

# CULTURE.TRACE

*Or how to build culturally-inclusive AI?*

CONTEXT. Breakneck speed developments in artificial intelligence (AI) are predicted to transform every aspect of how people live, work and communicate. This growing ubiquity of AI has caused researchers and critics to raise questions about the potential ethnic, gender and racial biases involved in the widespread deployment of AI in fields as diverse as facial detection, urban planning, employment and the criminal system. These problems, it is argued, stem in part from the fact that AI models have been historically trained on problematic datasets. As a consequence, the classification and labelling of humans through techniques such as computer vision have included the prejudices and stereotypes embedded into these datasets. Yet despite growing evidence of this problem, there is still limited public knowledge about how this might negatively affect communities in the UK and, as crucially, *what positive steps could be taken to mitigate this?*

*Culture.trace* in an experiment and public research engagement designed to demonstrate an alternative approach to AI, where humans are approached through kindness, empathy and imagination rather than historical biases and stereotypes. We explore what an alternative vision of a future AI could look like through showing how technology, and the people it analyses, are most interesting when approached through a non-judgemental and positive lens.

**Culture.Trace**

Historically, Artificial Intelligence models have been trained on biased and problematic datasets. Moreover, we have seen that the classification and labelling of humans has included prejudice language and offensive stereotyping. Culture.Trace is an application designed to demonstrate an alternative approach whereby human profiles are considered with kindness, empathy and imagination. Our aim is to redefine AI by showing that both the technology and the people it analyses are most interesting when considered through a non-judgemental and positive lens.

Start Webcam Upload Image Use Image URL Go

**Creative**  
Casual wear, bright colours, styled hair cut, imaginative, sensitive, empathetic

**EDM**  
bright colours, neon, bright jewelry, colourful makeup, independent, passionate, daring, experimental

ACTIVITIES. The project will undertake following activities:

- An interactive public research engagement at the Barbican will co-create knowledge about key themes related to the topic, such as the use of AI models in facial recognition, employment and automation, urban planning and smart cities.
- We will develop and deploy an interactive tool that will allow the public and participants to have computer vision “read” the culture that is being signalled by them; this allows us to think about computer vision beyond object detection and surveillance, and begins to allow us to think about AI *as an anthropological tool*.
- A short documentary will also be on show exploring perspectives on existing bias in AI, as well as considering possible solutions coming from academics, scientists, artists, coders, and users who have been affected by AI systems’ biases.
- In addition to the public research engagement, the project will also host a workshop bringing together journalists, technologists and academics to debate and discuss problems and solutions to the issue. This event will be live-streamed and followed by a reception.

TEAM. Culture.Trace is a joint project between the Barbican and the School of Oriental and African Studies (SOAS) and Quilt.ai. From the Barbican side, the project will be led by Charlene Prempeh, founder of A Vibe called Tech and a researcher specialising in the issues around AI and the black community in the UK. From the SOAS side, the project will be advised by Dr Matti Pohjonen from the Centre for Global Media and Communication as a part of the Global Digital Future(s) Initiative. From the Quilt.ai side, the project will be led by Dr Angad Chowdhry and Anurag Banerjee. Quilt.AI has been called “a good example of a company that is striving to use unstructured data in an ethical way” by the [Economist Intelligence Unit](#). The documentary will be made by filmmaker Nekane De Ozamiz.

DATES: November 8-9, 2019