

IPEC MEMBERSHIP NEWSLETTER

THE INSTITUTE FOR POLICY, ETHICS, AND
CULTURE'S MONTHLY UPDATES



IPEC RENEWED PROVISIONALLY

Soonkwan Hong and I presented the IPEC renewal documents on November 4 and subsequently IPEC has been granted a provisional renewal until December 2026. Thank you for all of the hard work and I look forward to continue to support your research, scholarship, and creative activity.

Stefka

RoboSAPIENS

Since February 2024 IPEC member Alexandra Morrison has been consulting as the Independent Ethics Advisor for a large European AI and Robotics project across 6 countries involving 7 universities and 3 corporate partners. The Robotic Safe Adaptation In unprecedented Situations or “RoboSAPIENS” for short, was spearheaded by researchers in The Department of Electrical and Computer Engineering at Aarhus University in Denmark. The team is working to develop deep learning AI tools that will enable robotic open-ended self-adaptation in response to unprecedented system structural and environmental changes when working in tandem with humans.

The head researcher of Robosapiens has led over 30 major EU funded research projects. Morrison is his first Independent Ethics Advisor. The European Commission’s relatively recent requirement of having an independent ethics advisor or advisory board reflects their awareness that the public is increasingly concerned about ethics in technology especially when Artificial Intelligence is involved.

Morrison was keen to accept this position not only because the EU requires that these socially impactful projects have independent ethics advisors have expertise in philosophy, but because they have a vision of fostering collaborative relationships between ethicists and STEM researchers; including the consideration of ethical issues starting at the conceptual stage of proposals. The EU contends that ethical research enhances the quality of research, promotes a better alignment of research with social needs and garners social support for research because high ethical standards generally merit public trust.

Morrison will be consulting with RoboSAPIENS for the next three years. In June of 2024 she travelled to Norway to meet with the team and gave a presentation on ethics. She also had an opportunity to visit the impressive shipping simulator facilities at the Norwegian University of Science and Technology (NTNU) in Ålesund, Norway.

What counts as research?

J. W. Hammond's research focuses on the rhetoric of norms and standards, examines how ostensibly neutral evaluation processes can shape and be shaped by epistemic injustice. As part of this agenda, Hammond is co-PI of the Spencer Foundation grant-funded project "Prototyping and Evaluating a Living Research Synthesis Infrastructure," which considers the possibilities and perils associated with systematic reviews of literature. Any synthesis of research tacitly advances a host of claims—for example, claims about what counts as "research," about what findings from research ought to "count" (and how), and about how to account for methodological differences (e.g., those associated with different quantitative and qualitative research genres). For this reason, syntheses of research can be sites where epistemic hierarchies and injustices are reproduced or resisted. Reimagining reviews of literature at scale requires us to reimagine the knowledge infrastructures on which research synthesis depends: the ecologies of policies, practices, norms, resources, social structures, technologies, and methodologies that configure the evaluation and synthesis of research.