The Governance of Digital Immortality

Conceived by Microsoft researchers which ignited visions of the possibility of a digital afterlife and virtual online personas being formed by digital remains of living person that will enable them to live long after their physical death.

Digital Immortality & Digital Afterlife

History is at risk of repeating itself regarding the governance of technologies, where there have often been long lags between innovation, understanding of its wider impacts and a governance response (Collingridge, 1980).

Governance & Regulation

The first study – a systematic literature review – focused on the framing of Digital Immortality and Digital Afterlife, and the state of art on its governance. The results showed strong technological influences with limited emphasis on governance.

Research Progress

The next study is a governance gap analysis, complemented by stakeholder interviews, to ascertain how transferrable existing governance artefacts are to protecting an identifiable posthumous identity.

This Year's Focus

...focus group discussions are to be planned to enable the collection and analysis of public perceptions regarding the potential of Digital Immortality and the Digital Afterlife, and its governance before commencing additional studies.
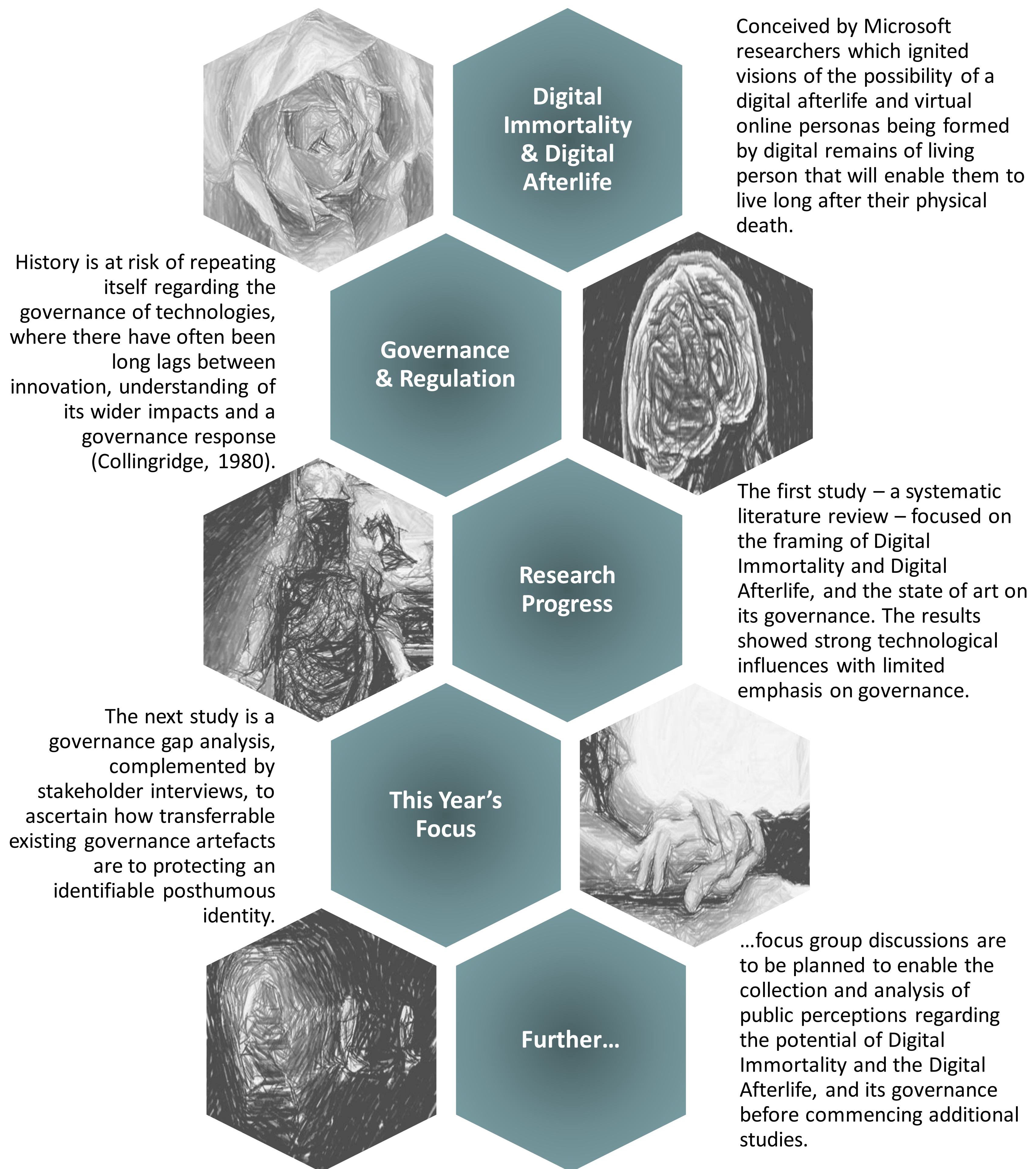
Further...

The studies in this multi-disciplinary thesis utilise a flexible design process. Additionally, the approaches adopted are empirico-inductive for a comprehensive cybersecurity and governance analysis of this phenomenon. Finally, due to the sensitivities around death, creative means will be pursued for public engagement events to align with Responsible Innovation.

University of BRISTOL

Researcher
Khadiza Laskor
Supervisors
Professor Richard Owen
Professor Andrew Charlesworth