Lopes, C., Ibrahim, N. and Srinivasan, S. (2021) 'Media and digital technologies for mixed methods research in public health emergencies such as COVID-19: lessons learned from using interactive Radio-SMS for social research in Somalia', *Journal of Mixed Methods Research*, 15 (3), pp. 304–326.

Srinivasan S., Karekwaivanane, G. & Diepeveen, S. (eds) (2021) *Publics in Africa in a digital age*. Abingdon: Routledge.

# Justice & Accountability



## PEOPLE

Dr Thomas Probert

The theme focusses predominantly on the prevention and investigation of unlawful killings and is convened by Dr Thomas Probert. It has historically conducted research in support of the mandate of the UN Special Rapporteur on extrajudicial, summary, or arbitrary executions. It was with great sadness that those working on this theme, and across CGHR, mourned the sudden passing of Prof. Christof Heyns, a leader of that mandate and long-time friend and partner of the Centre, in March 2021 (see In Memory of Christof Heyns, p30).

## Lethal Force Monitor

Over the last several years, CGHR researchers have made contributions to the online resource, *The Law on Police Use of Force Worldwide* ([www.policinglaw.info](http://www.policinglaw.info)). The next phase of this project has been a collaboration with a research cluster at the University of Exeter and with NGOs in Latin America to work toward a consolidated 'Lethal Force Monitor'. This project has been launched (<https://lethal-force-monitor.org>) and now includes six full country profiles, detailing not only the legal regime but also the processes in place for data collection and accountability, as well as a range of potentially useful comparative indicators regarding the frequency with which states resort to lethal force.

The next phase of this project is underway with the support of the Open Society Foundation. We will undertake to explore a series of inter-regional seminars and investigate at least a further two full case studies.

## Standards on the Use of Force in Law Enforcement



Meanwhile, the UN Human Rights Guidance on Less-Lethal Weapons in Law Enforcement, to which an Expert Meeting hosted by CGHR contributed, was published by the Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights and has now been translated into all six UN languages. This document has been a valuable reference point for the human rights sector.

Building upon this, during 2021–22, Thomas coordinated a project with the African Commission on Human and Peoples' Rights to develop a Study on the Use of Force in Law Enforcement in Africa, which will be opened for public consultation in late 2022. He was also invited to present expert evidence to the Catalan Parliament as it considered the adoption of new legislation concerning the policing of assemblies.



# Justice & Accountability



**Meeting of the African Commission on Human and Peoples' Rights validating the Study on the Use of Force by Law Enforcement in Africa, held in Pretoria on 21 and 22 June 2022. Sitting in the front row, from left to right, are Hon. Idrissa Sow (Chairperson of the Working Group on the Death Penalty, Extrajudicial, Summary or Arbitrary Killings, and Enforced Disappearances in Africa), Hon. Maria Theresa Manuela (Special Rapporteur on Prisons, Conditions of Detention and Policing in Africa), Hon. Rémy Ngoy Lumbu (Chairperson of the Commission and Special Rapporteur on Human Rights Defenders) and Thomas.**

## ICC Amicus Appearance

In October 2020, the International Criminal Court (ICC) Appeals Chamber, hearing the matter of *Bosco Ntaganda*, sought the opinion of amici with respect to the definition of 'attack' in Art.8(2)(e)(iv) of the Rome Statute. Along with colleagues at the University of Pretoria, Thomas was one of the amici asked to present orally before the Chamber.

The original amicus brief can be found at [www.legal-tools.org/doc/d355i9/pdf](http://www.legal-tools.org/doc/d355i9/pdf). The argument put forward by Thomas and his colleagues was that specially protected objects (such as hospitals and cultural property) are protected from 'attack' outside the conduct of hostilities (under Geneva Law) in a broader sense than the term is applied during hostilities (under Hague Law), and that it is this broader definition that should inform the interpretation of Art.8(2)(e)(iv) of the Rome Statute. The Appeals Chamber ultimately did not agree, choosing to maintain a consistent interpretation of 'attack' within the various elements of Article 8.

## Publications

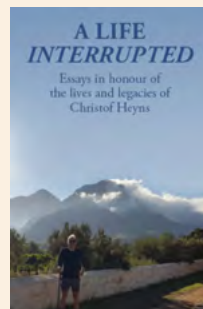
Alston, P., Heyns, C., Knuckey, S. and Probert, T. (2020) *Alston and Heyns on unlawful killings*. Pretoria: Pretoria University Law Press.

Probert, T. (2020) 'Ensuring the right of assembly in extraordinary times'. *ACHPR Police and Human Rights in Africa Newsletter*, 14.

Probert, T. (2022) 'Accounting for life: the role of counting and data in the protection of the right to life and the pursuit of safety', in Viljoen, F., Fombad, C., Tladi, D., Skelton, A. and Killander, M. (eds). *A Life Interrupted: Essays in Honour of the Lives and Legacies of Christof Heyns*. Pretoria: Pretoria University Law Press, pp. 281–295.

Probert, T. and Heyns, C. (eds) (2020) *National Commissions of Inquiry in Africa*. Pretoria: Pretoria University Law Press.

Ruteere, M., Kimari, B. and Probert, T. (2020) *Strengthening policing oversight and investigations in Kenya*. African Policing Civilian Oversight Forum.



**Thomas, Ella and Sharath all contributed to this book. Among other things, they charted Christof's pioneering model of consultation and engagement and identified his indefatigable commitment to collaborative and inclusive human rights work as central to his legacy.**

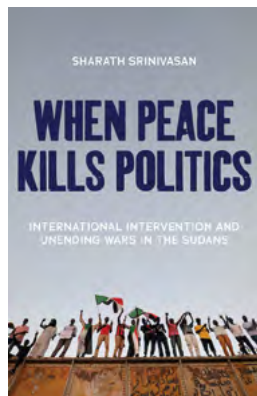
# Violence, Conflict and Peacebuilding



## PEOPLE

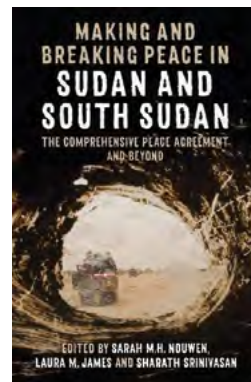
Dr Devon Curtis  
Professor Sarah Nouwen  
Dr Sharath Srinivasan

Our work on violence, conflict and peacebuilding seeks to make fresh, critically-grounded advancements in peace work that is more attentive and constructive with respect to political complexities. In recent years, work on this theme saw various multi-year projects bear fruit with an array of publications, presentations, and public engagements.



For many years, CGHR researchers have contributed to thought and practice on peacemaking and peacebuilding in Sudan and South Sudan. The year 2021 saw the publication of Sharath's monograph, *When peace kills politics: international intervention and unending wars in the Sudans* (Hurst; Oxford University Press). The book argues that efforts aimed at 'making' peace too often rely on instrumental means – forging deals, templates for liberal constitutions, blueprints for reconstructing states – that have more in common with logics of violence and that undermine non-violent civil politics. In this way, in Sudan and South Sudan, peace interventions were interwoven with the reproduction of armed conflict for many decades. The book calls for rethinking peacemaking in the image of non-violent civil political action, fostering rather than undermining such politics in the making of peace. A number of talks and media engagements followed the book's publication, including

with policymakers at the Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Office and on *Al Jazeera*, *Monocle*, and *France24*. In the context of Sudan's popular revolution and turbulent political transition, Sharath sought to lay greater emphasis on the significance of non-violent political struggle and the central importance of neighbourhood resistance committees in safeguarding the revolution's promise.



Engagements with diplomats and policymakers also followed the publication, in late 2020, of *Making and breaking peace in Sudan and South Sudan: the comprehensive peace agreement and beyond* (Proceedings of British Academy/ Oxford University Press), co-edited by CGHR affiliate Sarah, former affiliated researcher Dr Laura James, and Sharath. In their introduction to that volume, Sharath and Sarah emphasised the need to pay closer attention to how contestations over different visions of peace, held by foreign interveners alongside local actors, shape the means of making peace, often with counterproductive effects.

A wider gaze upon peacebuilding worldwide and a particular focus on the political transformation of armed groups animates the Politics After War network led by CGHR-affiliated researcher Devon and former CGHR research associate Dr Gyda Sindre. The project

# Violence, Conflict and Peacebuilding



PERSPECTIVE © FRANCE 24

## Sharath speaking to France 24 about the pitfalls of peace-making in the Sudans.

conducted a series of Research-Policy Dialogue workshops on Disarmament, Demobilization and Reintegration (DDR) throughout 2020-2022. Collaborating with the Disarmament, Demobilization and Reintegration unit in the Department of Peace Operations at the United Nations, the project team presented key findings from research at an event in New York in June 2022. Devon and Dr Gaho Burihabwa published an article on Burundi from this work in *International Affairs*.

The broad theme of rethinking ideas and practices of peace through closer attention to power and political contestation continues to bring CGHR researchers together to chart new directions in their work. In November 2021, Sarah, currently Professor of Public International Law at the European University Institute, hosted Devon and Sharath, as well as Dr Sarah Kendall, at a workshop, 'Politics, Peace, and Paperwork'. Subsequently, Sarah published an article, 'Exporting peace? The EU mediator's normative backpack', which calls for a radical inversion of the historical myopia and bias of Eurocentrism in the EU's future peace work.

## Publications

Burihabwa, N. and Curtis, D. (2021) 'Postwar statebuilding in Burundi: ruling party elites and illiberal peace', *International Affairs* 97 (4), pp. 1221–1238.

Cho, J., Curtis, D., Dudouet, V., Malm, J., Sindre, G., and Kovacs, M. (2022) 'The Political Dynamics of DDR: Key Research Findings' Folke Bernadotte Academy (FBA) Research Brief.

Nouwen, S. (2022) 'Exporting peace? The EU mediator's normative backpack', *European Law Open* 1 (1), pp. 26-59.

Nouwen, S., James, L. and Srinivasan, S. (eds.) (2020) *Making and breaking peace in Sudan and South Sudan: the Comprehensive Peace Agreement and beyond*, in *Proceedings of the British Academy*, Oxford: Oxford University Press.

Srinivasan, S. (2021) *When peace kills politics: international intervention and unending wars in the Sudans*. London: Hurst & Co; New York: Oxford University Press.

Srinivasan, S. and Nouwen, S. (2020) 'Peace and peacemaking in Sudan and South Sudan', in Nouwen, S., James, L. and Srinivasan, S. (eds) *Making and breaking peace in Sudan and South Sudan: the Comprehensive Peace Agreement and beyond*, in *Proceedings of the British Academy*. Oxford University Press.

# Podcast

## Declarations – The Human Rights Podcast



**The Declarations Podcast is the human rights podcast run out of CGHR at the University of Cambridge. The aims of the student-led podcast are to explore contemporary debates about politics and human rights with some fantastic guests from Cambridge and around the world and to create a platform for critical commentary.**

Declarations started as a student-led initiative in 2016. So far, each season has focussed on different themes. For example, the podcast has looked into activism, alternative futures and memory. Season 6 of *Declarations*, which ran through the Lent Term of the 2021-22 academic year, focused on New Technologies and Human Rights. Understanding the implications of digital technologies, which are already permeating day-to-day life, is key to the protection and promotion of human rights in the 21st century. Digital technologies can affect a wide range of human rights and fundamental freedoms, including *inter alia*: freedom of expression; freedom of assembly; freedom of thought, conscience, religion, or belief; the prevention of torture and other ill-treatment; the right to a fair trial; and equality and non-discrimination. The season's eight episodes covered the following topics: [predictive policing](#), [the securitisation of European borders](#), [live facial recognition](#), [empathy games](#), [biometrics and refugees](#), [freedom of expression and internet shutdowns in Pakistan](#), [AI and workers' rights](#), and [deepfakes and non-consensual pornography](#).

What made this season unique were two main aspects. The first was the team's inside knowledge, composed of interdisciplinary backgrounds, which enabled us to approach the topic of new technologies and human rights from a wide range of perspectives (legal, political, sociological... ) and include them in the discussion. The second strength we had was our invited guests, who were confronted with out-of-the-box questions and with whom our panelists engaged in rich debate. Besides, as we moved the recordings of the episodes online, we made sure that our guests represented a truly diverse panel in terms of backgrounds, nationalities, and gender. We also invited more than one



**Sebastián Lehedé and Andrea Farres-Jimenez working on the 2022/23 podcasts**

guest per episode (for example, an academic and an activist), so the dialogue was richer and more thought-provoking, since different points of view were presented.

Season 6 saw *Declarations* pass a huge milestone of having over 100,000 lifetime concurrent listeners and downloads across nine podcast platforms. There was also an average of 805 plays per episode for season 6 on Spotify. To date, *Declarations* has been listened to in 179 countries, with its biggest audience tuning in from the United States. This has led the student team to feel an enormous amount of pride in the production and how important the content they produce is to wider audiences. Though much of our strategy for this season was to focus on the community at the University of Cambridge, and though this was achieved, we saw listeners tune in from all over the world.

You can find all the episodes on all popular podcast apps ([Apple podcasts](#), [Spotify](#)), together with their show notes and links to further material, in case you want to dig deeper into a specific subject. See <https://declarationspod.com/team> for profiles of season 6's team.



# Students at CGHR



**Sharath and Ella with colleagues and members of the Student Group at CGHR's Welcome Drinks reception in Michaelmas 2022.**

During 2021–22, students at CGHR faced the question of how to advance the pre-pandemic activities of the Student Group while adapting them to the hybrid conditions imposed by the later stages of the pandemic. In this vein, the Group has contributed to CGHR's programming of online academic and practitioner events throughout the year, covering a range of human rights topics of current significance, such as digital rights. For each event, the Student Group contributed to: the communication phase, by promoting events with creative posters to be shared through CGHR's social media; the hosting phase, by providing online support to the event organisers; and the follow-up phase, by ensuring wider accessibility through written summaries of the talks, which are published on the CGHR website.

In accordance with CGHR's commitment to enriching its academic approach to human rights with knowledge and insights from the professional world, the Student Group continued our 'Practitioner Series'. For years, the Series has allowed students to engage in professional discussions with a plethora of experts, who are asked to discuss their work and career paths in various organisations. This year, we hosted Jonathan Cohen, Executive Director of Conciliation Resources, and Renata Ávila, CEO of the Open Knowledge

Foundation led a teach-out for our students. The Student Group introduced a new event to conclude the Practitioner Series – a 'Young Practitioners Panel', which brought together three former CGHR students and researchers in a conversation about their common area of practice. This first Young Practitioners Panel focussed on the topic of public health and development and hosted Jacki Crowell, resource mobilisation and programme specialist at Partners In Health, Nadia Kevlin, a humanitarian professional with ten years of experience working in Africa and the Middle East, and Daniella Ritzau-Reid, advocacy coordinator at Médecins Sans Frontières. The Panel provided a stimulating reflection on the value and pains of becoming a young professional in the public health sector in developing countries. We hope the Young Practitioners Panel can become a staple in CGHR programming and continue to bring together the Centre's alumni in enriching conversations.



**Benedetta Morari, the 2021/22 Coordinator for CGHR's Student Group**

# Students at CGHR

## STUDENT GROUP FOR 2021/22

Benedetta Morari  
Mohja E Amer  
Mark Barrow  
Jak Galbraith  
Ottoline Mary  
Kenzo Okazaki  
Phoebe Page  
Ella Rechter  
Alisa Santikarn  
Sum Yin Wong,

## DECLARATIONS TEAM 2020/2021

Podcast Lead: Muna Gasim  
Sam Baron  
Mary Hallowell  
Neema Jayasinghe  
Akshata Kapoor  
Eddie Kembery  
Max Parnell  
Jay Richardson  
Virginia Somers  
Ashling Williams  
Laura Williams  
Thomas Williams

## DECLARATIONS TEAM 2021/2022

Podcast Lead: Andrea Farrés Jiménez  
Veronica-Nicolle Hera  
Yasmin Homer  
Alice Horrell  
Neema Jayasinghe  
Tom Kissonck  
Max Parnell  
Ella Rechter  
Nanna Lilletvedt Sæten  
Antoine Sander  
Yasar Cohen-Shah  
Archit Sharma  
Dr Maryam Tanwir

## DVC TEAM 2020/2021

Leads: Ray Adams Row Farr and Dylan Rogers  
Ayra Ali  
Sam Baron  
R. Maxwell Bone  
Jamie Hancock  
Moses Law  
Laetitia Maurat  
Saide Mobayed  
Atalanta Sawdon Harkavy  
Helena Trenkic  
Mary Tzoannou  
Nikita Yazikov

## DVC TEAM 2021/2022

Leads: Laetitia Maurat and Nikita Yazikov  
Najib Adbihamid Ahmed  
Rachael Folakemi Akinola  
Ayra Ali  
Bea Bullough  
Kayla Brown  
Matthew Carter  
Claudia Chan  
Ryan Coppack  
Abby Devon Cox  
Arnold Foda  
Quaid Forbes  
Felicity Garvey  
Maxwell Hammer  
Zahra Hasan  
Alice Horrell  
Saloni Jaiswal  
Eve James  
Margot Mollat du Jourdin  
Lana Malwood  
Nicholas Pritchard  
Alaya Purewal  
Stephen William Rayner  
Thomas Quermerais  
Chantip Tatiyakaroonwong  
Eloise Ward  
Fung Yat I

## STUDENT INTERNS

### SUMMER 2021

#### Laetitia Maurat

Laetitia, a law student at Pembroke College, was an intern at CGHR, helping to design the course on Open Source Investigation for Academics. In 2021–22, she was also student co-lead of the Cambridge DVC. She is an incoming graduate at Columbia University, New York, for the M.A. in Global Thought.

#### Nikita Yazikov

Nik was also a summer intern working on the Open Source Investigation for Academics course. In 2021–22 he completed his undergraduate degree reading History of Art at Gonville & Caius College and also was student co-lead of the DVC. He is an incoming MPhil student in the History of Art at Selwyn College.

#### Ray Adams Row Farr

Ray worked in collaboration with the other 2021 summer interns to develop the Open Source Investigation for Academics course. She's a graduate in HSPS from St John's College and now leads the course seminars as well as works as an Open Source Researcher for Amnesty International.

### SUMMER 2022

#### Daniel Newton

Daniel is an undergraduate in Sociology at University of Westminster. His research interests focus around inequalities, specifically class, and how emotions and governance reinforce such inequalities in social settings. Daniel supported Sebastián with the 'Contested Data Territories' workshops.

# Public Events

## Practitioner Series

The goal of the annual Practitioner Series is to introduce students to professionals working in a sector of relevance to CGHR, including human rights, humanitarianism, development and media. Practitioners are encouraged to speak not only about the substance of their work but also about their career pathways, in order to shed light on what work is like in these sectors and how one might get there.

In 2021, we took the practitioner series online and welcomed Deborah Brown from Human Rights Watch, Lysa John from CIMCUS, an international non-profit organisation dedicated to strengthening citizen action and civil society around the world, Aleksandra Dier from the security council's Counter-Terrorism Executive Directorate, and Maria Patakyová, the Public Defender of Rights in Slovakia.

In 2022 we brought our student group back and they organised our Practitioner Series featuring Jonathan Cohen, director of Conciliation resources, Renata Ávila, CEO of the Open Knowledge Foundation, and a Young Practitioner panel featuring Nadia Kevlin and Daniella Ritzau-Reid.

## MICHAELMAS TERM 2020

**(Un)Settling Epistemologies Through Digital Tools**, a presentation from the The Whistle team sharing the Human Rights Digital Toolkit and the Social Life of Data, two digital resources they developed.

**Spreading Disinformation in Brazil: The Amazon Fires Case**, a panel discussion with Rebekah Lyndon, Victoria Tse, Lena Moore, and Mo-May-Hobbs discussing their research of digital disinformation in Brazil, especially around the 2019 Amazon fires.

**Tackling Covid-19 in Kenya and Somalia: Interdisciplinary innovation out of CGHR**, a talk with Sharath Srinivasan and Luke Church on their work supporting a Covid-19 risk communications and community engagement response in Kenya and Somalia.

## LENT TERM 2021

### CGHR Practitioner Series

- **Aleksandra Dier**, counterterrorism and gender expert at the UN Security Council Counter-Terrorism Executive Directorate
- **Lysa John**, Secretary General of CIMCUS
- **Deborah Brown**, senior researcher and advocate on digital rights at Human Rights Watch
- **Mariá Patakyová**, Public Defender of Rights of the Slovak Republic

**Journalism in Colonial Settings: The Case of Puerto Rico**, a panel discussion with Dr Federico Subervi-Vélez, Sandra Rodríguez Cotto, and Dr Jairo Lugo-Ocando discussing their book.

**The Frontlines of Peace: An Insider's Guide to Changing the World**, a book talk with Dr Severine Autessere.

**Exploring the Human Rights Implications of Online Assemblies**, a panel discussion with Francesca Fanucci, Evelyn Douek, Ella, and Thomas discussing the right to peaceful assembly online, particularly with respect to the obligations of platforms.

## EASTER TERM 2021

**Covid-19 and Seafarers: A Humanitarian Crisis?** A panel discussion with Dr Momoko Kitada, Dr Birgit Pauksztat, Dr Sanley Abila, and Dr Helen Devereux on how the pandemic exacerbated and created occupational health and safety issues for mariners, as well as how to ameliorate the situation.

## MICHAELMAS TERM 2021

**Searching for a New Kenya: Politics and Social Media on the streets of Mombassa**, a book talk with Stephanie Diepeveen.

**When Peace Kills Politics: International Intervention and Unending Wars in the Sudans**, a book launch with Sharath.

**At the Crossroads: The Digital Rights Movement in Times of Data Coloniality**, a talk with Sebastián.

## LENT TERM 2022

### CGHR Practitioner Series

- **Jonathan Cohen**, Executive Director of Conciliation Resources.
- **Young Alumni Practitioners Working in Health & Humanitarian Response**, featuring Jacki Crowell, Nadia Kevlin and Daniella Ritzau-Reid.
- **Renata Ávila**, CEO of Open Knowledge Foundation

**Arbitrary States: Social Control and Modern Authoritarianism in Museveni's Uganda**, a book launch with Rebecca Tapscott, Ambizione Research Fellow at the Albert Hirschman Centre on Democracy of the Graduate Institute in Geneva.

# People

## Co-Directors

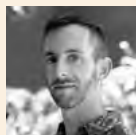


**Dr Ella McPherson** is Associate Professor of the Sociology of New Media and Digital Technology as well as the Anthony L. Lyster Fellow in Sociology at Queens' College. At CGHR, she leads the Human Rights in the Digital Age theme. Her research is concerned with symbolic struggles surrounding the media in times of transition, whether democratic or digital. She is particularly interested in the implication of these struggles for, on the one hand, the formation, evaluation and contestation of truth-claims and, on the other, the individual and collective pursuit of good lives. She is examining these implications through three empirical projects: human rights fact-finding in the digital age, digital fakery, and neo-Luddism. She founded and leads The Whistle, an academic startup that supports the use of digital evidence for social and institutional change.



**Dr Sharath Srinivasan** is David and Elaine Potter Associate Professor in Politics and International Studies, and a Fellow of King's College. As the Centre's inaugural Director (2009-17), he spearheaded the establishment of CGHR. Sharath is an interdisciplinary and applied researcher currently working on issues at the intersection of communication technology and politics. Grounded in political theory on civic republicanism, his enduring interest lies in how political ideas, values and interests that are embedded in the 'built' world – in digital technology but also institutions built by peacemakers – enable or constrain political action and the public realm. He co-founded Katikati and Africa's Voices Foundation, social innovation start-ups borne out of research at CGHR. He sits on the Governing Council for the British Institute in Eastern Africa and is a Fellow of the Rift Valley Institute.

## Postdoctoral Scholar



**Dr Sebastián Lehuédé** holds a PhD in Data, Networks and Society from the Department of Media and Communications at the London School of Economics (LSE). Sebastián was recently granted the [2022 Association of Internet Researchers Best Dissertation Award](#). Sebastián's research focuses on the governance of digital technologies, which he approaches from a global social justice perspective inspired by Latin American decolonial theory. He is part of the Tierra Común activist-academic network and collaborates with hacker and digital rights activists in Latin America.

## Research Associates



### Dr Zeina Al Azmeh

Zeina is Centenary Research Fellow at Selwyn College, Cambridge and a CGHR Research Associate.



### Dr Dorien Braam

Dorien is a Research Associate on the theme of Digital Media, Voice and Power, a PhD researcher with the Disease Dynamics Unit at the University of Cambridge, and a Policy Leader Fellow at EUI.



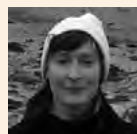
### Luke Church

Luke is a Research Associate on the theme of Digital Media, Voice and Power and Affiliated Lecturer at the Department of Computer Science and Technology.



### Dr Stephanie Dieveveen

Stephanie is Research Associate on the theme of Digital Media, Voice and Power and was CGHR Deputy Director in 2018-2019. She is a Research Fellow at ODI.



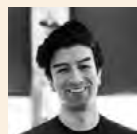
### Dr Anna Gielas

Anna is a Marie Skłodowska-Curie Individual European Fellow at the Department of Geography as well as a CGHR Research Associate.



### Dr Rebekah Larsen

Rebekah is a postdoctoral fellow in the Department of Journalism and Media @ Oslo Metropolitan University and a CGHR Research Associate on the Human Rights in the Digital Age theme.



### Dr Matt Mahmoudi

Matt is a CGHR Research Associate on the Human Rights in the Digital Age theme, Researcher/Advisor on Artificial Intelligence & Human Rights at Amnesty International, and an Affiliated Lecturer at Cambridge's Department of Sociology.



**Dr Thomas Probert** is CGHR's Research Associate on the Justice and Accountability theme and Head of Research of the international collaboration 'Freedom from Violence' at the University of Pretoria.



# People

## Centre Coordinators



**Jenna Anderson** was CGHR's coordinator from February 2020 to October 2022. She coordinated the Centre's activities and supported the Student Group and the Digital Verification Corps. Additionally, she managed communication (including our website and social media) and external relations. She also supported the Centre and its researchers in administrative tasks.



**Anusha Arumugam** is CGHR's current coordinator (joined October 2022). She is a human rights advocate from Malaysia, where she worked predominantly on civil and political rights violations. Anusha read the LLM (2019) and the MPhil in Politics and International Studies (2022) at the University of Cambridge.

## Affiliated Academics

**Dr Sebastian Ahnert**, King's College

**Dr Anne Alexander**, Cambridge Digital Humanities

**Professor Duncan Bell**, POLIS

**Professor Alan Blackwell**, Computer Laboratory

**Professor Adam Branch**, POLIS

**Professor Jude Browne**, POLIS

**Mr Luke Church**, Computer Laboratory

**Dr Devon Curtis**, POLIS

**Professor Graham Denyer Willis**, POLIS

**Professor Harri Englund**, Department of Social Anthropology

**Dr David Good**, King's College

**Dr Mónica Moreno Figueroa**, Department of Sociology

**Professor Sarah Nouwen**, Faculty of Law

**Dr Glen Rangwala**, POLIS

**Dr Pieter van Houten**, POLIS

## In Memory of Christof Heyns



**Thomas, Christof, Sharath and Dr Michael Hamilton in Glion, Switzerland, for a UN Human Rights Committee workshop on the right to peaceful assembly**

All at CGHR were immensely saddened by the sudden passing of Professor Christof Heyns in March 2021.

With the loss of a thoughtful scholar of the African human rights system, an incredibly popular teacher of the next generations of human rights activists, and a universally respected and impactful UN human rights expert, Professor Heyns's untimely death has shocked friends and colleagues around the world.

For us at CGHR, Christof was a founding figure. As Dean of the Faculty of Law and former director of the Centre for Human Rights at the University of Pretoria, he travelled to Cambridge for the Centre's inauguration in 2009 and thus began our first institutional collaboration. We initiated a period of student exchanges, shared teaching, and research collaboration, supported by the David and Elaine Potter Foundation. It was a happy coincidence that CGHR's inauguration happened alongside Christof's appointment as UN Special Rapporteur on extrajudicial, summary, or arbitrary executions, a role dedicated to focusing upon the protection of the right to life. This became a natural focus for our collaboration over the coming six-year mandate.

During his time as Special Rapporteur, Christof produced landmark reports on some of the core topics of the mandate, such as the death

penalty and the use of force both by the police and in situations of armed conflict, as well as ground-breaking reports on the safety of journalists, the risks of autonomous weapons systems, and the potential of new communications technology for fact-finding. He conducted country missions to states facing a variety of different challenges, including India, Mexico, Ukraine, and Papua New Guinea.

Scholars and students at CGHR were delighted to be able to contribute to the highly participatory way in which Christof undertook his work as a mandate-holder, in part through convening a number of expert meetings in Cambridge. Students undertook a number of research reports exploring some of the complex and challenging themes he sought to clarify in his reports to the Human Rights Council and to the General Assembly. One of the first students to collaborate in one of these projects, Thomas, subsequently became a longstanding and close colleague of Christof while maintaining strong links with CGHR.

Though he contributed much to the clarification of the norms around many of the themes of his mandate, Christof was firmly convinced that the challenge was not usually a disagreement about the norms but rather a lack of clarity about the facts on the ground. With that in mind, one of the long-term focuses of his time as mandate-holder was the updating of the Minnesota Protocol on the Investigation of Potentially Unlawful Death, a process involving more than 150 technical and legal experts from around the world.

The same consultative and collaborative approach suffused his subsequent work, including his stewardship of the UN Human Rights Committee's drafting process for its recent General Comment No.37 on the right of peaceful assembly. Always wanting to explore the difficult questions about human rights' meaning and implementation in contemporary realities, Christof was sure of the need to consider the implications of the right of peaceful assembly online and brought together a diverse group of experts for both a technical and philosophical exchange at CGHR in late 2019.

Christof was passionate about the contribution that regional human rights mechanisms could play as part of the international system and was always an advocate for engagement with the African Commission on Human and Peoples' Rights, working with them from 2013 to 2015 as they developed their General Comment on the right to life. More recently, as a member of its Working Group on the Death Penalty and Extrajudicial, Summary or Arbitrary Killings and Enforced

# People

Disappearances in Africa, he had been working with them on the early phases of a comprehensive study of the use of force by the police in Africa.

Another common thread of Christof's engagement with international affairs was his belief in the vital role that young people and human rights education can and must play in the advancement of rights. From his commitment to human rights mootings (both among schoolchildren with the National Schools Moot in South Africa and among university students with the development of the Nelson Mandela World Human Rights Moot), to his pursuit of masters and doctoral exchange programmes, Christof was a constantly supportive advocate and resource for his current and former students.

Because of the consultative and collaborative approach that he took to the already highly internationalised work of human rights, but also as a result of his incredibly extensive and memorable teaching around the world, Christof Heyns will be sorely missed by many in a wide range of different contexts.

*Sharath, Ella, and Thomas, on behalf of all at CGHR*

## **Christof's contributions to the UN Human Rights Committee's General Comment No.37 on the right of peaceful assembly**

In 2020, the UN Human Rights Committee published its general comment on how to interpret and protect the right of peaceful assembly, spearheaded by Christof's extensive convening and thinking on the theme, and which was also supported by CGHR research on how this right manifests online. On the occasion of the published interpretation, Christof said: *'It is a fundamental human right for individuals to join a peaceful assembly to express themselves, to celebrate, or to air grievances. Together with other rights related to political freedom, it constitutes the very foundation of a democratic society, in which changes can be pursued through discussion and persuasion, rather than use of force.'*

*'Everyone, including children, foreign nationals, women, migrant workers, asylum seekers and refugees, can exercise the right of peaceful assembly, which may take many forms: in public and in private spaces, outdoors, indoors and online,'* he added.

## **Christof's collaboration with CGHR created opportunities for many of our students to get involved in research projects informing his OHCHR work. Here are tributes from some of these students:**

*'In addition to his invaluable work, the Declarations Podcast team and I were grateful to have the chance to have a frank conversation with Professor Heyns around the effectiveness of IHRL as "gravitational pull" on states towards regulating autonomous weapons. His deeply considerate and concerned engagement with CGHR students, and the honesty with which he acknowledged the limits of, and yet pragmatically worked through, the framework, left an impression with us all. My deepest condolences to everyone who knew him and worked with him.'*

### **– Matt Mahmoudi**

*'Not only did he create opportunities for a wide swathe of people in the human rights space, but the questions he asked shaped many of our own paths. I would not have the same degree or career trajectory (looking at information rights of underserved communities) without the project he helped spearhead around ICTs and the Right to Life.'*

### **– Rebekah Larsen**

*'In the brief time that I spent with Christof I found him to be an incredibly kind man. Although we had assembled a high-level meeting to discuss freedom of assembly online with experts across the field, he treated all of us alike — whether old friend, professional specialist, or student. The equal worth he attributed to each of us was accompanied by a consideration of all ideas put before him, an openness that is rare and highly valuable. I'm sure that he will be deeply missed.'*

### **– Eleanor Salter**

# Benefactors and Funders

## The David and Elaine Potter Foundation

CGHR Co-director, Sharath, is the David and Elaine Potter Associate Professor in Governance and Human Rights. This endowed post, which gave rise to CGHR, was established thanks to a generous benefaction to the University in 2008 from the David and Elaine Potter Foundation. The Foundation and the University agreed that the post-holder should focus particularly on Africa and serve as the Director of the new interdisciplinary Centre. Since then, the endowment has also funded CGHR's core activities and administration, as well as CGHR's Postdoctoral Scholar appointments. The David and Elaine Potter Foundation seeks to achieve an impact through grants that promote reason, education, and human rights, in the hope of improving mutual understanding, reinforcing good governance, and encouraging the growth and maintenance of a robust civil society, particularly in less developed countries.

## The Cambridge-Africa Alborada Research Fund

Funding from the Cambridge-Africa Alborada Research Fund, which aims to support research African countries, given to CGHR researchers, has enabled collaborative work with African research partners on digital media, voice and power, especially related to technology and COVID-19.

## The Cambridge University Diversity Fund

The UDF supports initiatives across the University that aim to challenge discrimination and inequalities, increase the representation of under-represented groups, raise awareness of issues related to equality, diversity and inclusion, and facilitate implementation of good practice at the University. UDF funding (2022) supported a campaign around testimonies for End Everyday Racism's witnessing platform, powered by The Whistle.

## The Economic and Social Research Council (ESRC)

The ESRC funded Ella's research into human rights NGOs' use of social media platforms for evidence and advocacy as part of her Future Research Leader grant, supplemented by the Isaac Newton Trust (2014–17).

## The Economic and Social Research Council Impact Acceleration Account

Cambridge's ESRC-IAA has funded The Whistle on two occasions. The first (2015) was to develop the prototype of this platform, which supports the collection and analysis of digital evidence for social and institutional change. The second (2021-23) is to build a chatbot for asylum-seekers, in collaboration with Humans for Rights Network, which both provides information on the asylum-seeking process and collects evidence of systematic human rights violations.

# Benefactors and Funders

## The Economic and Social Research Council (ESRC) and the UK Department for International Development (DFID)

ESRC-DFID provided research funding for CGHR's 'Politics and Interactive Media in Africa' (PiMA) project (2012-2014) on how African broadcast media are using new ICTs to gather public opinion, as well as their effects on political accountability. The insights from this research fed directly into the methods piloted and applied in the work of Africa's Voices.



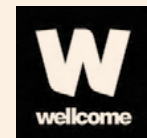
## European Commission Horizon 2020 Framework Programme

A grant from Horizon 2020 funded the theoretical and material development of The Whistle, as well as its use in test cases related to gendered violence, everyday racism, and human rights violations committed against asylum-seekers.



## Wellcome Trust and the UK DFID

Funding from the Wellcome Trust and the UK DFID for a multiyear research project (2016-2019) enabled CGHR researchers to explore how interactive radio broadcasts can be used in public health emergencies as a rapid-response social research and public health communications method, by conducting and assessing their use in the context of the Zika virus in Cape Verde and cholera outbreaks in Somalia.





#### **IMAGE CREDITS:**

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