
United Nations Public Service Forum 2018

Workshop I
Governance of the Future

ICTs and Inequality
**What sustainable strategies to close
the digital divide by 2030?**

Session 3, Working Group 2

Anita Gurumurthy, IT for Change

— **Knowing the present - to govern the future**

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...There remains a fundamental conflict of interest between politicians, the corporate world and the general populace. Governments must create a cohesive framework where materials are repurposed on a national level and move away from obsessions with GDP growth. Regulators must create an environment that gives businesses incentives to implement circular projects and work more effectively with enforcement agencies. And the private sector has to change its production models and create economic value from circular initiatives....

Knowing the present - to govern the future



Partnership between UNCTAD, ICC Brazil, IBM to address challenges in trade negotiations

Research by LawGeeks shows that in a test to read legal documents lawyers scored an average of 85%, compared to the robot's 94%. But more impressive was the fact that AI was able to review the five agreements in just 26 seconds, while the lawyers took an average of 92 minutes.

Knowing the present - to govern the future



Cities bidding for inviting Amazon's second HQ

Digital society or digital tools? - Question of frames

- Crisis of governability**
- Crisis of measures and indicators**
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- ??**
- ???**
- ????**
- ?????**
- The seduction of the AI master narrative**
- The need for new norms about old values of democracy
equality, dignity and solidarity**

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Part 1. The multiple divides in the digital paradigm

1.1 The access divide



Proportion of households with Internet access in 2017 (Source: ITU)

- In developed countries, the proportion of households with Internet access is twice as high as in developing countries and six times as high as the least developed countries (ITU ICT Facts and Figures 2017)
- Market forces are not bringing connectivity to populations in “remote and rural areas” especially for poorer, minority, and less educated members of society (Broadband Commission 2016)
- Women are the most affected by this “access trap”. Case of Africa (ITU ICT Facts and Figures 2017)

1.2. The skills and capacities divide

- People's capacities to engage with technology – starkly differentiated along socio-structural location (Broadband Commission, 2017)
- Without digital capacities, individuals cannot move from 'mere use' to 'meaningful engagement' with the Internet and ICTs.

See evidence from Women's Rights Online (2015)

- The capacities divide may entrench inequalities in the occupational structure in our digital future -
 - *the divide' between individuals who get to control and manipulate data, and those with no opportunity to do so (O'Neil 2016)*
 - 60% of jobs displaced bec of automation in the next decade will be women's – with reversal in loss of status

1.3. The development divide

- Emerging forms of Inequality and exclusion cannot be understood completely through an 'individual rights' perspective. We also need to understand the growing divide between countries and the implications for the right to development:

Developing countries need policy and regulatory space to engage in digital catch-up to maximise the benefits of digital industrialisation, but [prevailing global digital trade arrangements] prevent such strategies and lock developing countries into the low value and dependent parts of the global digital economy (UNCTAD 2018)

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Part 2. What national level strategies should developing countries adopt?

2.1 Inclusive digitalisation policy

- Policymakers need to effectively address exclusions in connectivity through:
 - targets for closing the access divide need to be differentiated by population; sweeping targets don't work.
 - accountable management of Universal Service Access funds (take the case of Colombia, Botswana, Turkey, Costa Rica)
 - Fibre backbone
 - Rural community access
 - Subsidised broad band and devices
 - Digital skills training
 - Free public wifi

2.1 Inclusive digitalisation policy (contd.)

- Connectivity is not enough.... policymakers need to move to a comprehensive strategy that focuses on all “horizontal enablers” (Digitalization Scorecard of the Broadband Commission 2017)
 - digital leadership – integrated road map
 - digital literacy
 - cybersecurity
 - e-payment
 - cloud services
- Data as an important axis of digitalisation policy
 - data protection
 - data sharing for innovation (Eg.India’s vision of an “enabling data ecosystem”)
 - Public data infrastructures or data as public good (AI units in key sectors – China, Canada, Singapore)

2.2 Economic policy

- Investment in digital capacities
 - Dedicated programmes to ensure all citizens have the basic ICT skills to work (Mexico)
 - Incentivising workers and firms to reskill/upgrade their skills to ensure employability and upward mobility (Singapore)
- Ensuring decent and quality jobs in the digital economy
- Codes of Conduct for platform workers and tracking of working conditions (websites such as Turkopticon and Fair Crowdwork Watch)

2.2 Economic policy (cont)

- Localising digital enterprises by responding to gaps in local analog infrastructure. (Building competitive advantage where big tech cant go) Ek Gaon in India works in agricultural value chain
- Programmes for promoting participation of MSMEs in cross-border e-commerce (UNCTAD 2017)
 - *The case of Mexico's Export Promotion Agency's B2B platform*
 - *Specific focus on women entrepreneurs needed.*
- Investment in regional value chains before global value chains (*African Continent Free Trade Area*)

2.3 Governance and democracy

- Accountable use of algorithms in welfare and public services (New York City Task Force)
- Right to explanation as an extension of the right against discrimination and prevention of unjustifiable cultural bias (EU GDPR and IEEE P-7003 Standard)
- Moving beyond 'AI panacea' to contextualised application of the suite of AI technologies in development decision-making (audits based on tax data, aid based on food insecurity data, girls' enrollment based on education data)
- Data partnerships in governance systems – community data models and ensuring accountability and guarding against extractivist cultures

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Part 3. Governance considerations for trade - emerging debates

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3.1. Global level policy stances - emerging issues

- Strategic approach to governance of cross-border data flows – not a one size fits all! (IT for Change 2018)
- Older issues are becoming important
 - Moratorium on ‘custom duties on digital products’ in WTO and flooding of foreign content. (Losses on tariff and cul rights)
 - Ecommerce negotiations in WTO
- Closing the investment gap – Only 1% of all MDB investments in ICT projects. New strategies in development finance needed for digital inclusion.

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Thank you!

anita@itforchange.net

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