



CONNECTED BY DATA

**Annual
Report
2022-23**

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Foreword by Jeni Tennison



When I left the Open Data Institute at the end of 2021, I wanted to put my efforts into filling a gap that I saw in the data landscape: while many academics and think tanks were arguing for greater public participation in data governance, no one was campaigning to make it happen.

I was extremely fortunate to get one of the final fellowships from the Shuttleworth Foundation, now sadly closed, to enable me to start **CONNECTED BY DATA** in March 2022. It's been liberating to focus on just one thing – a powerful voice for communities affected by data – amongst the hype and hubbub that has surrounded the use of data in AI over the past year.

This year has been about building our foundations: working through the details of our theory of change; learning what to argue for and how to argue for it; and setting ourselves up as an organisation. But we've also led substantial pieces of work: campaigning around the UK's Data Protection and Digital

Information Bill; helping the Joseph Rowntree Foundation develop an insight infrastructure for social and economic injustice; and documenting case studies that highlight the impact of data on people's lives.

Most importantly for me, it's been amazing to be able to work with old friends and new allies. We have brought together a range of other people and organisations advocating for data rights, collective action, and participatory data governance. We have partnered with and convened unions, academics, campaigners, politicians, media and think tanks, both in the UK and internationally. It's been extremely fulfilling to be able to support others' work, create space for conversations and collaborations that would not have happened without us, and through that take steps towards making the theory of collective and participatory data governance a reality.

Our vision

We want communities to have a powerful say in decisions about data so that it is used to create a just, equitable and sustainable world.



Jonathan Smith,
Advocacy and Campaign Director

“Joining Connected By Data has only reinforced to me how data and technology and power are connected. Also, as we move to an ever more datafied world, with the prominence of AI growing every day, how important it is for citizens and communities to have a say in the changes that this brings, to make sure they are in all our interests.”

Our mission

We campaign to put community at the centre of data narratives, practices and policies by advocating for collective and open data governance.

We have three main strategic **goals** arising from our [theory of change](#).

- **Change data narratives:** we develop compelling narratives of collective data governance, placing stories in the media and other key venues that influence communities and decision makers.
- **Change governance practices:** we surface and share examples of collective and participatory governance, convene a community of practitioners who lead and support collective data governance activities, and work alongside diverse communities to help define how data governance should work for them.
- **Change public policies:** we provide evidence-based public policy recommendations and language to create an environment for collective and participatory data governance.

These goals are enabled by a **strong community** and an **effective organisation**.

“Connected by Data is the most innovative new organisation in this sector in the UK, not least because it understands stories and framing. It is shaping a bold, progressive vision for data and democracy.”



Josh Simons, Activist and Author of ‘Algorithms for the People: Democracy in the Age of AI’

“It has been a joy to join an organisation where each day combines big thinking about the future of data governance and democratic practice, with practical action to learn and apply that learning in settings where it matters.”



Tim Davies, Research Director

Narrative

We develop compelling narratives of collective data governance, placing stories in the media and other key venues that influence communities and decision makers.

Analysing media stories

With our associate – and now fellow – Libby Young, we explored how stories about data are told in the media, and the kinds of action they prompt.

We identified 25 cases of stories describing issues related to collective data governance in the mainstream press in the last 5 years and collected at least two specific reports or articles for each. In total, we analysed 87 media reports.

The results of this work fed into our Narrative Lab, held in May 2023, and will be published later in 2023.



Libby Young,
Associate and Fellow

“Looking across 25 different data-related stories, it’s notable how even those related to individual harms have relational aspects and touch on age-old themes of power and justice.”

Amplifying other people's stories

We listened to, collated and shared a collection of case studies around the worker experience of data and AI, which we published as 'Our Data Stories'. These have been instrumental in supporting the work of journalists, trade unions and institutions such as the EHRC, and feature in our policy and campaign briefings.

"The TUC has enjoyed working closely with Connected By Data in relation to a series of collaborations over AI and data at work. Through these collaborations, Connected by Data has significantly contributed to the TUC's AI project, raising awareness of both the lived experience of workers, as well as the relevant legislation and policy around AI at work."



Mary Towers, TUC

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Our Data Stories

Adam Cantwell-Corn
21st April 2023

"Amid the hype and worry about the data-driven transformation of our world, there is often something conspicuously missing: personal stories. They ground our understanding that this change is not a remote future, but is a reality in progress that is affecting every relationship and interaction we have, as workers, family members, consumers and as citizens."



Garfield Hylton, **Amazon** warehouse worker
"It's really about greed, they're constantly cracking the whip"

Photograph reproduced courtesy of The Real News Network



Luke Elgar, **Royal Mail** postal worker
"All people should benefit as technology improves"

Photograph reproduced courtesy of the CWU



Alexandru Iftimie, **Uber** driver
"You never know when they are going to deactivate you or to suspend you."

Photograph reproduced courtesy of Guardian News & Media Ltd / Martin Godwin



Telling our own story

We want to tell a different story about data. One that brings out the need for collective data governance by connecting people to their communities rather than setting them in conflict.

We started with a [narrative document](#) and shared the [thinking behind its creation](#). Then we commissioned a [short video](#) to make the case for collective data governance, which was completed in June 2023.

In the media

We have proactively worked to generate and respond to media stories. We have landed several published items and developed relationships across the media landscape.

- [London Influence: Labour's biz love-in — Working class wonks pt.2 — Reality check – POLITICO](#), September 2022
- [Experts “too quick to dismiss” public concern over use of court data – Legal Futures](#), February 2023
- [Amazon's surveillance culture is ‘breaking’ its workers | Huck](#), March 2023
- [Bennett Institute Crossing Channels podcast, ‘Are emerging technologies more hype than reality?’](#), April 2023
- [Labour must resist Tory deregulation of AI and set out an alternative vision – LabourList](#), April 2023
- [Calls for stricter UK oversight of workplace AI amid fears for staff rights | Employment law | The Guardian](#), April 2023
- [TUC: Government failing to protect workers from AI – BBC News](#), April 2023

Practice

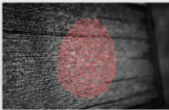





We surface and share examples of collective and participatory governance, convene a community of practitioners who lead and support collective data governance activities, and work alongside diverse communities to help define how data governance should work for them.

Finding examples of participatory data governance

We started the year looking for case studies where participatory methods were used in data governance. We found 48 of them, seven of which we have explored in detail and made available through our website.

Public: Participatory Data Governance ... | Use this data Airtable

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	Name	Cover image	Two line summary	URL	Our takeaway
1	Open Space on Policing Data Governance		The UK Home Office organised an ongoing 'Open Space' forum to engage CSOs in discussions around the integration of policing datasets and the development of biometric data analysis capabilities. The process allowed civil society a rol...	https://involve.org.uk/our-work/our-projects/practice/how-can-civil-society-be-involved-...	Engagement around a complex and controversial topic has been managed through a structured and predominantly closed-door process involving civil society ...
2	MindKind: Global Mental Health Databank Pilot		In 2020, Wellcome Trust commissioned a large scale programme of engagement to support design of a Global Mental Health Databank. ...	https://wellcome.org/reports/mindkind-global-youth-data	Participants suggested a number of key data governance principle and practices, including creating paid (rather than voluntary) data governance boards, and a presumption ...
3	UK Census 2021 - Outputs Consultation		The United Kingdom conducts a full population census every ten years. Data from the census is widely used to inform national and local policy making. ...	https://consultations.ons.gov.uk/external-affairs/census-2021-outputs-consultation/	The formal consultation received inputs from public authorities, civil society groups and individuals. ...
4	Monash Net Zero Precinct		Researchers from Monash University in Australia set out to explore the potential deployment of sensor networks, micro-grids and other innovations to help achieve net zero carbon emissions across the University's four campus locations b...	https://www.monash.edu/m-sdi/initiatives/projects/net-zero-precincts	The process generated a range of ideas for how future data governance should work. The ideas generated both emphasised ...
5	Data Governance Clinics		In two data governance clinics run by academics from the University of Tilberg for projects in the city of Amsterdam, leaders of projects facing data governance questions were supported to think through their projects, using a facilitate...	https://papers.ssrn.com/abstract=3880961	A facilitated process can provide the first steps for organisations to identify how proposed data collection or use impacts on the public interest...
6	Adolescent mental health: participatory mapping for future data collaboration		The GovLab, in partnership with UNICEF's Health and HIV team in the Division of Data, Analysis, Planning & Monitoring and the Data for Children Collaborative, ran a rapid process to develop, refine and validate a topic map on research ...	https://blogs.unicef.org/evidence-for-action/adolescent-mental-health-using-a-...	The use of a visual topic map provided a shared focus for discussion about where future data sharing may be valuable. ...

Supporting organisations with data governance

We undertook a commission by [Justice Lab](#) to conduct an [evaluation](#) of the public deliberation exercise that led to the report [Justice Data Matters: Building a public mandate for court data use](#), in order to surface lessons for similar future exercises within and outside the UK justice system.

We engaged with several partners to explore and support the development of their data governance approaches and to bring in greater participation from the communities they work with. These included:

- [Create Gloucestershire, Active Gloucestershire and Barnwood Trust](#) to co-develop a [one-day unconference for civil society organisations](#), independent community activists, funders and commissioners to explore the use, governance and impact of data, bringing together a sell-out crowd of 150 people at Gloucestershire Data Day
- the [Joseph Rowntree Foundation](#) on its initiative to develop an insight infrastructure to support action on poverty and social/economic injustice
- the [NHS AI Lab's](#) public dialogue on data stewardship
- the [Bennett Institute for Applied Data Science](#) as they developed their participatory approaches to support data governance in [OpenSafely](#)

“Connected by Data’s expertise and insight has helped us to understand the strengths and limitations of our approach to public participation in the justice sector, and devise more robust, strategic and influential projects in the future.”

— Dr Natalie Byrom, Justice Lab



“Connected by Data was central to the partnership that put on Gloucestershire Data Day, bringing together place-based groups for constructive, critical and creative conversations about power of data. Although the team are data specialists they don’t ever exclude people who are not!”

— Pippa Jones, Create Gloucestershire



Policy

We provide evidence-based public policy recommendations and language to create an environment for collective and participatory data governance.

Campaigning on data protection

With support from the [Joseph Rowntree Reform Trust](#), our [Our Data Futures project](#) involved campaigning around the [Data Protection and Digital Information Bill](#) and convening a civil society coalition to work on the Bill.

We created a [briefing for the Second Reading of the Bill](#) and organised a parliamentary event [Ensuring People Have a Say in Future Data Governance](#), chaired by Lord Tim Clement-Jones where we discussed the impact of the Bill on automated decision making, work, and education.

We convened two public civil society workshops on the Bill, in [September](#) and [March](#), as well as setting up communication channels between campaigners including regular calls, a Signal group, and common [reference material](#).

Convening to create a progressive vision

We started collaborative work on building a progressive vision for data and tech, with the aim of influencing party manifestos in the run up to the next General Election. In early March, we joined forces with [Labour Together](#) to convene a small group from civil society (along with Labour advisers and the Labour Together team) to explore principles and policies, and took these ideas to the LibDem Spring conference. We are continuing to develop this vision and aim to embed it in party policies during 2023/24.



“Connected by Data’s convening has really helped us to coordinate better with other civil society groups, and to exchange insights and intelligence that are essential for operating in the constantly evolving landscape of data and AI policy in the UK. Their expertise, humour, and warmth have created a strong and friendly community where civil society groups united by our passion for digital rights can come together.”

— Abby Burke, Open Rights Group

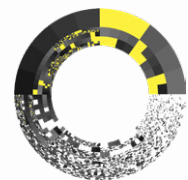


“Connected by Data’s work convening civil society organisations with an interest in the DPDI Bill has been extremely valuable. As the UK’s Consumer Champion, this collaboration has helped us develop a shared approach towards ensuring that the Bill delivers positive outcomes for consumers. We look forward to continuing to work together on data related issues.”

— Helen Fairfax-Wall, Which?

Establishing international partnerships

We have developed partnerships with a number of international organisations working on and around collective data governance, with whom we will work towards international influence during 2023/24. We supported [Global Voices](#) to secure \$100k funding from the [Future of Data Challenge](#), which will be used to run a global observatory on data narratives.



“We held the first in our Connected Conversations series earlier this month, bringing together a number of data governance thinkers, practitioners and campaigners from four continents to explore current contours of data and AI regulation around the world.”

Write up of [Connected Conversation](#)

“We have been cooperating with Connected by Data since the Datasphere Initiative’s inception and are looking forward to building on our common research agendas and raising awareness of why we need a more human-centric approach to data governance.”

Carolina Rossini, Director of Partnerships & Research, Datasphere Initiative



Community

During 2022/23, we organised, spoke at or participated in over 30 events and gained a deeper understanding of the kinds of spaces where conversations are happening, and what's lacking.



Jeni Tennison giving the keynote at the RSS Conference 2022 / Richard Gray



“While we continue to develop our ability to access and use common resources, we must also create the spaces – and the technologies, agreements and governance that support them – to build communities around them.”

Jeni responding to the Paradox of Open



Screenshot of a tweet from Audrey Tang (Minster of Digital Affairs, Taiwan) sharing an article written by Connected by Data's Tim Davies

We gained followers of over 1000 on Twitter, 84 on Mastodon and 350 on LinkedIn (since January 2023). We created an open Discord community, with over 100 members, that we use both for internal collaboration and to share resources and knowledge.

Beyond building the numbers we've had some highlight engagements from getting significant influencers to share what we are talking about, to providing our campaigning community with live insights into what going on.

Fellowships

We established a small fellowship programme, supporting and mentoring four fellows working in and around collective data governance.

“Being part of Connected by Data’s fellowship programme has been an amazing source of support and inspiration as I’ve pursued my research applying lessons from natural resource governance to data and AI. The collegiately among the fellows cohort, all working in different countries/continents but with a shared vision of making sure that data works in the interest of people, is a constant reminder of the importance of the work we do.”

Kiito Shilongo, Mozilla Foundation Fellow



Kiito Shilongo
Mozilla Foundation Fellow



Judith Townend
Senior Lecturer, University of
Sussex



Libby Young
PhD student, Sydney Law
School / Monash School of
Media Studies



Luke Richards
MSc student,
University of
Birmingham

Organisation

Since the founding of the organisation in March 2022, we have grown from one person to a team of six part-time staff across two continents, from one funder to eight, and put in place most of the necessary structures, systems and processes to operate as an organisation.

Openness

We aim to work in the open. We published organisational documents like our [Theory of Change](#) and [Strategic roadmap for 2022-23](#), including opening up work-in-progress versions of our [Brand Narrative](#) for comment from others.

We share our own resources and amplify those of others; write up the events we attend and organise; and regularly blog on topics we're exploring. We also produce weeknotes which give a behind-the-scenes perspective on our work.



Maria Luciano
(she/her)
Research
Associate

“Often, those seeking change internalise some of the dynamics they wish to end. As a Brazilian, non-native English speaker, being so warmly included in this project and witnessing a genuinely collaborative, humane, kind, and non-extractivist approach to research and engagement has been a great reminder of why I do what I do and what kind of researcher I want to be.”



Diversity, equity and inclusion

Our work is founded on an awareness of power, privilege and pluralism inspired by feminism, intersectionality, and anti-colonialism. We're committed to building this into our working practices and view this as an ongoing task.

Practical steps we've taken this year include actively advertising roles to under-represented groups; positive discrimination during shortlisting; and improving accessibility by providing interview questions in advance.

We encourage team members to identify their pronouns – demonstrating allyship to non-binary / trans colleagues and partner organisations – and have flexible working practices so that work can fit with people's lives.



Adam Cantwell-Corn (*he/him*)
Policy and Campaigns
Associate

"In a fast moving space where people and interests jostle for position, Connected by Data's generous approach to convening and collaborating is a breath of fresh air and an initiative I'm very happy to be part of."



Governance

We are a non-profit company limited by guarantee.

Our Governing Board is chaired by [Karin Christiansen](#) (Chair) with Non-Executive Directors [Louise Crow](#); [Karien Bezuidenhout](#); and [Hera Hussain](#).

Their [Terms of Reference](#) and [meeting minutes](#) are published on our website.

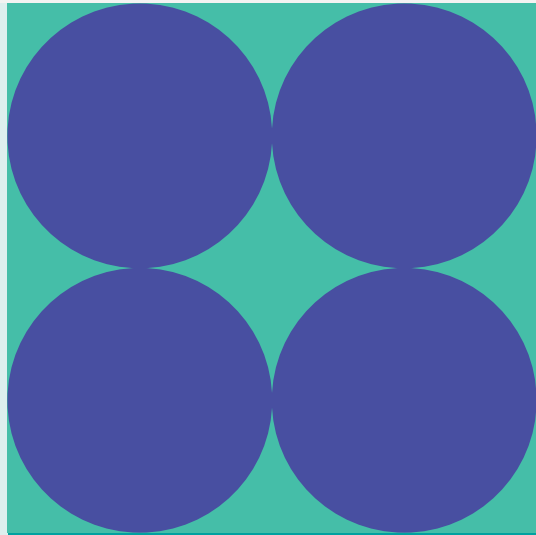
Funders

Thanks to our funders for their generous support during our first year.



“It has been truly delightful to witness the impact of the Shuttleworth Fellowship on Jeni’s ability to pursue her vision for fostering a better and more meaningful connection between individuals and data. This fellowship has also enabled Jeni to cultivate a thriving team and community of like-minded individuals dedicated to this shared purpose.”

— Helen Turvey,
Open Philanthropy Specialist



Finances

Our full financial statements have been filed with [Companies House](#) and are summarised here.

	2022/23
Income	£325k
Unrestricted grants	£264k
Restricted grants	£15k
Sales	£46k
Costs	£315k
Staff costs	£255k
Other costs	£58k
Corporation tax	£2k
Capital and reserves	£10k
Accrued 2023/24 income	£500k

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