



Round Table:
Inclusion in the network
society



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Call for Abstracts

Round table:

Inclusion in the network society – mapping development alternatives, forging research agendas

Bangalore, India

29th September – 1st October 2014

The experience of first-generation initiatives in the field of 'ICTs and development' has clearly demonstrated that the question of inclusion in the network society cannot be reduced merely to that of access to technological artefacts or infrastructures. In a globalised social order, the mechanisms of *networked, global* systems – production chains, finance, scientific and research processes, and the media – structure the rules of inclusion. They determine who has the ability to substantively participate in, and benefit from, the dominant networks of information, knowledge, production, and of cultural and resource flows.

Today, as we witness what has been somewhat glibly labelled the 'mobile revolution', alongside a momentous surge in the use of social media technologies – especially by young populations in developing countries – newer frames to interpret social equity, inclusion and participation become critical for the agenda of development. How does the diffusion of ICTs connect to the democratisation of information, knowledge and culture? Does it offer new pathways for the socially marginalised to have greater control over knowledge and wealth? [International Development Research Centre](#) (IDRC), along with [IT for Change](#), will host a round table between 29th September-1st October, bringing together leading development scholars and practitioners to contribute to the ongoing dialogues on ICTs and development – particularly from the vantage point of equity and inclusion.

In September 2009, IDRC had initiated a similar dialogue with Nobel Laureates Amartya Sen and Michael Spence, as well as other leading thinkers, at the [Harvard Forum on ICTs, Human Development, Growth and Poverty Reduction](#). Building on the key debates of the Harvard Forum, the round table will explore if, and how, opportunities in the emerging network society are, and can be, 'programmed' into the structures of technological networks. Another key objective of the round table is to build a research agenda that is contemporary enough to tackle the future of the ICTs and development question in the Global South.

Key issues

The round table will focus on the following issues:

1. What is the emerging structural-institutional ecology framing inclusion in the network society? What readings of the current paradigms of ICT diffusion, use, production and policy allow us to trace power and exclusion?
2. How do we map continuities and disjunctures in development practice when technology meets society, to build a 'new' narrative in which all people matter?
3. Under what conditions can digital technologies bring about 'equitable inclusion' in the network society? What kind of a structural-institutional ecology can facilitate efforts for 'equitable inclusion' in the network society?
4. What broad questions and specific themes would comprise a pertinent research agenda on networks, development and inclusion? What research methodologies would be appropriate in this regard?

Outcomes

The round table envisages the following outcomes:

- Field-building that deepens theoretical inquiry on 'inclusion and equity in the network society'.
- Research agenda-setting on themes at the intersection of networks, development and inclusion.
- Network building to explore possibilities for further work to build a systematic body of knowledge.
- Knowledge products in the form of papers/essays, that can be the basis of a special journal issue.

The event is designed to bring together around 25 participants – leading scholars, development practitioners and thinkers, as well as young researchers and practitioners in the sector who are interested in the theoretical and policy aspects of equity, inclusion and participation, in the 'ICTs and development' domain.

This open call seeks to identify young development researchers and practitioners who can contribute to the debate. Interested individuals need to submit an abstract of 1000 words that will become the basis for an analytical essay, in case it is short-listed for the round table. There is a limited number of travel fellowships for authors of selected full-length essays, to participate in the round table. Selection criteria include a minimum of five years of experience in the development sector, preferably with a focus on ICTs, and two publications. (Criteria may be relaxed on a case-by-case basis). For additional details on the themes, please see the detailed [concept note](#) for this event.

Submission deadlines

Abstracts must be received by **9th June 2014**. Full essays are due by **15th August 2014**. Please send all submissions and queries to: networkinclusion@gmail.com



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