ROSETTA FELLOWSHIP PROGRAMME
PART B – Proposal

Proposal title: Navigating the Frontiers of Governing Artificial Intelligence in Africa (AfroGAIN)

ABSTRACT:

AfroGAIN investigates how political, socio-cultural and ethical processes shape AI governance and what this means for balancing innovation and ethics in Ghana and South Africa. The need for this research is built on AI as a 'double-edged sword' that can help meet Africa's development aspirations while possessing potential risks such as algorithmic biases and human rights concerns. Critics also point to AI's possible negative geopolitical impacts on the continent, particularly as major powers, including the US, EU, and China, compete to establish partnerships within Africa's AI ecosystems, each promoting different standards. While many African countries have been governing AI as a priority, there is limited research on the motivations and politics behind actively pursuing AI governance, including values, themes, principles, and ethics embedded in the frameworks. With qualitative and quantitative evidence from South Africa and Ghana, this research will unpack how AI is building governance processes, how it is envisioned, and the role of local and transnational actors in influencing AI approaches on the continent. It aligns with Irish Aid priorities and the UN SDGs by accessing political and sociocultural processes in AI to enhance employment opportunities, promote innovation and build resilient infrastructure. AfroGAIN will also chart a path to ethical AI by examining governance frameworks that maximise AI potential and risks in line with the European Commission's Sustainable Strategy for AI. It will create new knowledge and address identified gaps in AI ethics, technology politics, global development, and cultural studies. Through practical and hands-on training at the University of Galway, the applicant will develop advanced knowledge in AI governance and methodologies and transferable skills in grant writing, project management, networking, and pedagogy, preparing him for a tenure-track post at an Irish university.

1. **Excellence**

   1.1 Proposed research

1.1.1 Introduction: In the last decade, governing Artificial Intelligence (AI) has become a priority for an increasing number of African countries.[1] Despite this increasing focus, a significant research gap exists in understanding the political and sociocultural dimensions, including the values, themes, principles, and ethics embedded in the frameworks. For example, while Rwanda's AI approach focuses on local innovation and creating a knowledge-based economy,[2] South Africa emphasises human rights, aiming to address inequality and social justice issues.[3] This divergence highlights the temporal complexity of adapting AI governance to meet the diverse and dynamic priorities of different African regions. Guided by Dr Rónán Kennedy, an AI regulation and governance expert at the University of Galway, the proposed AfroGAIN Project will answer two research questions (RQs): **(1) How do political and sociocultural dynamics shape AI governance in Ghana and South Africa? (2) How can ethical AI innovation be adapted and governed over time in these countries?** AI governance is defined as best practices that guide the development and use of AI to minimise risks and maximise benefits for all stakeholders, including governments, businesses, communities, and individuals.[4]

The need for this research is built on AI as a 'double-edged sword'[5] that can help meet Africa's development aspirations while possessing potential risks such as algorithmic biases and human rights issues.[6] Critics also point to AI's potential negative geopolitical impacts on the continent, particularly as major powers, including the US, EU, and China, compete to establish partnerships within Africa's AI ecosystems, each promoting different standards.[7] AfroGAIN's approach focuses on developing **temporal-inclusive frameworks** that can accommodate Africa's **diverse and evolving needs**. It aligns closely with Irish Aid priorities on strengthening governance and the United Nations Sustainable Development Goals (SDG) by accessing political and sociocultural processes in AI to enhance employment opportunities (SDG 8), promote innovation (SDG 9) and build resilient infrastructure (SDG 9).[8] It will also chart a path to ethical AI by examining governance frameworks that maximise AI potential and risks aligning with the European Commission's Sustainable Strategy for Artificial Intelligence.[9] Furthermore, AfroGAIN will create new knowledge, and address identified research and policy gaps in the fields of AI ethics, technology politics, global development, and cultural studies. Through practical and hands-on training at the University of Galway, the applicant will develop advanced knowledge in AI governance and methodologies and transferable skills in grant writing, project management, communication, networking, and pedagogy, preparing him for a tenure-track post at an Irish university, or a senior policy role in an international organisation.

1.1.2 Research Objectives: Three interrelated research objectives (ROs) are proposed to support the RQs posed and to provide the opportunity to follow, in real-time, efforts to govern AI in South Africa and Ghana (see 1.2.1 for selection criteria).

- **RO1 assesses how political processes influence AI governance.** This RO is linked to RQ1 by examining the political tactics, strategies, and power dynamics that shape AI governance in the chosen contexts. This will be achieved through document analysis and unstructured interviews with AI experts and stakeholders as part of Work Package 1 (WP1). Understanding these processes is crucial to uncovering how AI development fosters or hinders innovation and ethical standards.
- **RO2 examines the impact of international and local stakeholders on ethical AI innovation.** Given the geopolitical interests in Africa's AI, RO2 is tied to RQ2 by investigating the roles and influence of diverse stakeholders, including state institutions, NGOs and multinational corporations, through semi-structured interviews as part of WP2 in the chosen context. By identifying how these actors shape ethical standards and infrastructure for AI, RO2 will provide nuanced insights into the mechanisms through which ethical AI can be implemented and sustained in both countries.

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[1] M Musoni, 'Envisioning Africa's AI Governance Landscape in 2024' (ecdpm, 2024), https://ecdpm.org/work/envisioning-africas-ai-governance-landscape-2024.

[2] Republic of Rwanda, 'The National AI Policy' (Ministry of ICT and Innovation, 2023).

[3] Makhura B Rapanyane and Florence R Sethole, 'The Rise of Artificial Intelligence and Robots in the 4th Industrial Revolution: Implications for Future South African Job Creation', *Contemporary Social Science* 15, no. 4 (2020): 489–501.

[4] Allan Dafoe, 'AI Governance: A Research Agenda', *Governance of AI Program, Future of Humanity Institute, University of Oxford: Oxford, UK* 1442 (2018): 1443.

[5] Jennifer J Chen and Jasmine C Lin, 'Artificial Intelligence as a Double-Edged Sword: Wielding the POWER Principles to Maximize Its Positive Effects and Minimize Its Negative Effects', *Contemporary Issues in Early Childhood* 25, no. 1 (2024): 146–53.

[6] Mirca Madianou, 'Nonhuman Humanitarianism: When 'AI for Good' can Be Harmful', *Information, Communication & Society* 24, no. 6 (2021): 850–68.

[7] Nicolas Miailhe, 'The Geopolitics of Artificial Intelligence: The Return of Empires?', *Politique Étrangère*, no. 3 (2018): 105–17.

[8] https://unstats.un.org/sdgs/report/2024/#:~:text=The%20Sustainable%20Development%20Goals%20Report%202024%20is%20the%20only%20UN,assessment%20of%20the%202030%20Agenda.

[9] https://digital-strategy.ec.europa.eu/en/policies/european-approach-artificial-intelligence

- **RO3 explores the influence of sociocultural and ethical values on AI governance.** This RO connects to RQ1 by examining how cultural norms and ethical values, such as *Ubuntu* and traditional practices originating from temporal pre-colonial and colonial periods, shape AI governance and societal acceptance using surveys and focus group discussions. RO3 will be part of WP3 to uncover how AI governance frameworks can be tailored to the unique cultural contexts of Africa.

1.1.3 State-of-the-art approach: The field of governing AI lies at the intersection of numerous temporal contexts. On one hand, AI's immense potential is pushing the boundaries of possibility, fostering innovation, creativity, and progress.[10] However, it also introduces ethical and sociocultural issues such as biased algorithms and privacy and security risks,[11] which may disproportionately impact Africa.[12] Moreover, the rapid pace of technological change often outstrips the speed at which regulatory frameworks can adapt, with governments and regulatory bodies frequently struggling to keep up, attempting to impose rules on technologies that have already been widely adopted.[13] While the expectation is that the EU AI Act (arguably the most ambitious attempt to regulate AI) will serve as a blueprint for global rules, a so-called Brussels Effect,[14] concerns that it may reinforce global power hegemon and not tailored for Africa's diverse needs may be amplified on the continent. A recent survey highlighted a vast research gap in AI governance and perspectives from Africa, with scholarly works and grey literature making generalised claims and needing more empirical evidence from the continent.[15] These generalised claims often assume that AI governance approaches from the Global North are universally applicable, thus **overlooking Africa's diverse political and sociocultural landscapes.** It homogenises the continent, failing to account for the unique challenges and opportunities that different African countries face. The AfroGAIN Project addresses this vital research gap by examining the role of politics, power dynamics and tactics in how governments adopt and adapt new technologies (RO1) and how countries in Africa have been reshaping these technologies to fit their national contexts (RO3) rather than simply adopting them as constructed by countries in the Global North. AfroGAIN further builds on the recognition that multiple actors in Africa occupy the same sociopolitical spaces to examine how they define this milieu as they operate within the bubble of governing technology (RO2).

The AfroGAIN Project leverages the opportunity ROSSETA offers to engage in innovative and novel research on a broader scale. ***Temporality:*** AfroGAIN comes at a pivotal time when Africa is experiencing rapid technological transformation and increasing digital penetration.[16] This surge in connectivity is creating the world's largest growth market for AI, offering an opportunity to analyse this phenomenon as it evolves in real-time. ***Breadth:*** In other research projects addressing these issues, the proposed strands would usually be studied in isolation, for example, focusing only on local initiatives or specific policy frameworks.[17] AfroGAIN is unique in that it has the opportunity to bring these areas together by exploring the dynamics of two African countries, thereby allowing the adoption of a holistic approach. ***Depth:*** The research moves beyond a techno-deterministic perspective that focuses on the importance and developments of the technologies themselves.[18] Instead, AfroGAIN argues that AI governance in Africa is not static but needs to **adapt over time** to address shifting political, ethical, and sociocultural challenges.

1.2 Methodology, Interdisciplinary approach, diversity and quality of Open Science Practices

1.2.1 Methodology: AfroGAIN adopts **a longitudinal approach** by collecting data from **South Africa and Ghana** to **capture diverse voices** (see 1.2.3). The focus on these two countries is for several reasons. Firstly, South Africa dominates Africa's AI governance through its deep learning and data analytics initiatives.[19] This contrasts sharply with Ghana, where no national AI governance framework exists, even though the country uses AI extensively in health services, agriculture, etc.[20] Furthermore, in 2019, Google opened its first African

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[10] Anand S Rao and Gerard Verweij, 'Sizing the Prize: What's the Real Value of AI for Your Business and How Can You Capitalise?', *PWC*, 2017, https://www.pwc.com/gx/en/issues/data-and-analytics/publications/artificial-intelligence-study.html.

[11] PJ Wall, Deepak Saxena, and Suzana Brown, 'Artificial Intelligence in the Global South (AI4D): Potential and Risks', *arXiv Preprint arXiv:2108.10093*, 2021.

[12] R Adams, 'AI in Africa: Key Concerns and Policy Considerations for the Future of the Continent', *Policy Brief*, no. 8 (2022), https://afripoli.org/ai-in-africa-key-concerns-and-policy-considerations-for-the-future-of-the-continent.

[13] Gregory N Mandel, 'Regulating Emerging Technologies', in *Emerging Technologies* (Routledge, 2020), 361–78.

[14] Anu Bradford, *The Brussels Effect: How the European Union Rules the World* (Oxford University Press, USA, 2020).

[15] Thompson Kwarkye, 'Navigating the Frontiers of AI Policies in Africa', in *Tech and Human Rights* (University of Dayton School of Law, 2023), https://ecommons.udayton.edu/human_rights/2023/concurrent5e/1/.

[16] Tania Begazo, Moussa Blimpo, and Mark Dutz, *Digital Africa: Technological Transformation for Jobs* (World Bank Publications, 2023).

[17] Adams, 'AI in Africa: Key Concerns and Policy Considerations for the Future of the Continent'.

[18] Maaz Gardezi and Ryan Stock, 'Growing Algorithmic Governmentality: Interrogating the Social Construction of Trust in Precision Agriculture', *Journal of Rural Studies* 84 (2021): 1–11.

[19] Abejide Ade-Ibijola and Chinedu Okonkwo, 'Artificial Intelligence in Africa: Emerging Challenges', in *Responsible AI in Africa: Challenges and Opportunities* (Springer International Publishing Cham, 2023), 101–17.

[20] Emmanuel Lamptey and Dorcas Serwaa, 'The Use of Zipline Drones Technology for COVID-19 Samples Transportation in Ghana', *HighTech and Innovation Journal* 1, no. 2 (2020): 67–71, https://hightechjournal.org/index.php/HIJ/article/view/18/pdf.

AI research lab in the country, positioning Ghana as the future of Africa's AI.[21] Additionally, both countries are priority countries for Irish Aid and will provide a sample frame to give the research a wider sociocultural dimension across the continent and catalyse information-rich discussions about states at different stages of governing AI. Importantly, AfroGAIN will also analyse legal frameworks from **global players** (e.g. the relevance of the EU AI Act for Africa) to link the project to the EU's Sustainable Strategy for AI.

WP1, Politics and AI Governance [M1-M10]: WP1 has **two main objectives**. Firstly, it moves beyond the state-of-the-art by **reviewing the literature** on the temporal context in AI ethics, technology politics, cultural studies and global development to inform the research approach (see 1.2.2 on interdisciplinarity). This literature review will capture the multiple drivers and impact of AI governance by connecting the national with international (e.g. analysing the implication of EU regulations on Africa), formal and informal (e.g. between state and traditional actors) and local and transnational (e.g. the flow of local innovations with the transnational nature of AI technologies). Secondly, WP1 will **assess how political processes influence AI governance (RO1)** by **analysing thirty documents,** including AI policies, strategies, national and international regulations and agile governance tools from the selected countries and global players. Thirty documents will provide a representative sample for in-depth analysis of specific instances where political processes impacted AI governance across different contexts.[22] While developing a comprehensive coding scheme can be complicated for document analysis,[23] keywords such as governance, policy, strategy, and regulation will structure the coding hierarchically and create other codes and sub-codes as the analysis progresses. Additionally, at least **fifteen unstructured interviews** will be conducted among stakeholders, such as the African Centre for Economic Transformation (ACET), GIZ Fair Forward, and Smart Africa, who will be purposively sampled to ensure the most needed data sources are chosen for WP1.[24] Fifteen unstructured interviews were selected to provide a diverse yet manageable range of perspectives necessary for in-depth understanding.[25] The unstructured interviews will complement the document analysis as they provide rich and detailed insights that can reveal underlying themes and tactics, adding depth to interpreting the textual data.[26]

WP2, Stakeholder Dynamics [M10-M16]: The primary objective of WP2 is to **examine the impact of international and local stakeholders on ethical AI innovation (RO2).** The WP will identify **a diverse range of stakeholders,** including state institutions, NGOs, development partners, 'traditional' authorities, diaspora groups, multinational corporations and foreign governments by relying on the applicant's networks, collaborations with the secondment host (see 1.2.4), online platforms (e.g. LinkedIn and X), governance forums and academic events from Ghana and South Africa. After identification, WP2 will conduct at least **twenty semi-structured interviews** to explore the motivations that drive global and local actors in AI governance, collect rich and detailed insights into varied strategies and offer flexibility in probing to inform the research approach.[27] The minimum of twenty semi-structured interviews was decided on because this will allow for depth and breadth of information, ensuring a thorough exploration of key actors' complex dynamics and varied strategies in AI governance.[28] As some of the interview participants may be high-level bureaucrats who are time-poor, semi-structured interviews will be a realistic option because they provide the flexibility to explore critical issues in depth while allowing conversations to flow naturally within the limited time frame.[29]

WP3, AI Sociocultural and Ethical Values [M12-M24]: **WP3 is designed to explore the influence of sociocultural and ethical values on AI governance (RO3).** This WP will adopt **survey methods** by developing closed and open-ended questionnaires for a randomised sample of 150-300 participants from Ghana and South Africa, including, but not limited to, **policymakers, AI developers, academics and community members.** Participants will be recruited through online platforms, applicant networks and partnerships with local institutions **to ensure a representative sample** (see 1.2.2). Surveys will produce rich accounts, such as participants' subjective experiences and how policymakers and other stakeholders negotiate and integrate sociocultural values into AI governance.[30] While surveys favour answering RO3, an obvious disadvantage is that they require literacy and risk excluding participants with limited literacy skills.[31] To address this, the survey questions will be prepared in English, Akan (in Ghana), and Xhosa (in South Africa),

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[21] Aanu Adeoye, 'Google Has Opened Its First Africa Artificial Intelligence Lab in Ghana', *CNN World*, 2019, https://edition.cnn.com/2019/04/14/africa/google-ai-center-accra-intl/index.html.
[22] Klaus Krippendorff, *Content Analysis: An Introduction to Its Methodology* (Sage publications, 2018).
[23] Louis Cohen, Lawrence Manion, and Keith Morrison, 'Coding and Content Analysis', in *Research Methods in Education* (Routledge, 2017), 668–85.
[24] Lisa M Given, *The Sage Encyclopedia of Qualitative Research Methods*, 1st ed., vol. 1 and 2, 2 vols (New York: Sage publications, 2008).
[25] Hamza Alshenqeeti, 'Interviewing as a Data Collection Method: A Critical Review', *Sciedu Press* 3, no. 1 (2014): 39–45.
[26] Elizabeth Campbell and Luke Eric Lassiter, *Doing Ethnography Today: Theories, Methods, Exercises* (West Sussex, UK: Wiley Blackwell, 2014).
[27] Alshenqeeti, 'Interviewing as a Data Collection Method'.
[28] Given, *The Sage Encyclopedia of Qualitative Research Methods*.
[29] Alshenqeeti, 'Interviewing as a Data Collection Method'.
[30] Virginia Braun et al., 'The Online Survey as a Qualitative Research Tool', *International Journal of Social Research Methodology* 24, no. 6 (2021): 641–54.
[31] Braun et al.

and all participants will be briefed on how to approach the survey (e.g. the unimportance of grammar, spelling, etc.). Up to **10 focus group discussions (FGDs)** will complement the surveys by providing a platform for participants to engage in conversations more freely. FGDs will allow for a deeper exploration of complex sociocultural and ethical values that may not be fully captured in survey responses.[32] 10 FGDs are justified because they will facilitate interaction among diverse participants and reveal how stakeholders reconcile their views in AI governance.[33]

While developing codes and sub-codes for the document analysis, the interview and FGDs will be transcribed and analysed using NVivo. Thematic coding will be applied to identify common themes and patterns.[34] The survey data will also be analysed using SPSS to ensure data validity and reliability.[35]

1.2.2 Interdisciplinary approach: AfroGAIN reflects interdisciplinary perspectives by (i) integrating approaches in AI ethics, technology politics, cultural studies and global development through literature review (WP1) **to magnify the reciprocal relationship between technology and society**. By integrating these disciplines, WP1 will develop a culturally sensitive and ethically robust AI governance model: (ii) blending quantitative and qualitative studies to break down the silos between the fields of technology and African studies. The mixed method approach will identify patterns and correlations that are not evident through any single method. (iii) publishing generated knowledge in high-impact journals and presenting at conferences such as the AI Governance Global Conference 2026 (see 2.2) to target development scientists, technologists, anthropologists, and policymakers, enabling knowledge sharing across disciplines.

1.2.3 Gender dimension and other diversity aspects: Biases relating to gender and other protected characteristics may be reproduced in governing technology, where there is a risk of overlooking these needs.[36] AfroGAIN analyses sociocultural values, including traditional and gender norms, to shape inclusive governance frameworks that address the needs of various societal groups (RO3). To ensure data diversity, the project has selected two countries at different stages of governing AI to inform the research approach (see 1.2.1). Moreover, participants will be recruited through extensive collaborations with local stakeholders (see 1.2.1) to develop a sampling frame that allows for the equal selection of women, men, LGBTQIA+ groups, ethnic minorities, etc. However, the applicant is aware that some parts of the research areas are not open to LGBTQIA+ groups, with some facing potential persecution if identified. Through previous research, the applicant has networked with several group members in the research area. He will rely on these networks, continue to ask questions about who needs to be included in the research, and apply pseudonymisation and data aggregation techniques to protect these participants (see 3.2). Additionally, he will consult the University of Galway's Office of the Vice President for Equality, Diversity and Inclusion for relevant support.

1.2.4 Proposed secondment: The African Centre for Economic Transformation (ACET), located in Ghana's capital, Accra, has **agreed** to host AfroGAIN's secondment. ACET's strategic focus on policy research, digital transformation, and sustainable development makes it an ideal partner for initiatives seeking to address Africa's complex challenges. To meet the target agreed with ACET, the secondment has been divided into two phases, three months per phase. In the **first phase from M12-M14, as D2.1,** ACET will offer direct access to AI actors, including government bodies, international organisations, and private-sector entities, providing invaluable opportunities for collecting data for WP2 (see 1.2.1). In the **second phase, between M22 and M24 as D4.2**, ACET will allow dissemination, communication and exploitation activities, especially in organising the workshops, interactive briefings, and undergraduate events as explored in 2.2 below.

1.2.5 Transfer of Knowledge: AfroGAIN will enhance the applicant's career to attain a position as a **Lecturer/Professor** and an internationally recognised research leader in AI Governance. In collaboration with his supervisor, creating a Career Development Plan at the beginning of the research (by M4) as D5.1 and regular reviews in M14 and M24 will be crucial in achieving this goal. The applicant has a track record in teaching, developing modules, researching AI ethics and auditing, and practical knowledge to evaluate AI trustworthiness. While these are essential for achieving the career objective above, additional skills are required. These include **(i) advanced knowledge of AI governance and methodologies, (ii) grant writing and project management, (iii) scientific communication, (iv) leadership and networking, and (v) pedagogy skills.**

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[32] David L Morgan, *Focus Groups as Qualitative Research*, 1st ed. (London, Thousand Oaks, New Delhi: Sage publications, 1996).

[33] Jean J Schensul et al., *Enhanced Ethnographic Methods: Audiovisual Techniques, Focused Group Interviews, and Elicitation*, Ethnographers Toolkit 3 (Lanham, New York, Toronto, Plymouth: Rowman Altamira, 1999).

[34] Juliet Corbin and Anselm Strauss, *Basics of Qualitative Research: Techniques and Procedures for Developing Grounded Theory*, 3rd ed. (Los Angeles, California: Sage publications, 2007).

[35] Saiyidi Mat Roni and Hadrian Geri Djajadikerta, *Data Analysis with SPSS for Survey-Based Research* (Springer, 2021).

[36] Samuel Akpan Bassey and Ncha Gabriel Bubu, 'Gender Inequality in Africa: A Re-Examination of Cultural Values', *Cogito-Multidisciplinary Research Journal* 11, no. 3 (2019): 21–36.

Leveraging his supervisor's expertise in technology and law through mentorship will allow the applicant to understand better AI's ethical and societal implications, which will inform his research and teaching activities. Additionally, being part of his Technology and Right Cluster (TRC) group will build a network of interdisciplinary contacts and refine his research understanding, all of which are crucial for establishing a solid academic career. The applicant will attend two training workshops on **Mixed Methods Research (M2)** and **Collecting Ethical Data (M6)** hosted by the University of Galway's Research Development Centre (RDC) to build his research skills. In achieving **ii**, the applicant will receive training from the RDC framework, which offers training in three levels: project management (M2), academic integrity (M4) and grant writing (M12). Training related to **iii** will be received through the secondment host's (ACET) transdisciplinary research seminar (M14, M22), where he will present on **the challenges and opportunities of conducting AI research in Africa**, receive feedback and interact with other researchers. The applicant will receive training in **iv** by leading a peer-to-peer interdisciplinary discussion group at the School of Law (M1-M24) and ACET (M12-M14, M22-M24) and attending professional networking events (M1-M24) such as Galway AI, AI for Good and Doing Research in Africa Groups to expand his network by twenty new contacts by M24. He will allocate time each week for leadership and networking development activities, actively seeking opportunities to lead smaller tasks such as serving on departmental committees at the School of Law, participating in ACET's outreach programs and utilising resources available through the Galway's Professional Development Office. To gain pedagogy skills (**v**), the applicant will teach undergraduate and graduate modules in **Lawyering, Technology and Innovation and Law and Analytics** as part of TRC (M1-M24), aiming to teach one module per semester. Additionally, between M1 and M24, he will supervise masters and doctoral students on **AI trustworthiness and safety, AI regulation, technology law and ethics**, targeting the supervision of at least four students throughout the project timeline. Progress for all training activities will be reviewed through regular reporting to his supervisor as D5.1 and D5.2.

The applicant will transfer his knowledge of researching and developing course modules on AI ethics and methodologies to evaluate AI trustworthiness to students and members of the University of Galway. This will include: (i) collaborating with Galway's Career Development Centre to organise two hands-on sessions in M6 (for students) and M12 (for researchers) on evaluating AI trustworthiness. (ii) Propose AI ethics and auditing topics to TRC's open seminars, planning to deliver a lecture in M8 and M24. (iii) During teaching and supervision (M1-M24), the applicant will ensure that students gain practical insights and skills for navigating complex ethical and governance challenges in AI. This will be done by allowing students to engage with real-world ethical issues to enhance their practical skills. (iv) In M24, the applicant will lead a hybrid consultation between actors in Ireland/Europe and Africa (see 2.2) to open new collaborative opportunities in joint research initiatives, policy advisory roles and international AI forums beyond the project timeline.

1.2.6 Open Science Practices and Research Data Management: AfroGAIN will facilitate early and open sharing of the research by documenting and publicly disclosing pre-registration activities on platforms like the Open Science Framework. Moreover, registered reports, pre-prints, and document analyses will be available at the project's AI Governance Observatory (see 2.2) to serve as the project's public face and to promote reproducibility and FAIR data principles.[37] Research findings will be deposited in the University of Galway's repository, Access to Research at Galway (ARAN), and on preprint platforms such as OpenAire and Zenodo to ensure compatibility, long-term accessibility, and potential for reuse. Furthermore, analysed scripts will be stored and shared on a cloud-based repository, such as GitHub, after anonymisation techniques are applied. AfroGAIN will engage in open peer review by publishing in peer-reviewed journals with open access (see 2.2 for dissemination plan) and using Open Research Europe,[38] where manuscripts will be publicly reviewed and responded to. By embracing open peer review, the applicant aims to contribute to a more inclusive and dynamic exchange of knowledge, enhancing the impact and reach of AfroGAIN.

A Data Management Plan (DMP) will be completed in M3 as D0.1 in collaboration with the supervisor to ensure that outputs remain as open as possible and as closed as necessary, adhering to open science, FAIR principles and the General Data Protection Regulation (GDPR). The DMP will include: (i) publishing the data on the AI Observatory and using persistent identifiers to ensure data from the content analysis, interviews, FGDs and surveys are reliably **found**; (ii) uploading transcripts, field notes, and analysed scripts to GitHub to allow for **access** after applying anonymisation techniques to remove personally identifiable information and other sensitive elements, (iii) saving the interview transcripts in XML to ensure **interoperability** with other data systems and (iv) documenting the steps for data collection, including sampling approaches and participant selection on the project's Observatory to facilitate long-term **reuse**. The applicant will also include a codebook and a methodology section in the dataset documentation. Support is available at the host institution through a Data Protection Officer to ensure appropriateness and alignment with the principles above. Furthermore, the

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[37] EC expert group on FAIR (findable, accessible, interoperable, reusable) data: https://commission.europa.eu/documents_en
[38] https://open-research-europe.ec.europa.eu/

requisite ethical approvals (D0.2) from the University of Galway and the selected countries in M4 (see 3.2 for a contingency plan in case of delays in ethical approvals) will be essential for data management.

1.3 Match between the proposal and the supervisor/research group

Dr Rónán Kennedy, an Associate Professor at the University of Galway School of Law, will supervise this research. In the last two decades, Dr Kennedy has developed specialised knowledge of the intricate relationship between law and technology, particularly regarding the rise of AI. His research, including 26 peer-reviewed articles, 5 papers in proceedings, 4 book chapters, and 6 policy reports, has resulted in some of the earliest theorising on how legal frameworks rapidly evolve to keep pace with AI advancements and the intersection between technological innovation and ethical debates. His deep understanding of AI's legal nuances and his track record of interdisciplinary research (including peer-reviewed publications in information systems and climate science journals) provide a robust foundation for guiding the applicant to navigate the complex regulatory landscapes and ethical considerations unique to Africa. For example, his work on AI4People promotes responsible AI and supports governments and global businesses in mitigating AI risks and implementing AI ethics and AI technologies sustainably. This will provide the framework for state-of-the-art training to enhance the applicant's career. Dr Kennedy has extensive experience in supervision and training, including LLM thesis (22), PhD (5), and Postdoc (1) since 2020. In 2022, he received both the President's Award and the College Award for Teaching Excellence, nominated by students, attesting to his teaching and supervisory excellence. Dr Kennedy also brings a longstanding record of engaging with policymakers and legal scholars to translate research findings into practical strategies that address socioeconomic disparities, ranking him as a leading authority on the intersection of technology and law. The applicant will join Dr Kennedy's Technology and Rights Cluster (TRC), which includes experienced researchers with additional skills in AI governance approaches, offering plenty of scope for support. Additionally, TRC has strong links with Irish Aid and relevant UN entities (e.g. UNDP), providing an avenue for dissemination.

Rob Floyd, the Director for Innovation and Digital Policy at ACET, will be an added advantage to this research. At ACET, Rob pioneers programs supporting Africa's digital transformation through informed policy, focusing on AI policymaking, digital infrastructure, and green industrialisation. He launched Africa's first AI challenge for regional infrastructure and digital skills and has been at the forefront of initiatives like digital industrial hubs and Africa's digital single market. With a background spanning three decades as an economist and journalist, Rob's career includes significant tenures at the World Bank, where he held various high-level positions, including overseeing substantial lending programs and directing operations and strategy. His diverse policy development and practical implementation expertise make him exceptionally well-equipped to guide AfroGAIN.

1.4 Professional Experience, competencies, skills

The ROSETTA Fellowship is the ideal next step in the applicant's professional trajectory, as it aligns perfectly with his demonstrated growth potential, independent thinking, and initiative. With a strong foundation in research and practical applications, the applicant has already made significant strides in advancing his expertise. During his postdoctoral tenure at the University of Oxford, he investigated methodologies designed to assess the trustworthiness of AI systems. This included critical evaluations of data integrity mechanisms and bias mitigation strategies as key pillars in addressing the complex issues surrounding AI governance. As a postdoc at the University College Dublin, the applicant has developed a deeper understanding of AI's technical challenges, particularly regarding system vulnerabilities, uniquely positioning him to offer strategic guidance to developers and policymakers alike. His ability to translate these insights into practical applications has made him a valuable resource in shaping informed, data-driven decision-making processes within AI. In addition, his research outputs, **including a manuscript, seven journal articles, four conference contributions, three media engagements, eleven grant awards equalling €162,050, and the experience of mentoring around 30 graduate and undergraduate students** (see CV), demonstrate huge potential, a high level of expertise and a strong track record of academic and professional accomplishments, underscoring his suitability for this project.

As a proficient English, Danish, German, Akan, and Xhosa speaker, the applicant has acquired the expertise to investigate the designated research objectives. Regarding **RO1**, he has experience unpacking the intersection between technology and politics that delivers responsible governance in Africa. In a recently accepted article by the Canadian Journal of African Studies, he analysed how EU regulatory standards shape African policy trajectories. On **RO2**, a collaboration between the African Union and the Faculty of Law at the University of Oxford, led by the applicant, identified and organised a week-long workshop in Addis Ababa, Ethiopia, in January 2024 to engage around 30 researchers, policymakers, and technology practitioners on Africa's

emerging technology governance. Concerning **RO3**, the applicant's recent monologue[39] explores traditional and modern debates that shape the roles of customary women leaders in Ghana's digital transformation, receiving favourable responses from leading scholars. Prof Hans Peter Hahn from Goethe University, Frankfurt, called it '**exciting and illuminating'**, while Prof Nicole Stremlau from the University of Oxford wrote that the book "**offers a brilliant analysis of Africa's sociocultural dynamics."**

2. Impact

2.1 Potential impact of the fellowship on the researcher's career prospects

ROSETTA will enhance the applicant's career per the European Skills Agenda, particularly the "cross-border mobility of skilled workers and professionals" outlined in the Osnabrück Declaration.[40] By working with Dr Kennedy, his research group, direct training, and self-guided studies, the applicant will expand his spectrum of scientific expertise in AI governance and methodologies and build skills in project management, grant writing, scientific communication, leadership, networking and pedagogy in the short to medium term. This will enhance his long-term career goal as a **Lecturer/Professor** at a European University, preferably in Ireland. Full-time research and teaching positions in Irish Universities require a collection of publications and a compilation of scientific activities to demonstrate the candidate's maturity and ability to conduct future research. With an enhanced publication record, the ability to apply for grants and advanced leadership and supervisory skills, the applicant will pursue a tenure-track position immediately after the fellowship. Moreover, delving into cutting-edge issues such as ethical AI deployment, technology politics, and the transferable skills in leadership, teaching, and supervision will inform his pedagogy skills to develop AI ethics and governance courses and mentor early-stage researchers to directly feed into his long-term career goals. He will also be able to apply for various national and international funding, such as the ERC Starting Grant. This will be targeted in the first year after this fellowship to complete the transition from recognised researcher (R2) to established researcher (R3) within the European Research Careers Framework.[41]

The applicant will also develop specialised knowledge and skills highly sought after in public policy, international organisations, and other multilateral fields. For instance, the insights from studying Africa's uniqueness and the pieces of training in project management and scientific communication will provide a distinctive perspective that can be applied to global AI governance, making him a valuable asset as a senior researcher in a think thank, a consultant with an NGO or a policy advisor for governments either in Europe or Africa. This is in keeping with the European Commission's goal towards building the skills and competencies of researchers beyond the traditional academic job market.

2.2 Suitability and Quality Measures

AfroGAIN includes dissemination, exploitation, and communication (DEC) activities as WP4 (M1-M24). In collaboration with Dr Kennedy, a detailed DEC plan will be developed in M6 as D4.1 and reviewed in M12. **Dissemination** activities will consist of (i) a minimum of three publications **(one of which will be AI governance recommendations)** in high-impact scientific journals, such as African Affairs, New Media and Society, AI and Ethics or any of the top ten African Studies/emerging technologies journals (Google Scholar h5-index 24-157) in M9, M15 and M23. The applicant will aim for a citation rate 1.5 times higher than the journal average within twelve months of publication by publishing pre-prints in open-access repositories (e.g. OpenAire) and social media platforms (see below): (ii) three papers each submitted to the AI Governance Global Conference 2026 (~150 researchers and AI developers, M10), Artificial Intelligence in Africa Conference, Cape Town (~800 policymakers and AI developers, M16) and the European Conference on African Studies (~1500 researchers, M24). The applicant will aim for an average positive feedback score of 4.5/5 from conference participants by distributing feedback forms asking participants to rate the papers on a scale of 1 to 5: (iii) convey a workshop in Accra, Ghana, in collaboration with the secondment host (~30 attendees) to discuss the research findings with experts, policymakers and regulators (M22). Accra will provide the platform for technology debate, where stakeholders such as Ghana's Ministry of Communication and Digitisation, Irish Aid, ACET, Google AI Lab, EU Mission-Ghana, and GIZ Fair Forward will reflect on the findings and establish an AI governance network that could host annual events. (iv) AfroGAIN will then bring these actors into a hybrid consultation in Galway in M24 with the AI Advisory Council and the Foreign Direct Investment Agency to see how the research findings and their perspectives converge and/or diverge. The Galway event will also use our vantage point of Ireland to discuss the Irish/EU support for countries in the Global South. (v) Given the need for public dialogues and the opportunity for crowdsourcing data through online participation, AfroGAIN will establish an online **AI Governance Observatory** in M1 to serve as the

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[39] Thompson Gyedu Kwarkye, *Women in Local Governance: Exploring Nawuri Women Leaders in Human Security in Kpandai District, Ghana* (regiospectra Verlag Berlin, 2022).
[40] http://ec.europa.eu/social/BlobServlet?docId=23216&langId=en
[41] https://euraxess.ec.europa.eu/europe/career-development/training-researchers/research-profiles-descriptors

project's public face. The Observatory will capture and publish information about efforts to govern AI by drawing on interview data and document analysis. It will also be a space to support open science and research data management (1.2.6) and communication activities (see below).

Communication activities will engage **scientific peers, policymakers and non-specialist audiences (e.g. university students, end users, and the public)**, **highlighting AI benefits and risks, and fostering support and interest in AfroGAIN.** The following strategies will be employed: (i) Leverage Galway's outreach initiatives, such as Tech Tour (M12) and Law Radio (M20), to discuss critical AI governance topics (e.g. regulating AI) and provide engaging content tailored to academic and non-academic audiences planning to reach a probable audience of 500. (ii) Organise two interactive discussions with at least forty non-specialist audiences each in South Africa (M16) and Ghana (M20) to facilitate engagement and interest in AI governance. (iii) Host an event for approximately 200 students in politics, law, engineering, and computer science at the Universities of Cape Town (M16) and Ghana (M22) to showcase the project's relevance, stimulate interest and promote career opportunities in AI governance. (iv) Establish a robust **online presence** through the project's observatory and social media channels (e.g., Facebook and X) beginning in M1. The applicant will also leverage TRC's and ACET's Communication Teams, websites and social media channels to target an overall audience of 3000 by M24. He will provide monthly updates on project advancements and utilise various formats (e.g. blog posts and short videos) to reach the audience and keep them engaged.

Exploitation activities will include engaging with the policymakers of South Africa (M16), Ghana (M22) and the African Union's Committees on Technology (M24) to integrate the findings into the governance frameworks within the first year of the project's end. Additionally, the applicant will collaborate with AI companies in Africa, including MinoHealth, DataProphet and Zindi (M24), to pilot his AI governance recommendations within a year of the project's completion. The research findings will also support the applicant's future projects. If intellectual property (IP) arises, the applicant will rely on Galway's Innovation Office to support IP management.

2.3 Secondment Research Idea

ACET is best suited as a secondment host due to its strategic focus on policy research, economic transformation, and sustainable development in Africa. ACET's extensive network with government bodies, international organisations, and private sector entities provides invaluable opportunities for collaborative research and practical application of the findings. Furthermore, ACET's expertise and resources create a rich environment for fostering innovation, capacity building, and knowledge exchange, making it an exemplary host for advancing the objectives of the ROSETTA Fellowship. **They will provide the opportunity to collect data for WP2 during the first phase of the secondment (D2.1). Additionally, ACET will allow DEC activities, especially in organising workshops, interactive briefings, and undergraduate events in Ghana and South Africa (D4.2)**. By uniting the strengths of the University of Galway and ACET, AfroGAIN will benefit from unparalleled institutional support and contribute to a broader understanding of AI governance that is globally relevant and tailored to Africa's specific needs.

3. Implementation

3.1 Proposed work plan

AfroGAIN is structured into six WPs: three technical WPs (WP1, WP2 and WP3), Project Management (WP0), Dissemination, Exploitation and Communication (WP4), and Career Development (WP5) in Table 1 below.

WP0	Project Management	Start date: M1
		End date: M24
Objective	**O0.1:** Ensure the project runs smoothly and plan for ethical data collection.	
Tasks	**T0.1:** Project management through task activities and regular meetings with Dr Kennedy. **T0.2:** Prepare Data Management Plan (DMP) and ethical approvals. **T0.3:** Progress Reporting.	
Deliverables	**D0.1:** Data Management Plan **[M3]**. **D0.2:** Ethical approvals **[M4]**. **D0.3, D0.4:** Progress Report **[M12, M24]**.	
Milestones	**Ms0:** Completed DMP **[M3]**.	
WP1	Politics and AI Governance	Start date: M1
		End date: M10
Objectives	**O1.1:** Review literature to integrate interdisciplinary approaches to inform the research. **O1.2:** Assess how political processes influence AI governance in Ghana and South Africa.	

Tasks	**T1.1:** Review literature to integrate key conceptual and methodological approaches. **T1.2:** Identify and analyse thirty documents. **T1.3:** Conduct and analyse fifteen unstructured interviews with AI experts.
Deliverables	**D1.1:** Literature review **[M6]** (updated throughout the project). **D1.2:** An AI Governance recommendation submitted to African Affairs **[M9]** **D1.3:** A paper submitted to AI Governance Global 2026 Conference **[M10].**
Milestones	**Ms1:** Completed literature review, content analysis and unstructured interviews **[M6].**

WP2	Stakeholder Dynamics	Start date: M10
		End date: M16
Objectives	**O2.1:** Examine the role of international and local stakeholders on AI ethics and governance.	
Tasks	**T2.1:** Identify actors in AI governance and conduct and analyse semi-structured interviews	
Deliverables	**D2.1:** Complete the first phase of secondment **[M14]** **D2.2:** A paper submitted to New Media and Society Journal **[M15].** **D2.3:** A paper to the Artificial Intelligence in Africa Conference, Cape Town **[M16].**	
Milestones	**Ms2:** Semi-structured interviews completed and analysed **[M13].**	

WP3	AI Sociocultural and Ethical Values	Start date: M12
		End date: M24
Objective	**O3.1:** Explore the influence of sociocultural and ethical values on AI governance.	
Tasks	**T3.1:** Develop, conduct and analyse surveys and FGDs in the research area.	
Deliverables	**D3.1:** A paper on sociocultural influence on AI governance **[M23].** **D3.2:** A paper submitted to the European Conference on African Studies **[M24].**	
Milestones	**Ms3:** Survey and FGD data collection completed and analysed **[M18].**	

WP4	Dissemination, Exploitation and Communication (DEC)	Start date: M1
		End date: M24
Objectives	**O4.1:** Disseminate the research findings to achieve high visibility, communicate the project to a range of audiences and opportunities for exploitation.	
Tasks	**T4.1:** Carry out dissemination activities including, six scientific and conference papers, two workshops in Accra and Galway and utilise the AI Governance Observatory. **T4.2:** Ensure communication activities by leveraging Galway's outreach initiatives, two interactive briefings with non-academic audiences, host events at the Universities of Cape Town and Ghana and establish a robust online presence via social media, the project's observatory and leverage communication teams from Galway and secondment host. **T4.3:** Ensure exploitation activities by engaging with policymakers and tech companies in South Africa, Ghana and the African Union.	
Deliverables	**D4.1:** Dissemination, Exploitation and Communication (DEC) Plan **[M6],** reviewed in M12. **D4.2:** Completion of second phase of secondment **[M24]**	
Milestones	**Ms4** Review of DEC Plan **[M12].**	

WP5	Career Development	Start date: M1
		End date: M24
Objective	**O5.1:** Develop and implement the Career Development Plan.	
Tasks	**T5.1:** Draft a Career Development Plan (CDP) (updated throughout the project). **T5.2:** Leverage Dr Kennedy's expertise, participate in the TRC and attend two training workshops in mixed methods and ethical data collection to build his research skill. **T5.3:** Complete Galway's RDC framework. **T5.4:** Participate in ACET's transdisciplinary research seminar **T5.5:** Lead peer to peer discussions and attend professional networking events. **T5.6:** Teach and supervise undergraduate and graduate students at TRC. **T5.7:** Complete all knowledge transfer activities from applicant to host.	
Deliverables	**D5.1:** Career Development Plan draft **[M4]** (updated **M14** and **M24**). **D5.2, D5.3:** Report on training and knowledge transfer activities **[M11, M23]** **D5.4:** Evaluation questionnaire **[M24].**	
Milestones	**Ms5:** Review of CDP **[M14]**	

3.2 Risk management

While the applicant will manage the project, oversee its direction, and ensure alignment with the ROs and WPs, the University of Galway's Research and Financial Services will provide financial management for the research. Progress monitoring will focus on the quality and timeliness of research, training, knowledge transfer, dissemination, and career development through regular meetings (every fortnight) with Dr Kennedy (T0.1).

Before each meeting, the applicant will submit a summary of achievements and any necessary adjustments to the project. Additionally, project reports will be submitted in M12 (D0.2) and M24 (D0.3). **Risk monitoring** will occur through regular meetings to address emerging issues such as those speculated in the table below:

Risk [Severity 1-10]/ [Likelihood- High-Low]/WPs	Mitigation Measures (M) and Contingency Plan (C)
Researching in challenging regions of complex evolving sociopolitical issues that may cause security risks and delays in data collection /9/High/WP1, WP2, WP3	- The applicant has conducted research in these countries before and will build on his networks with the Universities of Cape Town and Ghana, and organisations such as Irish Aid, ACET and GIZ Fair Forward to understand on-ground realities and address potential data access issues **(M)**. - Implement flexible timelines and use digital platforms like Zoom and SurveyMonkey to collect data to mitigate travel restrictions and ensure continuous data collection **(M)**. - If data collection is impossible, the applicant will focus on countries with similar sociopolitical contexts (e.g. Ivory Coast will replace Ghana) **(C)**.
Delays in ethical approvals from research countries/5/Moderate/ WP1, WP2, WP3	- Initiate contact with ethical review boards and relevant authorities in M1 to understand their specific requirements and timelines **(M)**. - Apply for ethical approvals from multiple review boards (e.g. from local universities) to increase the chances of timely approval **(M)**. - Shift focus to other research tasks (e.g. drafting the non-empirical section of journal or conference articles) while waiting for the approvals **(C)**.
Delays in publications being accepted /5/Moderate/WP1, WP2, WP3	- Prepare a list of journals/conferences of varying impact factors and scopes that are appropriate for the research and prioritise journals or conferences with shorter review cycles to expedite the dissemination of findings **(M)**. - Utilise the Observatory and preprint servers like OpenAire and Zenodo to share findings while waiting for formal publications **(C)**.
Securing sufficient number of participants /5/Moderate/WP1, WP2, WP3	- Leverage established networks and relationships with local organisations and universities early in the project **(M)**. - Utilise multiple recruitment channels including social media, local events and applicant's and secondment host's networks **(M)**. - Use virtual meetings (e.g. Zoom) to override timing issues **(M)**. - Broaden the inclusion criteria or expand the geographical scope **(C)**
Keeping data safe, e.g. those involving LGBTQIA+ groups/ 8/Low/WP1, WP2, WP3	- Rely on the DMP to implement robust data anonymisation techniques **(M)**. - Compliance with local regulations and ethical standards to protect participant confidentiality and ensure secure data handling **(M)**. - Immediately conduct an audit of the data **(C)**.
Language Proficiency issues /6/Low/[WP3]	- Translate and explain interview, survey and FGD questions in familiar languages: Akan (in Ghana), and Xhosa (in South Africa) **(M)**. - Conduct follow up interviews or expand the FGDs if necessary **(C)**.

GANTT CHART

Work Package/Title	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	13	14	15	16	17	18	19	20	21	22	23	24
WP0 Project Management			D0.1	D0.2								D0.3												D0.4
WP1 Politics and AI Governance						D1.1			D1.2	D1.3														
WP2 Stakeholder Dynamics															D2.2	D2.3								
WP3 AI Socio-cultural and ethical values																							D3.1	D3.2
WP4 Des, Com and Exp.						D4.1																		
WP5 Career Development			D5.1									D5.2											D5.3	D5.4
Secondment														D2.1										D4.2
Milestones			Ms0			Ms1						Ms4	Ms2	Ms5				Ms3						
Legend		D		Deliverable										Ms		Milestone								

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