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DECaDE
Centre for the Decentralised Digital Economy

Our Summer news highlights

The Next DECaDE

Over the past six years, DECaDE has tackled some of the digital economy's biggest challenges. As generative AI, digital trade and global supply chains evolve, trusted systems that enable transparency, accountability and fair value exchange are becoming increasingly important.

A central theme throughout DECaDE's research has been provenance – the ability to verify the origin, ownership, and history of digital and physical assets. Whether supporting media authenticity, enabling transparent AI training data reuse or improving trust in global supply chains, provenance provides the foundation for more trustworthy digital ecosystems.
DECaDE has demonstrated that decentralisation is not simply a technological challenge but a social, legal and economic one. Building systems that people trust requires more than innovation alone; it demands open standards, transparent governance and mechanisms that ensure accountability from the outset.

What comes next? In our final Q&A, DECaDE Director, Professor John Collomosse reflects on the centre's achievements and explores the future opportunities, collaborations and research directions emerging from its work.

Professor John Collomosse, DECaDE Centre Director

The ideas, technologies and policy frameworks developed through DECaDE provide important foundations for a digital economy in which creators retain agency, markets operate transparently and trust can be maintained as technology continues to evolve.
The future of decentralisation will depend not only on what we build, but on how we choose to govern, sustain and apply these technologies. Through its interdisciplinary approach and close collaboration with industry, policymakers and communities, DECaDE has helped shape this conversation and laid the groundwork for the next generation of trusted digital systems.

Read the Q&A here

Showcasing ZOETROPE: Tackling the Copyright and AI Challenge

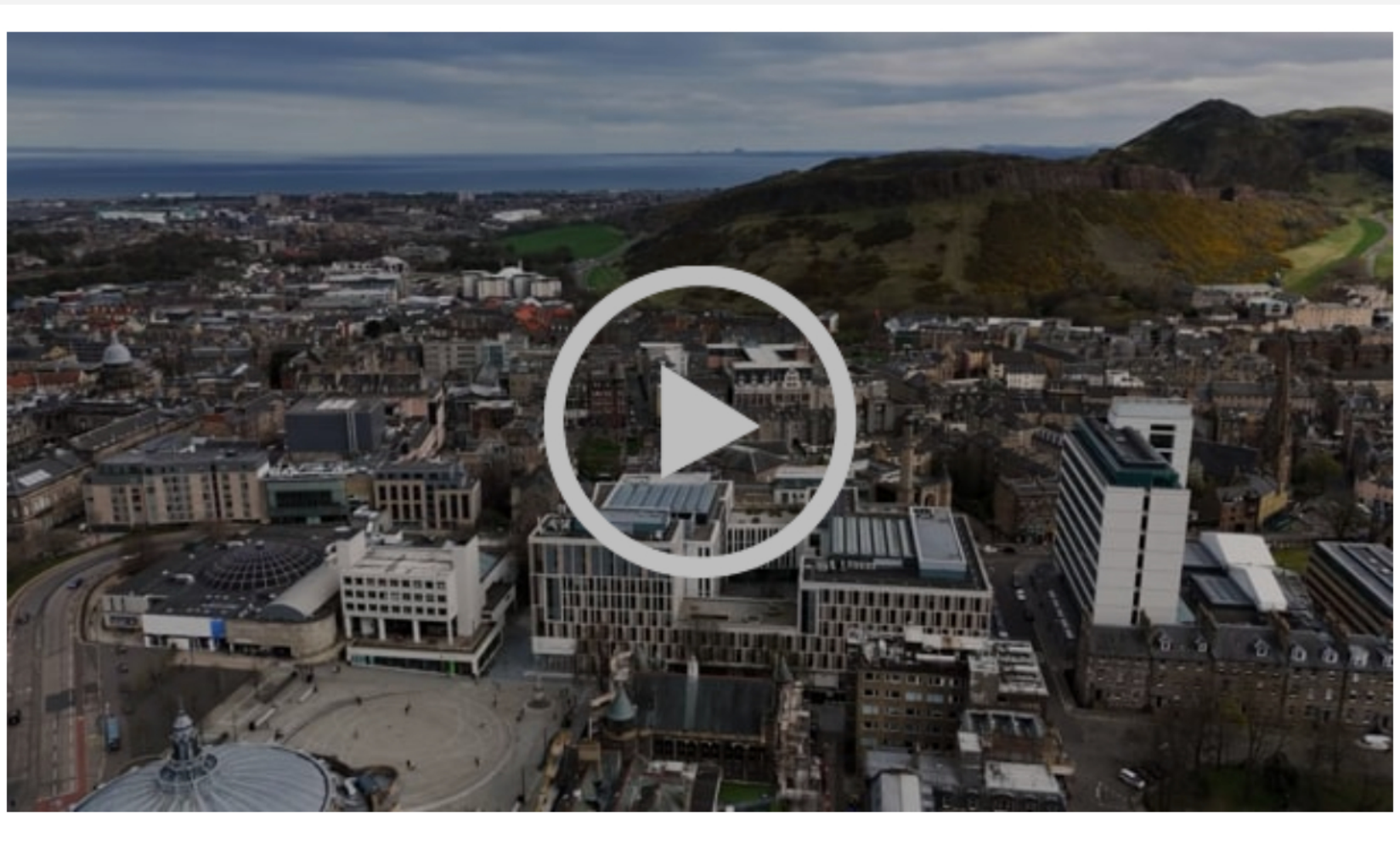
As generative AI systems continue to transform the creative landscape, questions around copyright, consent and compensation have become increasingly urgent. A new video released by DECaDE highlights ZOETROPE, an innovative technology designed to give creators greater control over how their work is used in AI systems.

Generative AI models are trained on vast amounts of online content, including artwork, photographs and other creative works. However, creators often have little visibility or control over how their content is used. ZOETROPE aims to address this challenge by enabling creators to register their work, specify consent preferences and set licensing terms for AI training. Building upon DECaDE's EKILA/ORA technical framework ZOETROPE explores new forms of digital ownership, creativity and storytelling.

The technology combines media provenance, Content Credentials, watermarking and fingerprinting to ensure ownership and rights information remains attached to content as it is shared and reused. Smart contracts automate licensing agreements and payments, helping to ensure creators receive both recognition and compensation for the use of their work. By bringing together consent, attribution and compensation, ZOETROPE represents a significant step towards a more transparent and creator-focused AI ecosystem.
An early version of ZOETROPE was demoed at CVMP 2025, and a full version of the paper will appear in the IEEE Computer Graphics and Applications journal in September 2026.
Watch the video to learn more about how DECaDE is helping shape the future of creator rights in AI.
Read the paper: GA-2026.pdf

Watch the video to learn more about DECaDE's work on media provenance, creator rights and AI governance.

Design Research on DECaDE



Researchers from The Institute for Design Informatics have released a new film showcasing the impact of the DECaDE project.

Through a collaboration between researchers at the University of Edinburgh and the University of Surrey, DECaDE brought together expertise from design, computer science, business, law and cybersecurity to explore how blockchain technologies could reshape our economies, societies and digital lives. Over five years, the project has examined the opportunities and challenges of decentralised technologies, with a particular focus on the creative industries.

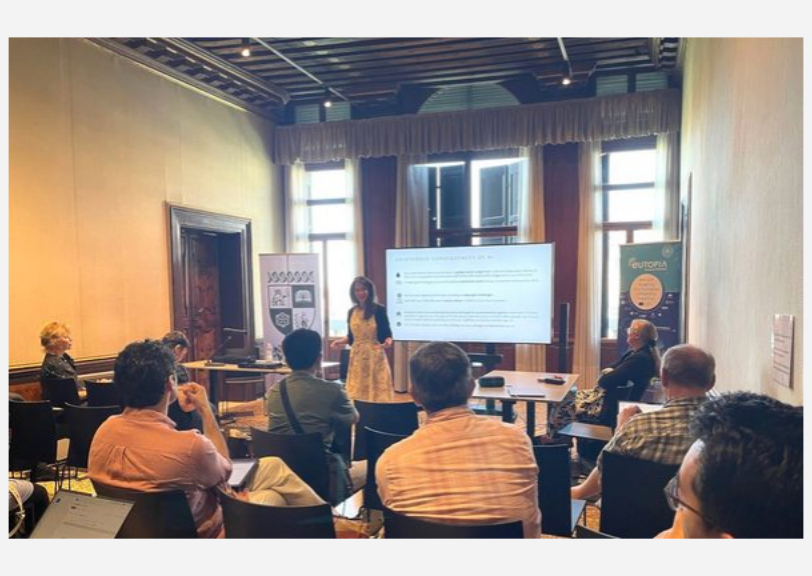
The film highlights three major design outcomes from the project: Token Gesture, which enabled people to experience and interact with NFTs; ORAgen; and ORAgen Fables, which explored new forms of digital ownership, creativity and storytelling.
Watch the film to discover how interdisciplinary research helped shape new ways of thinking about blockchain technologies and their role in the future digital economy.

Read more

DECaDE Success at CADE 2026

The DECaDE team had a strong presence at CADE 2026, the International Conference on AI and the Digital Economy, held in Venice from 15–17 June. Bringing together researchers exploring the opportunities and challenges of AI and digital transformation, the conference provided an important platform for sharing DECaDE's interdisciplinary research.

Among the papers presented was Dr. Birgit Altrichter's '*Unintended Consequences of Emerging Technologies and Ethical Considerations*', which explored how organisations can identify and address the unintended impacts of AI and other emerging technologies.
Dr. Felipe Merlano presented' '*Fact-checking Corporate Signals: Retrieval Augmented Verification of Social Responsibility Disclosures in Supply Chains*', examining how AI can be used to verify corporate social responsibility claims and improve transparency within supply chains.
Michael Brookbanks' paper, *Collaborative Governance and Co-Creation Framework for the Transformation of Cross-Border Supply Chain Ecosystems*, explored governance approaches that can support the transformation of complex supply chain networks.



Dr. Birgit Altrichter presenting at CADE.

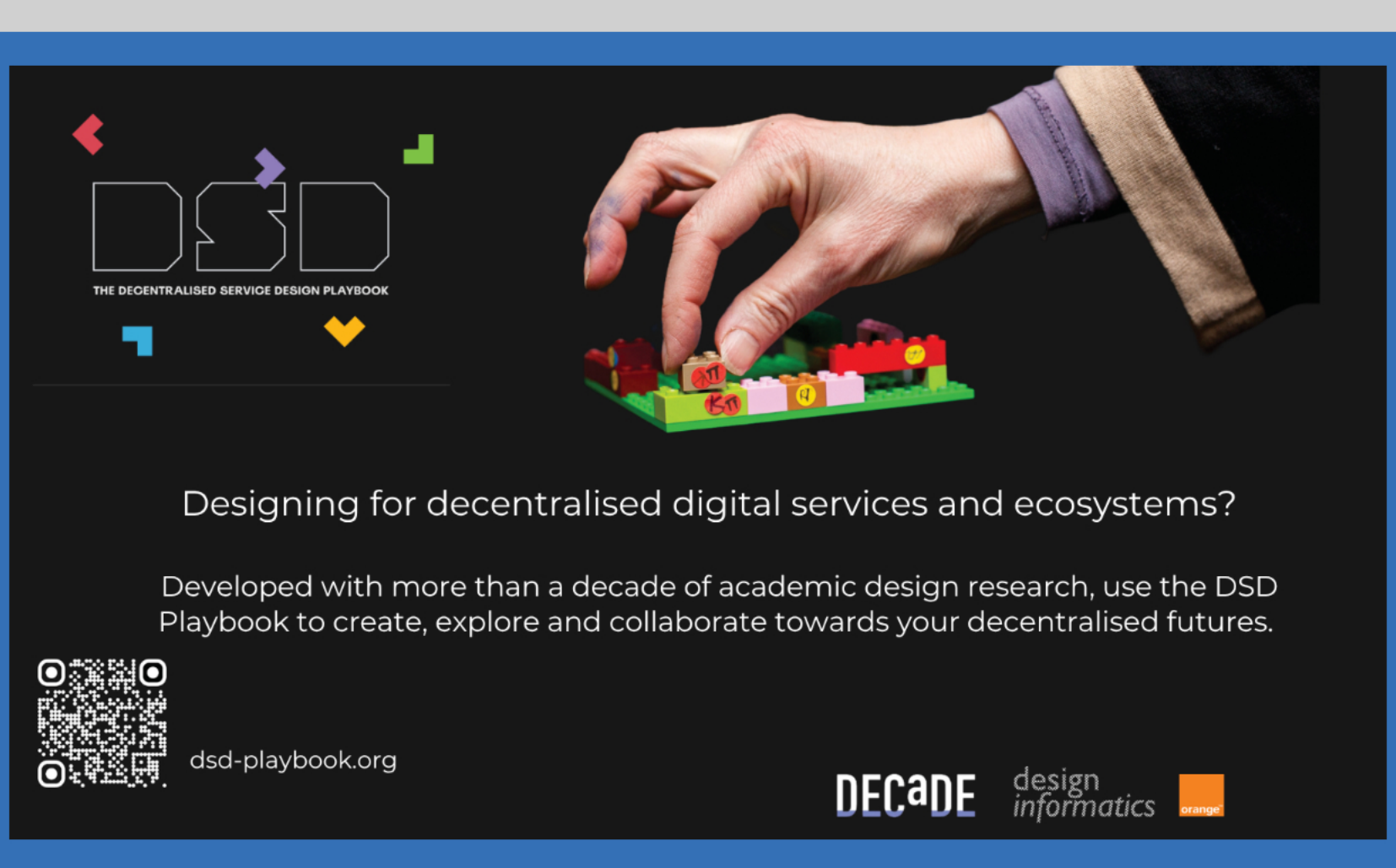
The conference concluded with further success as two DECaDE papers were recognised as runners-up in the Best Paper Award. Felipe Merlano's research was recognised for its innovative approach to measuring the gap between corporate claims and real-world actions, while Birgit Altrichter's paper sparked significant discussion around the unintended consequences of technology adoption and the need for ethical considerations in innovation.

Congratulations to Felipe, Birgit, Michael and the wider DECaDE team on this well-deserved recognition.

Our latest research

DECaDE researchers are publishing on topics related to decentralised platforms in fields such as creative industries and cross-border supply chain.

Decentralised Service Design: Co-Creation in Action



A key focus of DECaDE has been developing innovative co-creation methods to help diverse communities explore the opportunities and challenges of Distributed Ledger Technologies (DLTs).
Building on the Institute for Design Informatics' expertise in public engagement, researchers created the **Decentralised Service Design (DSD) Playbook** – an open and accessible toolkit that enables practitioners to design and run their own workshops exploring how services may evolve in a decentralised digital economy.
Developed in partnership with Orange and supported by a £20,000 ESRC Impact Acceleration Award, the playbook has been shaped through collaboration with industry partners across the supply chain, manufacturing and finance sectors. These partnerships have helped test and refine the toolkit in a range of real-world contexts.

The DSD Playbook includes full walkthroughs, slide-decks and worksheet packs, adaptable for both in-person or online workshops.
Visit www.https://dsd-playbook.org/

"DECaDE's DSD Playbook turns academic research into practical tools, enabling anyone—experts and non-experts alike—to co-create and design decentralised services."

DECaDE also worked with Brussels-based think tank AI4People to develop a complementary AI Ethics Playbook. Presented to representatives from the European Commission, industry and NGOs in December 2025, the resource translates AI ethics principles into practical activities and guidance that organisations can use to support responsible AI adoption.
By transforming academic research methods into practical design tools, DECaDE is helping organisations, communities and policymakers engage in informed discussions about the future of decentralised services and emerging technologies, regardless of their technical expertise.

Read More

Read our latest publications here

DECaDE

THE CENTRE FOR THE DECENTRALISED DIGITAL ECONOMY

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