



ThoughtWorks®

# ***SOCIAL IMPACT***

—— *a year in review*

# A TECH-DRIVEN SOCIETY

Tech has delivered many modern wonders: opened up a global marketplace, connected communities and made visible many injustices which can now be addressed. It has lifted up voices and created opportunities previously unimaginable. But alongside its real and powerful benefits, it has also had brutal and devastating effects. Local economies have been shattered, extremist voices amplified, social interactions are being ever-more defined by digital connection, resulting in loneliness and isolation.

The relationship between society and tech is ever-more complex, troubled and in need of careful consideration. Technologists are beginning to shape society and the responsibility of this role should not be underestimated.

ThoughtWorks is a global software consultancy that has been helping enterprises transition to a tech-enabled future for over 25 years. Our commitment to both tech excellence and social impact is unique; it's taken us to the forefront around issues like privacy, gender inclusion, social rights and open source. Our social impact strategies are informed by our partners working at the forefront of social movements and organizational coalitions.

At ThoughtWorks, we believe the tech sector needs a wide-ranging shift to galvanize technologists and businesses to new standard operating procedures, assumptions and behaviours.

To achieve this, we believe that a systems approach is required, with action on different levels. We've created a framework to help us, and others, navigate the way forward. The framework has five levers of change; this report outlines each lever and gives examples of the work we are doing there. It's by no means exhaustive, but offers a broad picture of the types of action that can be taken, individually or collectively.

Please take the time to read these stories and connect with us to see how we might collaborate for change – whether it's through an open source project, creating change strategies within your organization, or starting your own personal journey.

--  
*Elise Zelechowski and Eduardo Meneses*  
on behalf of the Social Impact Group (SIG)



**ELISE  
ZELECHOWSKI**



**EDUARDO  
MENESES**



## INDIVIDUALS

### *personal journey*

We provide a platform for ThoughtWorkers to become more socially conscious, empathetic global citizens and technologists.

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## THOUGHTWORKS & INDUSTRY

### *diversity & inclusion*

We reject discrimination and inequality, and promote diversity in all its forms. We actively strive to make ThoughtWorks and our industry more reflective and inclusive of the society we serve.

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## ORGANIZATIONS

### *tech for social change*

Technology tools can be a lever for social change. We engage with social justice organizations where we believe ThoughtWorks can provide deep value, through strategy, design and technology.

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## MOVEMENTS

### *solidarity over charity*

Our social impact strategies are informed by our partners. Whether they are social movements or communities, we strive to align our priorities with organizational coalitions to maximise our impact.

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## SOCIETY

### *responsible technology*

Technology is rapidly changing society. We drive conversations about privacy, equity, and inclusion. We proactively work to identify, understand, and address inequities in emerging technology.

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# OUR SOCIAL IMPACT FRAMEWORK

The social impact framework sets out *how* we make an impact (what levers we use), while leaving space for each region to formulate what the initiatives on the ground look like.



# ***SOCIAL IMPACT: A PERSONAL JOURNEY***

We see the personal journey at ThoughtWorks as the foundation of how we, as individuals and as a community, make positive social impact.

The personal journey is just that – a journey. It’s about committing ourselves to education about the world, both outside of and inside technology. It means investing individually in learning about historical social injustice, how systems of injustice persist today, and how our own biases, perspectives and actions can help or hinder efforts to address injustice.

The SIG curates a set of resources on our intranet and e-learning tool. Regions often host campaigns and events to go deep into current issues and spark conversation and reflection.

Ultimately, the personal journey is driven individually, and the quality and depth of the experience is driven by each persons’ level of participation in the learning process.

# SPOTLIGHT

Here are just a few examples of how regions supported ThoughtWorkers' learning journeys in different ways over the past year.



## **CENTRE FOR AUSTRALIAN PROGRESS' FELLOWSHIP**

// Australia

ThoughtWorks Melbourne hosts the [Centre for Australian Progress' fellowship](#): a four month program for emerging leaders to learn about political campaign strategy, messaging, framing and media communications, community organising, digital campaigning, and civil disobedience. Five ThoughtWorkers have been through this program so far.



## **PERSONAL COMPASS**

// Ecuador

Ecuador recently launched a new methodology, the "Personal compass", to help ThoughtWorkers identify concrete steps for their individual learning journey, and opportunities to support them in this path. Economic justice, ecology, gender equality, LGBTQI rights, racial injustice and equitable

tech are just some of the issues we explore with ThoughtWorkers to help map their interests to local initiatives to further their personal journey. We are also exploring how to apply the approach more widely, including tailored leadership journeys and are creating a new platform for social justice-related content.



## **NI WO TONG XIN**

// China

This is the 4th consecutive year for the personal journey offsite (in Chinese "Ni Wo Tong Xin"). The Xi'an social impact team, together with 16 colleagues and [REAP's](#) nutrition team, spent the weekend exploring critical social issues in rural areas, including malnutrition in children under three. The Xi'an office will work closely with REAP's nutrition team on future possible solutions.



# ***DIVERSITY & INCLUSION***

## MORE THAN TARGETS

Diversity & inclusion at ThoughtWorks is so much more than numerical 'targets'. Having a diverse community makes us better technologists, and results in better technology. Diversity and inclusion helps us preserve the culture we've worked so hard to create. We should be able to come to work, be ourselves and enjoy one another's company. To do that, we have to create an environment where people feel safe and included, as themselves.

We also believe that practicing social justice means doing what we can to level the playing field, building pathways into tech for people who might not have access because of historic and systemic discrimination.

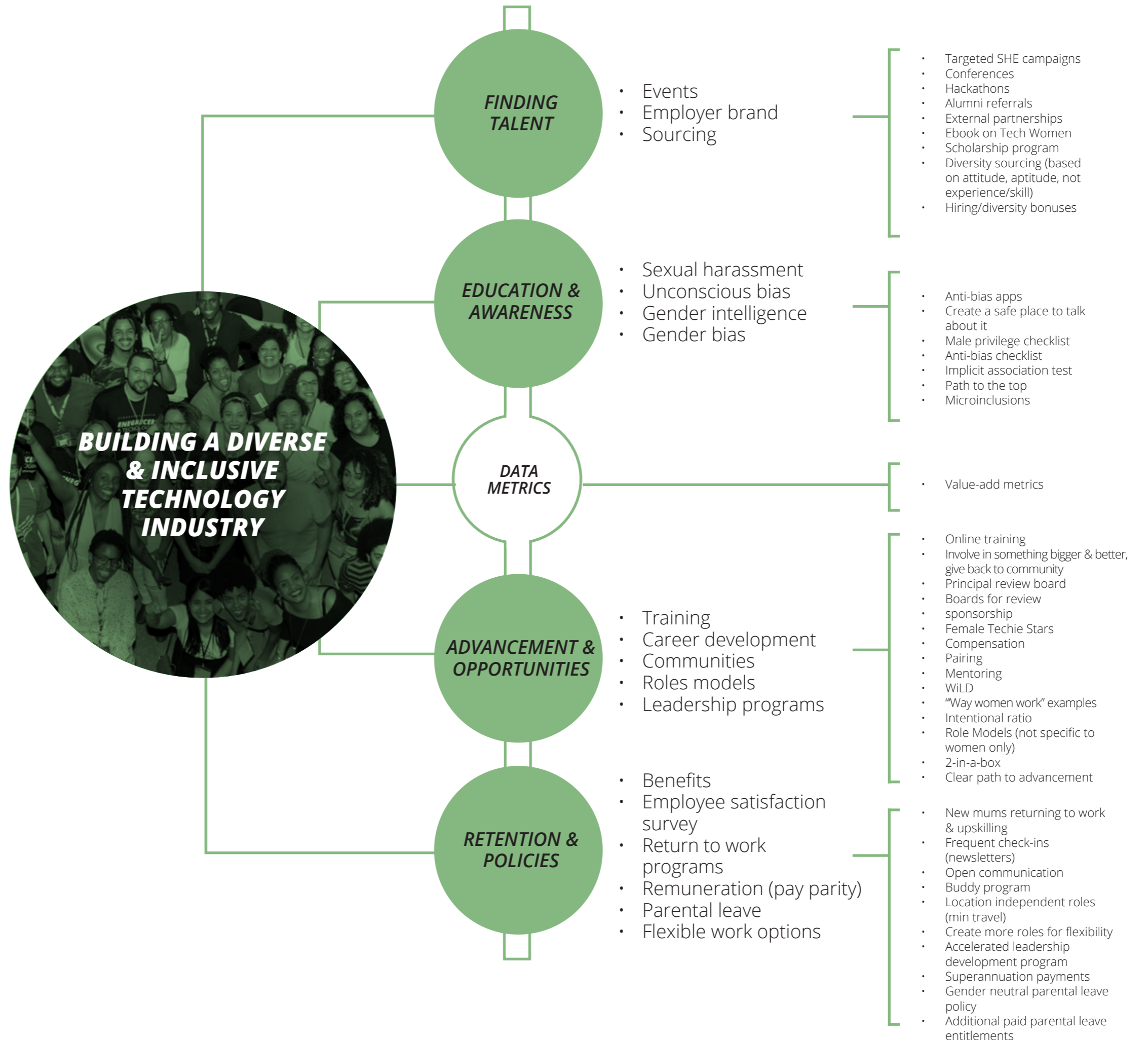
That said, setting goals is still important for driving broad participation. ThoughtWorks recently created a strategic goal of having 40% women and underrepresented gender minorities by the end of 2020 within our professional services globally. Though the global goal is gender focused, each region is working on the development of a secondary focus. And, as Rebecca Parsons memorably said when accepting our first Grace Hopper 'Top Companies for Women' award: "we are not done yet, not by a long shot".

# BUILDING IN DIVERSITY & INCLUSION

We have created a model to ensure that we have a globally consistent, collective, and holistic approach to addressing diversity and inclusivity. We mapped our focus areas, themes, activities and work with partners (see diagram to the right), and use a standard maturity model in conjunction with this to track our progress.

Globally, to keep us striving for gender balance, we are constantly, actively sourcing women, having a strong presence at non male-led and non-male focused tech events, shining a light on our female role models and speakers. These efforts have been rewarded, as we have succeeded in hiring way beyond the industry average numbers of women. As a company, we are normalising people declaring their pronoun choice, from staffing profiles to email signatures. [This beautiful article](#) tells Effy's story:

*"I hope that my work as a technologist can help bring people together. It's why I work for ThoughtWorks, somewhere where I feel like I can truly be myself and still contribute to making the world a better place."*



# DIVERSITY & INCLUSION SPOTLIGHT

Each region undertakes great efforts to preserve our inclusive culture, and attract diverse people to ThoughtWorks. We're shining a light on just a handful here:



## INTERNING WITH PRIDE & VAPASI

// India

India initiated the Interning with Pride program, a first-of-a-kind internship, that enables recently graduated techies exclusively from the LGBTQI+ community to enhance their technical skills through live industry experience. All four interns joined ThoughtWorks India post the internship program.

India completed three [VAPASI programs](#) in 2018. Vapasi is an initiative to help experienced women developers to re-enter the world of programming after a career break. The three week bootcamp sharpens programming skills through hands-on sessions and builds confidence and network.



## ENEGRECER

// Brazil

Brazil launched 'Enegreceer a Tecnologia' in 2018, a country-wide program on racial issues in Brazil with goals around recruiting, recognition and representation. Black people are a majority of the population in Brazil and are disproportionately discriminated against.

To support recruiting goals, Brazil hosted an Express Recruitment campaign and changed how they communicate to attract new candidates. They also launched a partnership with Black Rocks Institute to train the people team to recognize challenges that this group collectively faces and learn how to support their journey at ThoughtWorks. On representativeness, the Quilombolas group (an internal group of people that identify themselves as black) publish written materials and produce informative and educational talks.





## MINORITY GROUPS

// Germany

Germany has made Turkish German people the focus of their secondary diversity initiative. Turkish Germans face systemic discrimination, but are the biggest minority group in Germany; as of 2015 they made up roughly 4% of the population and 18% of all people with a migration background.

The team meet monthly to ideate and agree trials for ways to source and attract candidates with a Turkish German background. A talk series has been set up on Migration & Integration with Turkish German speakers, and workshops on intercultural understanding, identity and racism are planned in partnership with [Mavibla](#).

# DIVERSITY & INCLUSION AWARDS





## **TECH FOR SOCIAL CHANGE**

We know that technology tools can make a huge impact in the work of social change, and over the years, we've learned a lot about how to best leverage our skills to support our social sector partners.

We always strive to build software that is open source and easily maintainable, with an eye towards long-term sustainability. And we don't just build technology tools. From simple stakeholder mapping workshops to digital transformation engagements, ThoughtWorks teams are supporting a variety of projects in many ways across the global business.

# TECH FOR SOCIAL CHANGE SPOTLIGHT



## **BAHMNI**

// Global

Today, [Bahmni](#), an open source EMR (Electronic Medical Records) hospital system, initially developed by ThoughtWorks, is one of the most popular tools for low resource hospital/clinic settings. It has been implemented in over 40 countries, and is the recommended EMR in many Asian and African countries.

Bahmni started with a vision and a social appeal from Dr. Yogesh Jain at JSS hospital in Chhattisgarh State, India, in 2012. In partnership with JSS, ThoughtWorks began to explore how we could respond to the need for a high-quality, low-cost EMR for healthcare providers.

Working with JSS, ThoughtWorkers went to the field to live side-by-side with hospital staff to learn about their day-to-day practice and biggest pain points, and this is where Bahmni was conceived. JSS Hospital provided much of the direction on the early product roadmap. Many Bahmni features were conceptualised and brought to life while working at JSS.

Until 2017, ThoughtWorks exclusively contributed towards Bahmni; doing all of the management, development and support of the product. In 2017, we created the Bahmni Coalition, a group of 16 organizations, to

steward Bahmni going forward and help us grow the community of implementation partners, end-users, contributors and funders. The Coalition is taking Bahmni in new directions that ThoughtWorks couldn't alone and ensuring we can scale the impact of the toolset.

Our commitment and work on Bahmni continues as part of the Coalition. In 2018, ThoughtWorks invested in strengthening the Coalition, providing leadership, guidance and fundraising to support its work, as well as assisting in the search for a Director for the

Coalition. We completed implementations of Bahmni in Jordan, Egypt, Democratic Republic of Congo, Haiti, and Mozambique, and partnered with ThoughtWorks regional offices to work on product features.

Today Bahmni has immense potential to impact healthcare providers across many countries. There's so much work to be done and no matter where you are in the world, technologists can contribute to Bahmni. Please get involved.

[bahmni.org](http://bahmni.org)

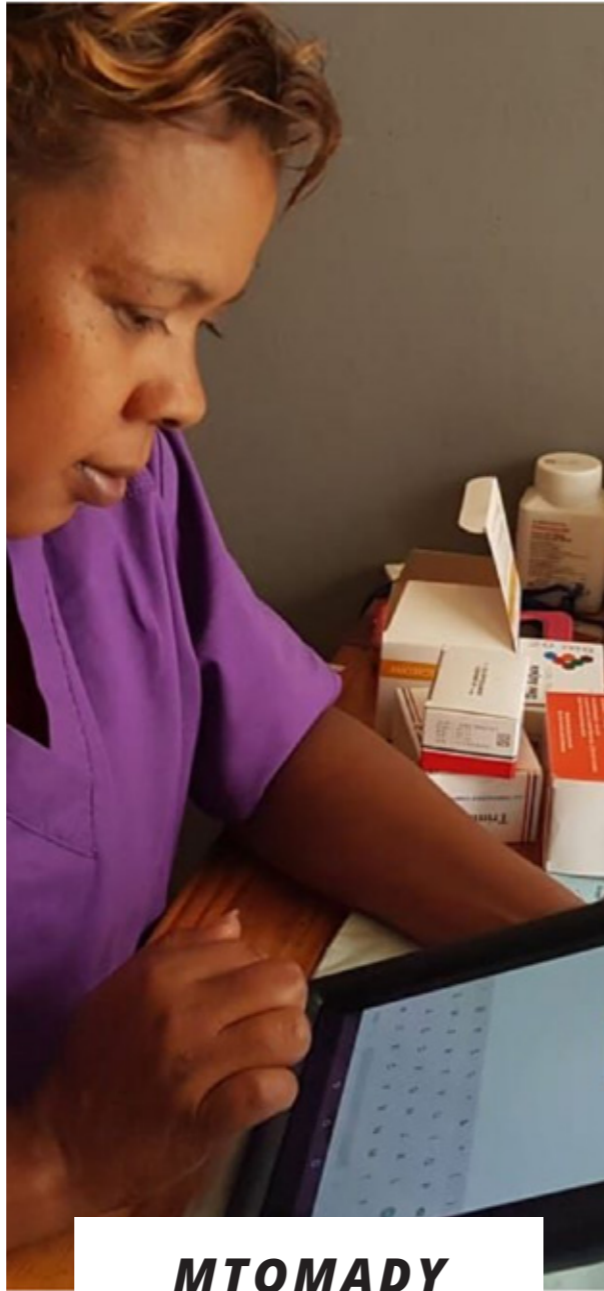




## **INVISIBLE INSTITUTE**

// North America

North America invested in building an open source tool for police oversight agencies to track and report on police misconduct. Through a partnership with Invisible Institute, ThoughtWorks piloted the development of the tool with the New Orleans Independent Police Monitor.



## **MTOMADY**

// Germany

ThoughtWorks Germany is helping the [Doctors for Madagascar](#) team with the mTomady project which aims to create a mobile payment system exclusively for healthcare in Madagascar. Features included monitoring improvement capabilities, improved CI/CD process, and shortened test times. If you want to know more, check out the [website](#).



## **MISSING:**

// India

'Missing' is an NGO working to prevent child and sex trafficking by creating awareness and empathy. TW Pune are supporting them as they create version two of the [game](#), a 3d RPG game with AR (augmented reality) to give players an immersive experience.

Our team did an inception for the new game, developed a Kickstarter prototype using Unity and continue to work on features.



## **ONE MILLION MENTORS**

// United Kingdom

1MM is an exciting social movement, supporting young people into the world of work. Together we have created a platform which uses technology to match mentors to mentees, working with youth partners to help mentees find their future faster. The ambition is to train, recruit and connect a million mentors to a million young people. Why not [become a mentor?](#)



# **SOLIDARITY OVER CHARITY**

Solidarity over charity is a philosophy of engagement and also a practice that underpins our thinking. It's core to our culture, and is a lens through which we see the world.

Charity is something you give to those "less fortunate than yourself." It suggests a belief in a hierarchical system, an "us" and a "them". It creates a power dynamic that further reinforces systems of oppression and economic inequality. Solidarity, by contrast, takes a systems change approach. Its foundational philosophy is that all relationships and power dynamics are multidirectional and acknowledges that everyone has wisdom and resources to solve problems.

We practice solidarity in a number of ways at ThoughtWorks. As individual ThoughtWorkers, and as a collective. We have skills, space and time to contribute to high-impact social change efforts.

# SOLIDARITY OVER CHARITY SPOTLIGHT



## NA PARTNERSHIPS

In North America, the Chicago office hosted another [i.c. Stars](#) program, where ThoughtWorks provides space, technical mentorship and career development support to low-income young adults. The i.c. Stars program develops local community leaders in tech, providing opportunities to break into the tech industry.

North America opened our offices to organizations such as Internet Freedom Festival, DataMade, i.c. Stars, Hearken,

Women who Code, Rails Girls and Codebar, providing office and meeting space.

In New York alone we provide free meeting space for over 75 non-profit and grassroots group working towards social justice, these include: Muslim Writers Collective, the Women's March, Cosecha, Theater of the Oppressed, Justice Committee and Progressive Hack Night. Given the difficulty of finding affordable meeting space in Manhattan, this has been essential support.



## INITIATIVES IN INDIA

The ThoughtWorks Chennai office started an initiative called SCALE - Social Coding (in an) Amplified Learning Environment, working with the Chennai Institute of Technology and Maatram foundation. We wanted to identify & train students from economically weaker backgrounds studying 1st year BEs through scholarships in colleges. Out of 50+ students who applied, we shortlisted 19 and supported them with an intense program of learning, games and more over six months.

The Pune office works closely with the Sampathik Trust on issues the LGBTI community faces, and supports their events such as the Annual Pride Walk. We are collaborating with their founder, Mr Bindu, by providing ThoughtWorks' practice and policy information for his manual for LGBTI inclusivity for corporates.



## WEB FOR TEENS

// Chile

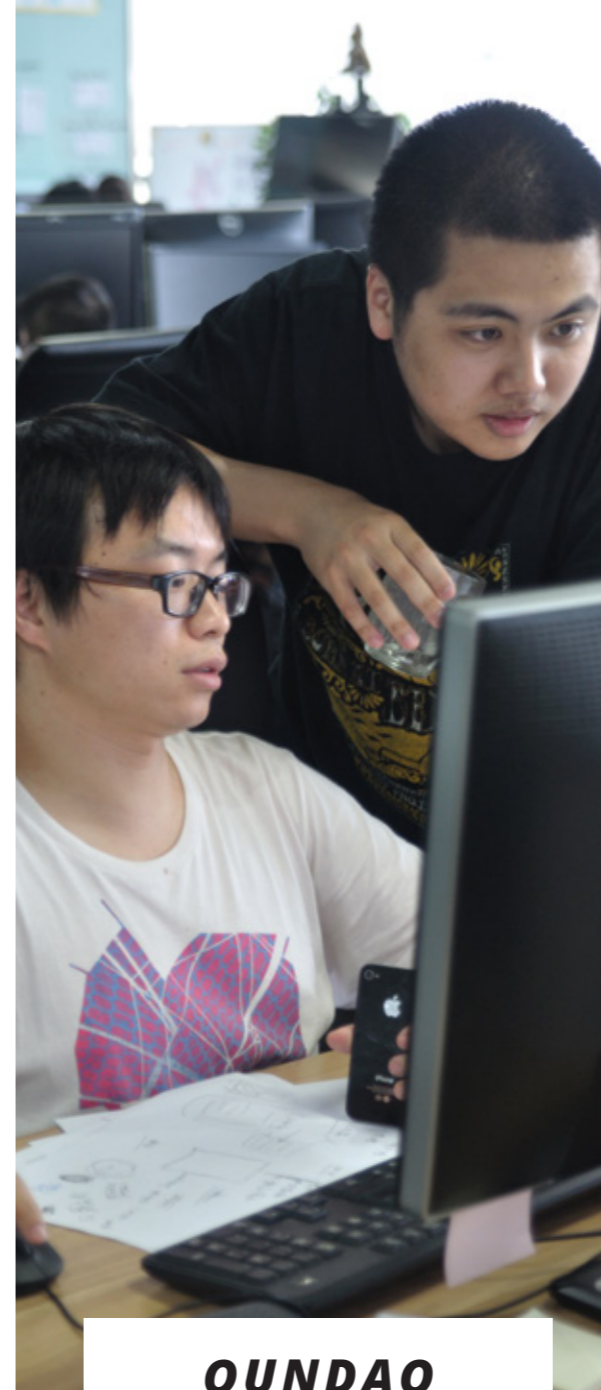
ThoughtWorks Chile launched the Web for Teens initiative to create opportunities for young people with less privilege to learn coding skills, with the ultimate goal of reducing the gap between social classes. The program model replicated the Django-Girls program, engaging teachers from the Santiago office in a 5-week course, with a curriculum focused on HTML, CSS and JavaScript.



## ART FOR GOOD

// London

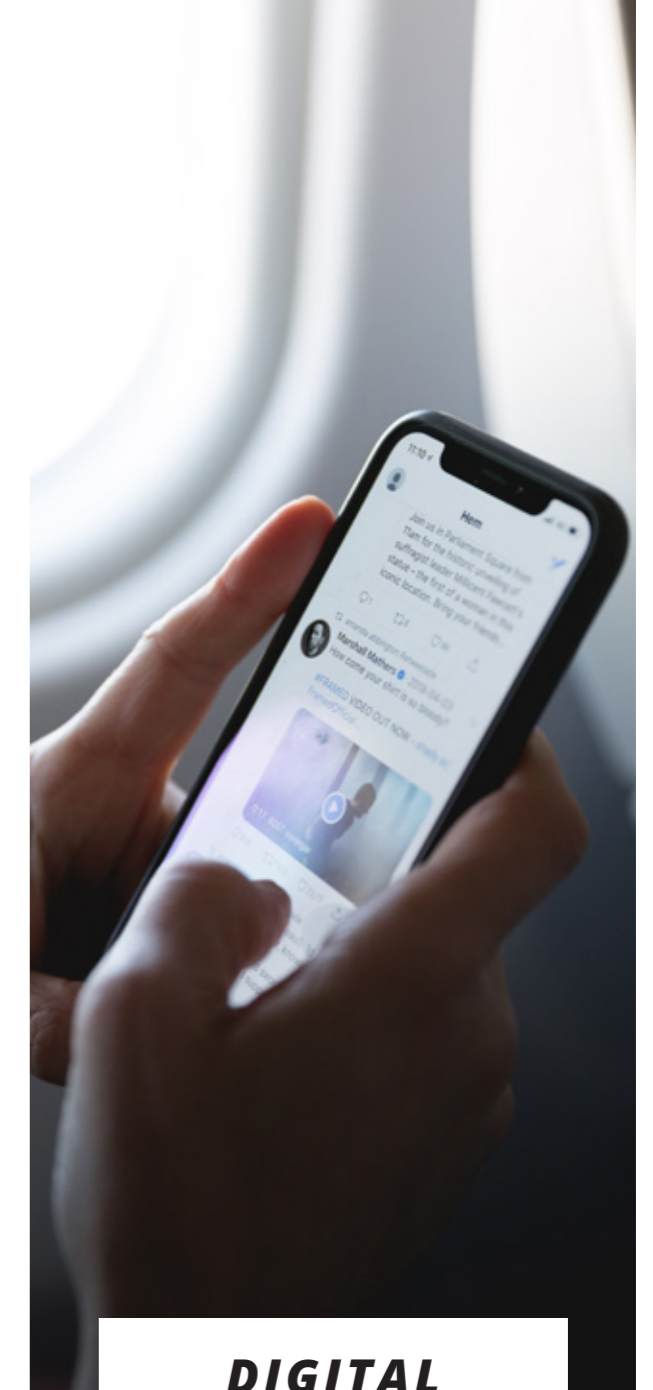
In the UK, ThoughtWorks piloted a change to office art displays. Dr J curated our first exhibition, "Phylomorphs" with 13 beautiful pieces from LGBTQ+ artists. In 2019, we are replacing this with an exhibition focussed on the BAME (Black, Asian and Minority Ethnic) experience in the UK, and the Phylomorphs pieces will be donated to the Albert Kennedy Trust to auction.



## QUNDAO

// China

ThoughtWorks China worked with [Qundao](#), an incubator to empower Chinese social enterprises. 15 ThoughtWorkers have enrolled as Qundao tutors this year; we have helped more than 60 social organizations to practice agile and lean in the last three years.



## DIGITAL RIGHTS WATCH

// Australia

ThoughtWorks Australia supported the creation of a new campaigning organization: [Digital Rights Watch](#) which brings together many organizations to support campaign initiatives and policy interventions to defend the free internet.



# RESPONSIBLE TECHNOLOGY

*We fundamentally believe that the foundation of technical excellence is a constant questioning and reimagining of how technology is transforming our world.*

At ThoughtWorks, we fundamentally believe that the foundation of technical excellence is a constant questioning and reimagining of how technology is transforming our world.

Today, tech excellence goes beyond writing great code or building an effective architecture — it means deeply embodying the values of privacy, empathy, equity and inclusion in the technology we create.

At ThoughtWorks, we have always believed that the tech sector needs an agile-scale shift to galvanize technologists and businesses to new standard operating procedures, assumptions and behaviours in our industry. Revolutionizing the tech industry has been a driving principle for many years at ThoughtWorks. Now, more than ever, we have to consider what it means to be technologists when technology is at the core of society.

We've been helping enterprises transition to a tech-enabled future for 25 years, serving as a strategic partner to solve the challenges enterprises are facing today, while providing a window into the challenges and solutions of tomorrow. With a unique commitment to both tech excellence and social impact, we've been at the forefront around issues of privacy, gender inclusion, and open source. We've helped enterprise clients innovate customer data privacy policies, diversify their workforces and leverage open source communities to build their tech.

However, what we have increasingly seen is that the seismic shifts occurring in the technology sector lead to unintended

consequences. Technology users have lost control of their privacy and agency. Society is not benefiting equally from technological advances. There is increasing concern about the part technology plays in our lives. And regulation cannot keep up with the pace of change.

As technology increasingly transforms business and our world, ThoughtWorks is uniquely positioned to remain a leader in this space, acting as a thought partner to our clients, being the future-focused technologists they need us to be. These massive shifts in how technology shapes our world has profound implications for our clients' business and the society we live in. As technologists we have to understand these implications, so we can campaign for awareness, design with empathy, avoid or mitigate against unintended consequences, and create software that truly builds an equitable tech future.

The internal campaign "Building an Equitable Tech Future" was launched in 2018 to more directly engage ThoughtWorkers in conversation about the societal implications of emerging technology. We wanted to inform and drive our vision of how ThoughtWorks should be revolutionizing the tech industry.

'Eq Tech', as we called the campaign for short, showed up in talks across the company in 2018. It featured in talks at XConfs in Germany and North America, as well as talks by ThoughtWorkers in a variety of external forums, from the Women of Silicon Roundabout to Paradigm Shift.



# RESPONSIBLE TECH VIDEOS



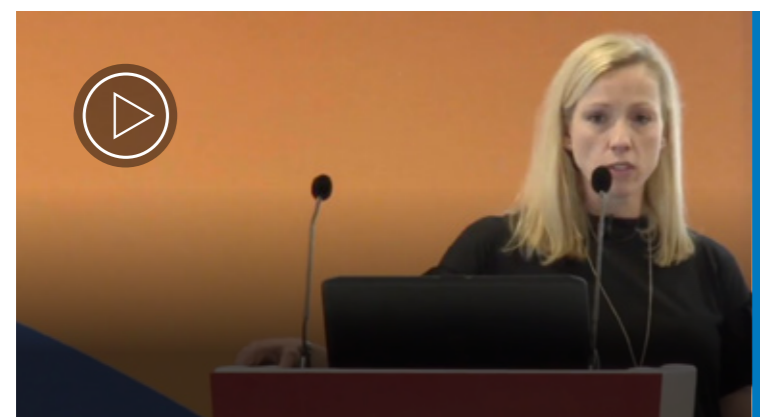
***The unintended consequences of tech choices***

**REBECCA PARSONS**  
@Paradigm Shift



***'Don't get comfortable - the changing role of the technologist'***

**JOANNA PARKE**  
@XConf NYC



***Building an equitable tech future***

**RENEE HAWKINS**  
@Women of Silicon Roundabout

# RAISING AWARENESS, REGION BY REGION

## **GERMANY**

Germany created an AI Ethics study group and hosted a series of Ethical Tech meet-ups.

## **NORTH AMERICA**

North America launched a meetup group called Ethics and Tech with almost 2,000 members to date, hosting a series of meetups in the New York Office. ThoughtWorks launched the Tech and Society series, hosting a discussion around Predictive Policing local policymakers. ThoughtWorks New York hosted the Ethical Tech Summit, convening 200 technologists, policymakers, artists, activists and academics to discuss a range of ethical tech issues.

## **UK**

The UK created a Social App for its EqTech themed Away Day, inspired by an episode of Black Mirror, "Nosedive". We wanted to see just how far our colleagues would go... and they surpassed expectations!

UK held a workshop to identify Emerging Eq Tech principles: Transparency for Trust, Awareness for Empowerment, Empathy for D&I, Accountability for Assurance.

## **INDIA**

Volunteers have formed a study group around risk zones in the EthicalOS toolkit & are planning a series of Lunch & learn sessions on equitable tech and EthicalOS.

# RESPONSIBLE TECH SPOTLIGHT



## THOUGHTWORKS ARTS

// North America

ThoughtWorks Arts is a ground-breaking program that incubates artists working in emerging technologies. Art and tech partnerships provide us a platform to explore and understand the societal implications of these technologies.

In 2018, filmmaker Karen Palmer joined ThoughtWorks as an artist-in-residence to explore emotion detection through Artificial Intelligence.

Her project, RIOT, is a film in which viewers' expressions drive the story forward in different directions. Audiences experience a riot in progress, and depending on their perceived level of calm, anger or fear, find themselves either being arrested, assaulted or set free.

While developing the project, we drew out risks and opportunities inherent to automated

decision-making systems, in the present as well as in the near future.

For example, RIOT reveals a risk that the technology will be relied on for intelligence it doesn't possess. Expression recognition systems cannot infer human intent, nor genuine emotional responses. Instead, they simply infer expression perception by other humans. So now we have an opportunity to educate and advocate for appropriate applications of the technology, and informed stakeholders.

Each artist-in-residence project reveals a web of potential risks and opportunities. Sharing these ideas and concerns provides a platform for dialogue on equity and ethics, between ThoughtWorks, partners, and our clients.

Further reading: [ThoughtWorks Arts Residency](#) & [Andy McWilliam's TEDx Talk](#) on TW Arts.

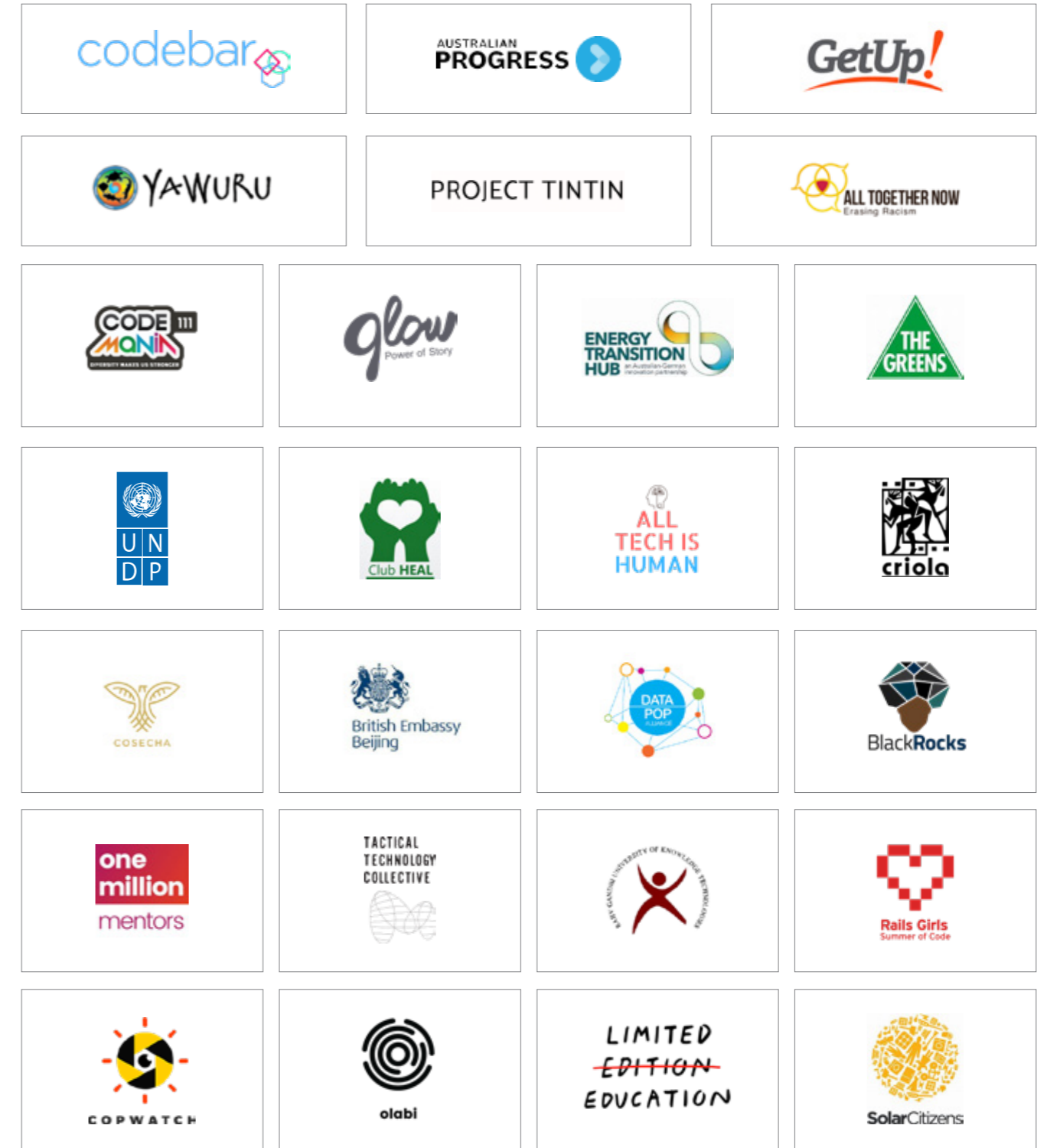
## TAKING THE RESPONSIBLE TECH FUTURE TO OUR CLIENTS

// UK

The UK ran an exciting Responsible Tech training, led by [Tactical Tech](#), around Empathetic and Ethical Design, and how to address the issues of unintended consequences. The session gave ThoughtWorkers practical tools and thinking which we can incorporate into our Capabilities but also use with clients and in our thought leadership.

We tested one of the tools against a product we're building with a client and are now exploring incorporating it at TWU (ThoughtWorks University, our global [grad program](#)).

# SOME OF OUR PARTNERS



# SOCIAL IMPACT

—— a year in review

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## ThoughtWorks®

We are a global software consultancy and community of passionate purpose-led individuals. We think disruptively to deliver technology to address our clients' toughest challenges all while seeking to revolutionize the IT industry and create positive social change.

Founded 25 years ago, ThoughtWorks has grown to a company of over 6,000 people, including a products division which makes pioneering tools for software teams. ThoughtWorks has 40 offices across 14 countries: Australia, Brazil, Canada, Chile, China, Ecuador, Germany, India, Italy, Singapore, Spain, Thailand, the United Kingdom and the United States.

[thoughtworks.com](https://www.thoughtworks.com)