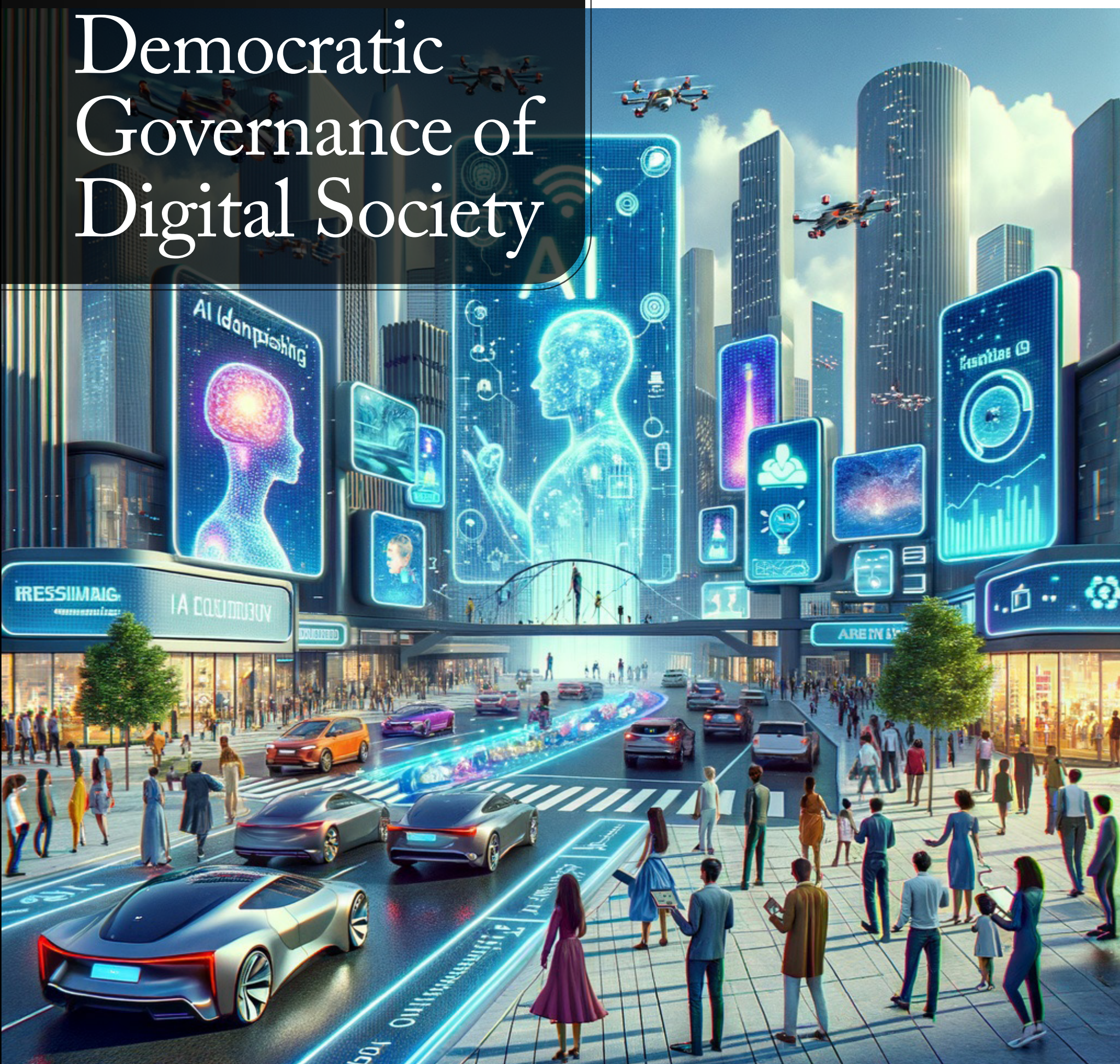
Media Development

1/2024

WACC

Towards Democratic Governance of Digital Society



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In the next issue

The theme of *Media Development* 2/2024 will be how to reinterpret communication rights today.

WACC communication for all

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EDITORIAL

Over one hundred years of sci-fi books, magazines, TV programmes, and films have made it easier (as Dr Who fans will testify) to believe that aliens from outer space are intent on taking over Earth. In 1938, courtesy of a notorious radio broadcast of "The War of the Worlds", they were Martians. Today, they are supercomputers imbued with Artificial Intelligence: *ailiens* from inner space.

Many writers had explored the idea of machines taking over aspects of society before Isaac Asimov published his sci-fi short story "The Inevitable Conflict" in 1950. In it, Earth is divided into four geographical regions, each with a powerful supercomputer known as a Machine that manages its economy. The machines conspire to take control of humanity's destiny.

A more recent example of this storyline can be found in Rehoboam (Westworld, 2020), a quantum AI computer system whose main function is to impose order on human affairs by careful manipulation and prediction of the future through analysis of a vast dataset collected by a global corporation.

Small wonder that the line between humans and robots (including computers like Hal 9000 in Arthur C. Clarke's Space Odyssey series) has been blurred, with the result that aliens tend to have human features, and *ailiens* are made to "think" like humans. Siri and Alexa are family friends ready to serve and entertain.

In their textbook *Artificial Intelligence: A Modern Approach* (1995; 4th ed. 2020), Stuart Russell and Peter Norvig offer four potential goals or definitions of AI, differentiating computer systems on the basis of a human and an ideal approach. The human approach demands systems that think or act like humans; while the ideal approach demands systems that think or act rationally. It is the tension between the human and the ideal that raises numerous almost intractable questions of ethics. Who is responsible for the actions of machines?

In Greek tragedy, actors playing gods entered the stage from above lowered by a crane or from below through a trapdoor, hence the Latin *deus ex machina* –a person or event that is introduced into a situation suddenly and unexpectedly, providing a contrived solution to an apparently insoluble difficulty.

Many later playwrights and authors used this device to resolve a conundrum, and some 20th century philosophers used the expression to describe the concept of the mind existing alongside and separate from the body as a *ghost in the machine* – also explored by Isaac Asimov in his collection of sci-fi short stories "I Robot" (1950). Particle physicists searching for neutrinos and antineutrinos thought of them as ghosts and theologians have long speculated about the intervention of God in human affairs.

No wonder, then, that people imagine that AI machines embody a sentient being, when all they really do is join up the dots at an exponential rate based on an exponential amount of data. What is of genuine concern, however, is the uses to which AI machines are put and their inevitable impact on human society. When the European Union's Panel for the Future of Science and Technology studied AI ethics (2020), it concluded:

> "The current frameworks address the major ethical concerns and make recommendations for governments to manage them, but *notable gaps* exist. These include environmental impacts, including increased energy consumption associated with AI data processing and manufacture, and inequality arising from unequal distribution of benefits and potential exploitation of workers… It will be important for future iterations of these frameworks to address these and other gaps in order to adequately prepare for the full implications of an AI future. In addition, to clarify the issue of responsibility pertaining to AI behaviour, moral and legislative frameworks will require updating alongside the development of the technology itself."[1]

Many actors in civil society are concerned

Image above courtesy of Pixabay. File made available under the Creative Commons CC0 1.0 Universal Public Domain Dedication. Source: https://pixabay.com/es/illustrations/inteligencia-artificial-cerebro-3382507/

that digital technologies, including those based on AI, can be appropriated by governments, security services, and global corporations to repress, control, manipulate, and profit from ordinary people – who have their own expectations of how these technologies might improve lives and livelihoods. Viable alternatives to "more of the same" are urgently needed as the NGO IT for Change, based in Bengaluru, India, urges in this issue of *Media Development*:

> "A just and equitable AI paradigm hinges on the radical restructuring of the global regime of knowledge, innovation, and development. This requires a structural justice approach to AI governance that is able to articulate the pathways for multi-scalar institutional transformation."

Fortunately, the European Union seems to be ahead of the game. In December 2023, the European Parliament and EU member states agreed on the parameters for the world's first comprehensive laws to regulate AI. The laws will not come into force until 2025 at the earliest. However, they will govern social media and search engines, including giants such as X, TikTok, and Google, and they will be based on a tiered system in which the highest level of regulation will apply to those machines that pose the highest risk to health, safety, and human rights.

In terms of communicative justice, the digital era needs "Societies in which everyone can freely create, access, utilise, share and disseminate information and knowledge, so that individuals, communities and peoples are empowered to improve their quality of life and to achieve their full potential."[2] To that end, digital media literacy is crucial, since demystifying how digital technologies and AI work – and how they

are controlled or manipulated – will mean greater awareness of the possible dangers and pitfalls. As Jim McDonnell points out in his article:

"Like all technological developments, the current AI wave does not determine the future. Human beings can and will invent creative alternatives. But they need to be much better informed about how the technology works and much more wary about the risks they face online. In short, there is a huge effort required to promote digital literacy and digital rights. This means involving citizens in the wider public discourse about how technologies like AI could be shaped and regulated for the wider public good." ■

Notes

1. *The ethics of artificial intelligence: Issues and initiatives*. Panel for the Future of Science and Technology. European Parliamentary Research Service (March 2020).
2. From "Shaping information societies for human needs". WSIS Civil Society Declaration (2003).

This issue of Media Development *has been produced in collaboration with IT for Change, which aims for a society in which digital technologies contribute to human rights, social justice and equity. Its work in the areas of education, gender, governance, community informatics and internet/digital policies pushes the boundaries of existing vocabulary and practice, exploring new development and social change frameworks. Network building is key. IT for Change is in Special Consultative Status with the Economic and Social Council of the United Nations.*

Digital platforms versus democratic political discourse: Challenges and the way forward

Seán Ó Siochrú and Anita Gurumurthy

At the turn of this century, many in civil society believed we were witnessing the dawn of a new era for the public sphere, one where the internet could realise the promise of a communication space where all voices could be heard equally, where the dominance of centralised and commercial media could be countered through a public agora open to all.

Instead, the neo-liberal paradigm soon engulfed the still-nascent internet, slowly but inexorably extinguishing such hopes, to a point where talk is now of a "post-public sphere" in which even the concept of the truth is in question, and where political discourse is ever more distant from the "real". Dominant social platforms pursue business models based on data-mining, surveillance and behavioural nudging, displacing social interaction with algorithm-driven digital mediation that replaces shared memories and collective experience with constant attention seeking and individual gratification.

One of the core features of digital platforms is their capacity to disseminate misinformation and disinformation very rapidly across huge swathes of the population. Before the platforms emerged, commercial media monopolies,

counteracted only to a degree by public service, non-profit and community-based media, had always profited from publishing sensational material. Corporate owners, sensitive to advertisers and their own interests, also steered clear of criticising capitalism and or pointing to its inequities.

The main social media platforms today do the same, but push it to an entirely new level. First, smartphones mean they secure attention at a much younger age. Second, they generate individual consumer profiles, thus sustaining – for commercial gain – their attention for much longer periods with a constant bombardment of tailored consumer products and ideology; and in the meantime, dragging them down "rabbit holes" of false information and into echo chambers and filter bubbles. The dawn of AI heralds a whole new set of possibilities to generate "verisimilitude", and even for the forgery of "scientific" datasets.[1] Third, by claiming not to publish content per se, but merely to enable others to circulate it, they bypass traditional institutional content regulation (albeit light regulation in the case of newspapers).

This much we know; it is barely contested anymore. Negative consequences for political discourse in many countries are widely acknowledged, as leaders are elected based on divisive and false claims targeting a population already suffering under the real-life onslaught of neo-liberal attacks on wages and job security and weary of information overload and of trying to interpret causes and solutions.

Current responses

So, let's get positive, and ask what can and must be done.

A first positive note is that the situation has become so blatant, that even mainstream economists and politicians can now talk about the "negative externalities" associated with the rapid and widespread dissemination of mis/disinformation and hate speech that go hand in hand with the digital platforms' business models, and how these negatively impact trust in public institutions and generate political and economic instability, radicalisation and extremism. Securing "information integrity"[2] is the terminology being used. Numerous countries have enacted, or are enacting, legislation to tackle various elements of this – though with little effective experience internationally to guide them.

Measures include attempts, notably in Canada and Australia, to channel some of the enormous profits of digital platforms, indirectly generated through users accessing media content, back to mainstream media providers. The EU is also a leading actor, the Digital Service Act (2022) obliging member states to establish a new regulator/commissioner for safety on the internet, and to ensure that very large platforms strengthen due diligence measures regarding illegal content and the deliberate manipulation of their services to achieve illegitimate goals. Institutional means to identify and remove problematic content can also be deployed.

In addressing these problems, a key challenge is to ensure that individual freedom of expression is protected particularly against state power, while at the same time addressing how the space for political expression is being constricted and distorted by the digital platform's market power. This is especially acute for many developing countries, since significant expertise and resources are required to develop the legislation and implement it. Countries tending towards authoritarianism face the very real danger that regulation and laws purporting to control these platforms will in fact be utilised to shut down dissenting voices, a real risk in for instance India.[3]

Nevertheless, a broad consensus appears to be emerging among many governments that tackling misinformation, disinformation and hate speech will demand new and more robust approaches to regulation, and that voluntary or self-regulatory approaches simply do not work. It is no coincidence that Brazil, in leading the G20 process for the first half of 2024, is including information integrity among its priorities in the digital sphere.

Why existing responses are inadequate

Yet the process of building a vibrant public sphere faces even bigger challenges.

Even if the worst excesses of digital platforms can be curbed, the current configuration of internet and digital platform-based media and communication cannot begin to live up to early hopes for the internet and for the creation of a deeper and more democratic public sphere. Centralised attempts to control the innate tendencies of platform algorithms that are designed to maximise profits, even where they achieve their core goals, cannot in themselves generate a dynamic that will reverse the notion that "truth" is a chimera – the profound epistemological question about the nature of truth and knowledge itself – let alone create the space and dynamic for a new information eco-system based on human rights, trust and credibility and capable of addressing diverse public interests.

Though the digital revolution introduced some novel twists, reigning in, in the above respects, of platform control, though absolutely necessary, would see the resurfacing of the same challenges faced previously by civil society: profit driven media with a vested interest in promoting consumerism and perpetuating the wider economic and social structures, insufficiently counter-balanced by public service media and emergent community-owned and independent non-profit media.

Thus, enhancing, even securing, "information integrity" of the major digital platforms' content by no means addresses the deeper issues involved in building a public sphere and political discourse in the digital age. Which leads to a further point.

At the risk of inducing pessimism at the sheer scale of challenges, there exists a deeper problem with the major digital platforms, one that impacts indirectly but powerfully on efforts to build a vibrant and diverse public sphere.

Attempts so far to tackle the power of the digital platforms tend not to address the core business model of these platforms. The latter will continue to rely on behavioural surveillance and profiling, maximising attention capture through psychological manipulation, from an early age and constant targeted advertising. Though the area needs further research, this is likely to have a significant impact on the capacity of people to engage meaningfully with ongoing political and wider social discourse and tends to reinforce a self-identity oriented primarily towards market consumption. This, arguably, leaves people more vulnerable to misinformation and disinformation, and poorly equipped to engage in critical thinking. Therefore, also needed are measures to tackle this core business model, and to extract people, especially young people, from the grip of the consumerist mindset, and to offer a wider range of identities and life incentives.

In the end, political discourse and the dominant economic paradigm, and indeed cultural expression, are closely intertwined in society, and building a space largely free from market and consumerist forces is likely to be a precondition to widely accessible and genuine democratic communicative space.

Levels of challenge

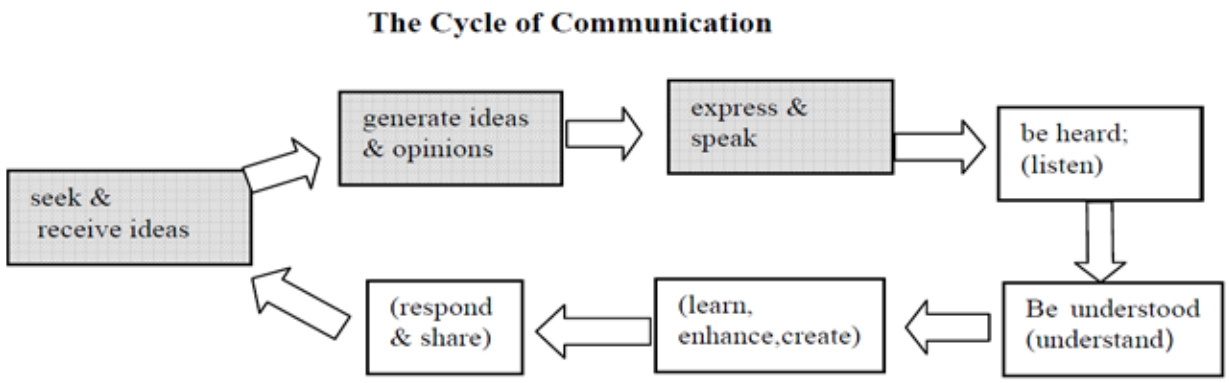
The challenge must be tackled at several levels, conceptually in terms of the language deployed and practically in policy and regulation from international to local levels, which can also enable people and communities to engage in and build democratic spaces and media.

Developing a conceptual framework

At the conceptual level, if the intention is to go beyond ameliorating some of the more egregious "negative externalities" of digital platforms, then the focus has to switch to the wider media and communication eco-system. The concept of information integrity, for instance, points legitimately to key concerns of accuracy, authenticity, source and so forth, related to an individual item of content. But this is detached from the wider eco-system that enabled its production, valorisation (both financially and substantively), sharing, filtering, access and consumption. These processes are located in, and influenced by specific eco-

nomic, social, cultural and institutional contexts, that enable content to be produced and stamp specific features on it. On its own, information integrity tells us very little about these wider structures. If the problems of political discourse are to be meaningfully addressed, they must encompass this wider context.

There already exist several conceptual frameworks capable of incorporating this broad approach. For instance, the idea of communication rights, as distinct from freedom of expression, offers a more holistic rights-based eco-system, tracing all stages in society's cycle of communication.[4] From this perspective the term 'communication integrity', as distinct from information integrity, may go some way towards capturing the wider institutional and systemic context and dynamic.



The shaded boxes above broadly encapsulate freedom of expression, but the others (those in brackets are associated with duty-bearers, individual or institutional) embrace the entire eco-system of communication in a dynamic manner, to potentially complete a virtuous cycle of communication that enriches political discourse. Amartya Sen's work might offer a complementary source of inspiration here. He argues that citizens reshape democracy through processes of public reasoning, underscoring the significance of unhindered communication, critical scrutiny, human security and value formation.[5]

Thus, an appropriate framework can offer overall guidance to building a set of concepts and ideas that can capture the complexity of media and communication in world largely dominated by digital platforms, and point to possible futures.

Policy and regulation

Effective policy and regulatory solutions will have to go further than those currently being developed or under discussion by government and institutions. Designing and implementing measures to ensure information integrity, while preserving freedom of expression, are of course important, including fact-checking by transparent public institutions.

But extending these to encompass the full cycle of social communication will require a lot more. The EU Digital Markets Act (2022) takes initial steps towards tackling the power of the major digital platforms by identifying and imposing obligations on "gatekeeper" service providers,[6] though the focus is primarily on enhancing competition; and by setting in place certain institutional safeguard mechanisms. The DMA can also mandate interoperability and data portability between core digital services and platforms, enabling users to migrate more easily to emerging platforms, including non-profit decentralised digital content platforms. These measures could, if vigorously enforced, have far-reaching long term consequences for the diversity of digital media.

Platform algorithms, largely untouched by proposed and actual regulation, need also to be subject to public scrutiny, and could be required, for instance, to forego the simplistic but fiercely defended notion of "relevance" (which catches and retains attention), and to ensure that algorithms promote content that is diverse, challenging, important and serendipitous. Some countries, such as Ireland, are also committed to providing direct financial support to non-digital media, including community media, to engage with the digital age, and potentially to guarantee the visibility and accessibility of alternatives on

the major digital media platforms.

Measures to enable public service, non-profit and community-owned media, to prosper are also essential to building a public space for critical media capable of enriching public debate. New, decentralised, non-profit business models are needed, with strong public support.

Yet even all of these measured combined are unlikely to be enough to tackle the depth of the problems and to confront the massive economic and political power of the dominant digital platform corporations. More radical measures may be required, including for instance the following:

- A total prohibition on surveillance-based advertising, unyoking people from their status as data-generators to maximise profits and arresting the bombardment of targeted advertising in every facet of their lives.
- At the level of service infrastructure, a complete structural separation of communication, including media, services from other forms of data-supported services, such as commerce or services providers.
- Major public support for the development of decentralised platform architectures and non-profit business models for media, particularly those emerging from civil society and communities and in developing countries.

Ultimately, a central enabling component could be the creation of a new UN body, established to take forward the inclusive agenda of the WSIS stemming from 2003/2005, moving towards democratic governance of digital society. The pressing challenge here is to move beyond the corporate-dominated multi-stakeholder models that have emerged since then, and to ensure multi-scalar, global consultation processes, guaranteeing that bottom-up voices and assemblies have a critical and powerful role. ▪

Notes

1. For this emerging possibility see https://www.nature.com/articles/d41586-023-03635-w
2. Defined by the UN Secretary General Policy Brief as accuracy, consistency and reliability of information. Misinformation, disinformation and hate speech as identified as major threats to it. Our Common Agenda: Policy Brief No. 8. https://www.un.org/sites/un2.un.org/files/our-common-agenda-policy-brief-information-integrity-en.pdf
3. There is always a risk that the concept of Information integrity can, when implemented in practice, mutate into the concept of 'information security', with strong overtones of centralised and illegitimate state control over permissible digital content. Nevertheless, the argument here is that the risks posed by platforms have become so compelling and threatening to (already fragile) democratic institutions, that many governments are willing to put considerable effort into finding solutions that minimise the possibility of such mutation.
4. See https://waccglobal.org/wp-content/uploads/2020/07/Assessing-Communication-Rights.pdf
5. See for instance his influential work *The Idea of Justice (2009).*
6. In September 2023, these were named by the European Commission as Alphabet, Amazon, Apple, ByteDance, Meta and Microsoft, and a further group were designated as Core Platform Providers. https://digital-markets-act.ec.europa.eu/commission-designates-six-gatekeepers-under-digital-markets-act-2023-09-06_en

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To breathe easy and dance light: Embracing revolution with the DisCO Manifesto

Anita Gurumurthy and Nandini Chami

Long ago, and when we were still tentative in our vocabulary, Dalit women's collectives in Mysuru – with very little material wherewithal, but the immense largeness of being – taught us how small is made beautiful. They ran a community radio station, maintained their own civic information registry, and lent meaning to convivial democracy. We have learnt with them the to-dos for feminist digitality's ice bucket challenge; the modes and methods of sense-making, place-making and claims-making for a humane and just digital world.

The Disco Manifesto resonates deeply with us. We are terrified by digital utopianism. The negation of lived experience and systematic domination programmed into tech and its "abstract, dangerously necrotic mechanisms" tell us that tech is far from any fix. We don't think we need "smart"; on the contrary, we – the sum total of co-dependent, co-implicated, planetary beings – need the easy rhythm of the heart. The omnipotent narrative of "machine-porn", of "self-sufficient artificial intelligence running autonomously on a decentralized system" and advancing trustless trust through immutable programming would seem patently absurd to anyone. Only, in an unfeeling, synthetic world fashioned and foisted by autocratic tech messiahs drunk on power, the joke, sadly, is on the commoner and their commons.

Re-reading the Manifesto today, in a world redefined by the Covid pandemic and its aftermath for the destiny of tech, is important. We see in the many stories of demise, including the recent collapse of cryptoexchange FTX, that a decentralised, peer-to-peer economy built on DAO-based Web 3.0 is just smoke and mirrors. But we also see – in the resurgence of venture capital funding for the new hot potato that is AI – yet another addictive path into the labyrinth of financialisation.

How, then, must we imagine a new digital order outside of capitalism? This is the quest that propels the DisCO Manifesto – which shows us how the patchwork quilt of a posthuman sociality can be a synchronised, yet, diverse, space of multiple universes. Where the human instinct to cooperate, nurture mutuality and value the visceral are woven into the tapestry. The Manifesto recognises that despite a broad commonness in the culture-structure DNA of the infinite worlds that make up the radical tomorrow of planetary flourishing, there is still no one prescribed route to post-capitalist transformation. In its call for a corporeal and historically situated politics that acknowledges the "irreducible human plurality" of visions of change, the Manifesto avows an abiding feminist politics.

Last year, at IT for Change, we were privileged to bring over 35 feminist scholar-practitioners from across the globe to deliberate upon a new vision for digitality. The group co-evolved a Declaration of Feminist Digital Justice rooted in distributed cooperativism – network infrastructures that enable thriving communities of belonging tied together through interconnections akin to the mutualistic underground forest networks of plant roots and fungi. Such feminist communication infrastructures that overturn the centralised server-client paradigm of the mainstream Internet are imagined as the architectur-

al backbone. This is quite similar to the DisCO Manifesto's Community Algorithmic Trust (CAT) platform that acts as a register for capturing productive market value, pro-bono/commons-generating value, and care work value.

We are currently exploring the contours of a blueprint for a data cooperative to support agricultural cooperatives of the iconic Self-employed Women's Association (SEWA), a trade union of 2.5 million members, all labouring women from 18 states in India. Working with SEWA's cooperative enterprises poised to go digital, we hope to co-shape the ethos of platform, data and AI technologies that will renew the organisation's mission. As Ela Bhatt, the founder of SEWA and the North star for feminist economics, argues, the Gandhian ideal of Swaraj/self-governing community is not to be interpreted as one which is "inward turning" but instead, one where "local markets can and do link into national and international ones and local ownership of resources link into larger systems of ownership". Emboldened by this vision, we wish to ask, "Can cooperatives govern their data resources collectively? How can women producers reclaim their data sovereignty? How can they manage digital intelligence collectively? How must they interpret their own practices, and 'the skills, knowledge, resources and opportunities available outside the community'(as Ela Bhatt urges), through a wisdom that is rooted?"

We see in the DisCO Manifesto's exhortation to recover a new political subject in "the commoner" echoes of Ambedkar – re-reading whose work in current conjuncture provides the precious hope we so badly need. B. R. Ambedkar, the architect of the Indian constitution, a feminist ahead of his time, wrote presciently about rebuilding the social relationality of a nation ravaged not just by colonialism, but the deep structures of caste. Ambedkar sought a society of liberty, equality and fraternity. Everyone needs to be guaranteed their full personhood – the right to be fully human. Which is the basis of "fraternity", that Ambedkar submits, is another name for democracy. He asserts, "Democracy is not merely a form of government. It is primarily a mode of associated living, of conjoint, communicated experience. It is essentially an attitude of respect and reverence towards one's fellow men," a society of true commonsification.

Ambedkar saw in his mind's eye the weaknesses of the Hobbsian traditions of the social contract theory and its simplistic reciprocity. In a society of mindboggling pluralism (and its richness) and extreme stratification (and its inherent poverty), he made extended proposals for the Indian nation's new constitution to protect the citizen against economic exploitation. He etched radical models for Indian agriculture and industry, founded on cooperativism. Ambedkar's thesis on trust – rejection of parochialism, of the state's "guardianship" (even as he argued the need for public investment crucial to people-managed

enterprises), and a call back to a fraternal society and economy – presents a powerful cartography for the complexity we must navigate.

In the plantationocene that is the digital society, the march of techno-capital has displaced the essential intimacy on which social being-and-becoming is predicated. We are under siege today by a culture of impunity – of Big Tech and the political class they ingratiate gone rogue. The enslavement of society and suffocation of nature is no cliché. To reinstate the denormalised humane, to destabilise the singularity of digital imagination, to restore the idea of a mutually affirming plural, we need new tools. We want for "love work" – the elimination of oppression everywhere and for everyone through a mutually engaged and accountable practice of solidarity – to be affirmed. Let's DisCO so everyone and earth can breathe and dance. ▪

The DisCO Manifesto is a deep dive into the world of Distributed Cooperative Organizations. It shows how DisCOs are a P2P/Commons, cooperative and Feminist Economic alternative to Decentralised Autonomous Organisations (or DAOs). The DisCO Manifesto also includes some background on topics like blockchain, AI, the commons, feminism, cooperatives, cyberpunk, and more.

Anita Gurumurthy is a founding member and executive director of IT for Change where she leads research and advocacy on data and AI governance, platform regulation, and feminist frameworks on digital justice. She contributes regularly to academic and media spaces and serves as an expert on various bodies including the United Nations Secretary-General's 10-Member Group on Technology Facilitation, Council of the Platform Cooperativism Consortium at The New School, New York, and has been on the Paris Peace Forum's working group on algorithmic governance.

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Reframing AI governance through a political economy lens

IT for Change 2023

While AI is not new to the field of computational science, the release of ChatGPT by Open AI in November 2022 marked a watershed moment. In a short time, the tech sector has rolled out Large Language Models (LLMs) and other Generative AI (GenAI) initiatives with rapid succession.[1] Recognizing both the concerns and opportunities that AI poses, regulators, and policy makers too have been addressing the conundrums confronting a new AI-mediated future.[2]

Appropriate policies and laws to mitigate risks and harms related to AI deployment are vital. However, this is not enough. A just and equitable AI paradigm hinges on the radical restructuring of the global regime of knowledge, innovation, and development. This requires a structural justice approach to AI governance that is able to articulate the pathways for multi-scalar institutional transformation.[3]

I. Key issues for AI governance

1. Big Tech's all-encompassing hold over AI. The ecosystem fostering AI continues to heavily involve Big Tech players.[4] These corporations invest in research and development on a scale that is unmatched, brokering lucrative partnerships with startups and governments.[5] Given their incomparable market power, these powerful actors are able to exercise an entrenched infra-

structural and narrative power over the sector. This translates into the ability to gatekeep access, an outsized agenda-setting voice at the table, as well as the wherewithal to actively shape policy discourse, influence rulemaking, and circumvent enforcement.

2. Structural barriers to a Southern-led AI. In the AI economy, dominant tech companies and infrastructure are either American or Chinese. This bipolar geo-economic context creates new dependencies – extending to foreign investments and debt, digital infrastructure, talent pool and intellectual property[6] – for countries of the Global South, who struggle to assert their sovereignty meaningfully in the AI space.[7] In addition, current trade rules on data and e-commerce being framed at the WTO and other regional/ plurilateral agreements continue to bind developing countries to de facto rules that stifle their digital policy space and prohibit meaningful evolution of their data economies.[8]

3. Subversion of justice in the 'Responsible AI' discourse. The 'Responsible AI' framework has garnered immense institutional power, becoming the aspirational norm for policy making. It is championed by the OECD, international development agencies as well as the private sector. But this discourse sidesteps the power and resource imbalances characterizing the current AI paradigm. Often co-opted by the powerful to diffuse accountability, evade liability, and disregard rights, responsible AI ends up as benign 'product safety' considerations.[9] The focus on risks and individual redress in the legal regime tends to marginalize the here-and-now concerns of actual harm to people, society, and our habitat and natural ecosystems. Institutional readiness to enforce audits or demand transparency from corporations about the algorithmic process is lagging behind.

4. Systematic evasion of transparency. Despite being constantly evoked in ethics guidelines, transparency continues to be an elusive piece in current AI practices. AI companies fail to disclose proactively how their systems work,[10] trivializing transparency to hasty and rudimentary audits or post-facto redressal of harms. These approaches, while necessary, are insufficient given that they can only trace the single hostile/offending element of a system as an error or malfunction but cannot unravel the decision-making process and factors that inform the cycle of input, output, outcome and impact, which is where responsibility and accountability can be located.

5. Perceived 'ungovernability' of AI. By framing AI regulation as a 'blank slate' where the old normal does not apply, corporations and governments distort its necessary basis in public deliberation. Further, technical obfuscation and assertions of an inherent 'unknowability' of AI shroud the policy discourse.[11] While there is indeed a need for attention to AI-specific regulation, AI exceptionalism only furthers the myth of 'ungovernability'. It decouples the object of AI regulation from the basic maxims of harm prevention, accountability, and transparency as has been historically applied across socio-economic policy sectors. Additionally, blank slate approaches disregard precedents from the domains of competition law, consumer welfare, data governance, corporate governance etc., that already exist, and could extend effectively to this space.

6. Absence of civic-public interest and inclusivity in the AI agenda. Marginalized communities and groups including women, racial and sexual minorities, small producers, workers, and indigenous communities are largely excluded from the decision making around AI, whether in the determination of priorities, design and deployment, or policy and rule-making.[12] This happens in many ways. First, the AI discourse is wrongly framed as an elite, technical issue, negating its civic-public basis. Second, the absence of shared language and platforms to engage with AI as a larger societal process renders it impossible for the vast majority to understand and interpret the impact and consequences of AI meaningfully. Third,

the epistemology driving AI is largely rooted in Eurocentric thought and traditions of liberalism, which while having desirable aspects, often eliminate alternative knowledge frameworks of Southern and indigenous people.[13]

Finally, there is also a high risk of the inherent bias and glaring omissions in data sets becoming reified into 'objective' truths, denying the meaningful representation of the Majority World in the AI paradigm. Paradoxically, the arc of AI innovation continues to exploit people from these countries to feed an extractive data economy – for iterative improvement of corporatized AI systems that lock innovation and for monetization of user attention.

7. Complexity in AI geo-politics. As a dual-purpose technology, AI is at the center of both strategic and development objectives for nations. This creates multiple pushes and pulls for multilateral governance and norm setting. For one, with the concentration of AI finance, resources, and talent in the US and China, geopolitics and geo-economics, today, continue to be a crucial force in determining the course of future AI development for the rest of the world.[14] This threatens to fragment the digital policy space and deter global policy consensus for norm building and leave smaller nations in the wind. Competing visions of development also characterize national visions of AI and how the balance between individual rights and social good is calibrated. Further, the escalating militarization of AI and its significance for national security is also likely to influence how governments, especially in the Global North, assess its value and consequently frame its regulation.[15]

8. Worrisome inattention to risks from AI models. Spurred by an efficiency argument and time-to-market considerations of current corporate VC-backed efforts, advanced AI models are being adopted at record speed, undermining risk assessment. AI innovation operates in a regulatory Wild West, ignoring knowledge gaps on risks stemming from unreliability, misuse, and systemic issues.[16] A culture of impunity that disregards potential degradation in service standards, larger margins of error, and probability of active harm with cascading effects, marks the field. For instance, frontline workers are increasingly advised to trust and follow AI systems and mistrust their own experience, judgment, and discretion. The locus of accountability for error or any failure is firmly pinned on workers with little or no power in the system, while the technical prowess of the models is defended and given a wide berth.[17] The scope for large scale breakdowns such as the Robodebt debacle in Australia originate in the negligence of due diligence process in AI innovation.[18]

Additionally, loss in information and data integrity is now exacerbated by AI tools, which are not always capable of detecting falsehood and can thus end up replicating the same.[19] The prevalence of AI-fueled disinformation threatens the safety of vulnerable groups and erodes trust in the digital public sphere. Emerging policy approaches towards 'derisking' AI are only looking at specific risks in silos (for instance discrimination, bias or disinformation) without addressing a) the profit motives that drive the uncritical adoption of technologies in a winner-take-all data economy, or b) understanding that AI-based risks are not experienced in isolation but are interconnected with structural issues.

9. Capture of AI public/commons. Open source models can play a pivotal role in democratizing access to AI technologies. But within the current landscape, resources and investments available to open source efforts are overwhelmingly controlled by Big Tech. Most open source generative AI models work in partnership with big tech companies (for instance, OpenAI with Microsoft, Anthropic with Google, and Stability with Amazon), either dependent on their funding or their compute power (cloud infrastructure/hardware) or their training data, to achieve scale.[20] Even when startups build on LLM models and develop open applications, ultimately, they enrich the ecosystem of large private players.

These issues extend to public goods/national AI initiatives as well, creating a situation where innovation ecosystems are under siege and not able to evolve independently and for applications in public AI ecosystems. Big Tech dominance also gives rise to maximalist regulatory approaches that set regulatory burdens targeted at highly capable models, but apply to all actors in the ecosystem, creating a lopsidedness that condemns smaller players to failure or stagnation and allows Big Tech to solidify its advantage.[21]

10. Absence of sustainability considerations. The biggest threat posed by the current trajectories of AI development is an exacerbation of the environmental crisis. Emerging evidence seems to suggest that AI may be more of a problem than a solution to our struggle against climate change, water shortages and high energy consumption.[22] Some estimates suggest that the water consumption in training Open AI's large language model GPT 3 was equivalent to the amount taken to fill a nuclear reactor cooling tower.[23] Even start-ups and technology developers working for a more ethical and transparent AI industry are struggling to address the sustainability challenge.[24] But questions and considerations of ecological impact have largely been missing from the AI governance conversation, even as its massive carbon footprint looms over the world.

II. Recommended directions for AI governance - Regulating for the AI we want

AI governance must be oriented towards human-centric innovation, epistemic justice and regenerative development. This means adopting a systemic approach that includes:

- Dealing with the structural imbalances that shape a highly unequal AI paradigm, and reining in Big Tech that currently controls the playing field;
- Adopting a feminist and intersectional approach to data ethics that is attentive to algorithmic discrimination and data minimalism to prevent the undue datafication of bodies and communities already subject to hyper surveillance by state and markets alike;
- Safeguarding and ensuring data integrity in AI systems so a trustworthy, credible and fact-based information ecosystem can operate;
- Striking a balance between preventing potential harms and fostering innovation and equity;
- Shifting from risk reduction to advancing strong institutional frameworks for audit and enforcement;
- Designing a multi-scalar governance model with justiciable rights, norm-building at the multilateral level, and room for contextual local implementation;
- Programing sustainability considerations in AI development to tackle extractivism, hyper-consumptive models and other downstream effects of AI;
- Legitimizing a role for public authorities and democratic governance mechanisms.
- Realizing AI's transformative potential needs attention to both democratic and distributive integrity.[25] Specifically, this would include the below elements in shaping AI governance.

1. A supra-liberal framework for AI governance. As AI raises new questions about the nature of personhood and categories of rights holders, the adequacy and appropriateness of the current human rights approach is called into question. Prevalent rights frameworks will need serious reflection and updation to address the challenges of our current moment. Going beyond a universalist, liberal rights framework, a supra-liberal formulation that addresses historical and contextual injustices will provide direction to a wider and post-anthropocentric view that is respectful of collective rights and natural ecosystems.

This would involve reforming multilateral processes to usher in an international regime for AI that is cross-cutting as well as a cross-sectoral effort to redefine rights regimes in areas such as food security, health, environment, welfare, gender equality, etc. Our techno-social future needs a global to local institutional revamp so

that AI is guided to serve the goal of enhancing the capabilities and aspirations of all individuals and communities.

2. Public mechanisms and standards to operationalize 'Responsible AI'. Truly responsible AI frameworks must be grounded in contextual accountability to concretely answer: Why this AI? What does it do? How is it imagined and for whose benefit? To this effect, the following aspects must inform AI governance efforts:

Transparency measures that meet a high threshold of explainability

- **periodic audits and assessments** of AI models, published in public domain databases that disclose instances of serious failures and explain the steps taken to remedy the situation;
- **mandatory proactive disclosures** requiring documentation of design and deployment considerations in AI, including details about parameters;
- **using post facto adequation** as a standard in AI-assisted decision making by public bodies, which includes building systems with the capacity to flag relevant information to verify the machine's inferences as well as obligations on public authorities to record justifications while using these systems;[26]
- **public domain resources and archives** in simple communication, including in non-mainstream languages and accessible formats;
- **meaningful access** to critical data sets, APIs and source code for public interest action.

Accountability geared at harm prevention over redress

- **upward accountability tracing** that goes beyond identification of malfunctioning code, with the duty of care pinned on the most powerful actor/s in the ecosystem;
- **global benchmarks and standards** on due-diligence and risk assessment, as well as acceptable margins of error for models;[27]
- **mandatory fundamental rights impact assessments** that factor in rights violation prior to AI model building rather than post-facto;[28]
- **independent national bodies for democratic deliberation and civic oversight** to bring in views of diverse groups of stakeholders to determine the necessity and appropriateness of AI deployment in various contexts;
- **critical literacy and popular science initiatives** by educational institutions to encourage a culture of public engagement in AI.

Inclusion beyond an abstract idea of 'fairness'

- **non-discrimination objectives/benchmarks** in legal frameworks that guarantee harm prevention, outline remedies and promote equity and inclusion within AI systems;[29]
- **hard-coding representativity and inclusivity** through techno-design measures that address implicit bias and outcome inequity such as, for instance, synthetic data (to correct gender and race based data gaps and bias in training data sets[30] and lower-bound constraints that account for intersectional bias;[31]
- **consultative mechanisms** to better inform multilateral AI governance, so that perspectives of the Majority World, including from oral cultures and indigenous communities, are able to inform the values that underscore AI development and governance.[32]

3. A diverse and inclusive AI commons. To break data and compute power that leads to the concentration of AI resources in a handful of private corporations and create the enabling conditions to catalyze AI innovation, an AI commons approach grounded in collective rights is urgently needed. Interventions need to be multiscalar and include the following measures:

- **A global center on AI innovation to address pressing development challenges.** This can build on prototypes such as the European Organization for Nuclear Research (CERN) and the International Space Station.[33]
- **Public financing for AI.** Public funding mechanisms through Overseas Development As-

sistance (ODA) commitments and international and regional financial institutions are vital for AI research in developing countries.

- **Reform of the IP regime to address challenges of data extractivism.** A range of possibilities must be explored, including:
  * strong institutional safeguards to protect social sector data sets, especially where there is a risk of proprietization of core development functions through AI models (such as in health, education and welfare);
  * conditional access to public domain and open government data, with inclusion of purpose limitations and clear sunset clauses on use;
  * fair use limitations on how models learn from and use training data to specifically prevent profiteering through reuse, including through strict stipulations against free-riding and the development of substitutive value propositions;[34]
  * new collective licensing proposals that balance the moral rights of creators (of the inputs that feed AI systems) with values of intellectual commons as public heritage;[35]
  * reciprocity guarantees in common data pools, where private model developers who build on public data layers have an obligation to share back and enrich the commons.[36]
- **A culture that promotes participation.** Incentives and infrastructures must be created for communities to actively input into the creation of data-sets, algorithmic schema, and the formulation of use-cases at national and sub-national levels. Policies must also promote development of GenAI models in non-mainstream languages and cultures, from large scale public initiatives to smaller community-driven initiatives. ▪

Submission to Call for Papers on Global AI Governance by UN Tech Envoy's office for the first meeting of the Multistakeholder Advisory Body on AI. IT for Change (2023). Authored by Anita Gurumurthy - anita@itforchange.net and Deepti Bharthur deepti@itforchange.net

Notes

1. Open AI's more advanced GPT-4, Meta's LLaMA 2, Elon Musk's xAI, Google's Bard and JD's ChatRhino, to name a few.
2. Over the last year, we have seen a number of initiatives from policy makers.
The UK government announced plans to invest GBP 900 million in a cutting-edge supercomputer, as part of its AI strategy towards a BritGPT.
The European Commission has made substantial amendments to the Artificial Intelligence Act policy, to specifically account for generative AI concerns in its last iteration.
In 2022, the European Commission also published a proposal for a directive on AI liability that would create a 'presumption of causality', to ease the burden of proof for victims to establish damage caused by an AI system and give national courts the power to order disclosure of evidence about high-risk AI systems suspected of having caused damage.
Canada has added the Artificial Intelligence and Data Act (AIDA) to its Digital Charter Implementation Act, a bill originally aimed at updating its data protection laws
China has introduced a set of Interim Measures for the Management of Generative AI
The US has opted for voluntary compliance with the White House's AI Commitment, to which many Big Tech companies are currently signatories
3. This paper builds on some key threads from a roundtable on 'Reframing AI governance through a political economy lens', convened in June 2023 by IT for Change and Transnational Institute. The hybrid event brought together scholars, activists and practitioners to examine the building blocks of a transformative approach to AI governance. The discussions, which are summarized in this paper and extended upon, engage with many of the questions outlined in the UN Tech envoy's call for papers on Global AI Governance towards informing the preparation for the first meeting of the Multistakeholder Advisory Body on AI.
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10. For example, those that target or deliver employment ads to particular people do not disclose how they spread their budget or weigh it against relevance, making it hard to know when job seekers are affected and how to prevent discrimination. Datta et al. (2014) found that setting users' profile gender to 'Female' resulted in fewer instances of ads related to high-paying jobs, but they could not determine what caused those findings due to limited visibility into the ad ecosystem. They note that Google's policies to serve ads based on gender meant that one cannot be certain whether this outcome was intentional, even if it is discriminatory. See: Datta, A., Tschantz, M. C., & Datta, A. (2014). Automated experiments on ad privacy settings: A tale of opacity, choice, and discrimination. https://arxiv.org/pdf/1408.6491
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Aligning AI systems with human values

Jim McDonnell

In the development and deployment of technologies based on AI, how can the voices of civil society organisations be raised against their potential risks and harms, but also for values such as equity, ethics, digital rights, control, choice, and transparency?

In 1847, the poet Ralph Waldo Emerson wrote "Things are in the saddle, and ride mankind." His words find an echo today. This is a time when growing numbers of institutions, governments and the wider public find themselves agreeing that the development and use of Artificial Intelligence (AI) urgently needs to be regulated.

In March 2023 a group of leaders in the AI field issued an open letter calling for large scale experiments to be paused. The signatories described AI labs as locked in an out-of-control arms race and helping to create digital minds that "no one can understand, predict or reliably control."[1]

Some voices, Elon Musk, for example, went so far as to warn that uncontrolled AI may lead to the extinction of the human race. The paradox is, of course, that Elon Musk and other technology billionaires are those who poured, and continue to pour, huge quantities of intellectual, computing, and financial resources into AI applications.

The difference between AI, General AI (AGI), and Generative AI (GenAI)

Since the open letter was published, the warnings and anxieties have proliferated. Fears are focussed on General AI (AGI), applications which once programmed, it is claimed, can perform as

well or better than their human designers at an ever growing range of intellectual tasks. Traditional AI systems are programmed to perform specific tasks. They are trained to follow specific rules in order to undertake particular tasks, but they don't create anything new.

Most attention has recently been paid to new so-called Generative AI systems (GenAI). These are being trained and retrained on huge amounts of data, using so-called LLMs (Large Language Models) in order to generate wholly new data. These LLMs don't act like the search engines people have become used to, e.g. Google, but rather are predictive algorithms. They have been built so that they can recognize and interpret the underlying patterns of human language and other kinds of complex data from the internet. But unlike traditional computer models, Generative AI can create new content, for example, images and text.

The limitations of AI

However, the accuracy and reliability of the new AI systems cannot be taken for granted. It is no surprise that the *Cambridge English Dictionary* announced in November 2023 that its word of the year was "hallucinate", defined as "to see, hear, feel, or smell something that does not exist." Today the word is used to speak of Generative AI chatbots such as ChatGPT, trained on texts gathered from the internet that produce new but sometimes false content. Moreover, chatbots can now produce explanations which appear plausible which are, in fact, false or misleading.

People can be deceived into interacting with deepfake chatbots which are designed to produce disinformation or fake news. For example, a recent overview found that generative artificial intelligence (GenAI) is being developed to help make online disinformation campaigns even more powerful, for example, by rival political groupings, e.g. in Pakistan or the United States, or regimes such as Venezuela. Other authoritarian governments, for example, Russia, Iran, and China, use AI to enhance and refine online censorship.

Chatbots like ChatGPT have captured the public's imagination because they generate text that looks like something a human being could have written, and they give users the illusion they are interacting with something other than a computer program. A growing number of critics worry about the development of AI "personal assistants". These sophisticated chatbots are far more capable than Amazon's Alexa. AI Inflection's "Pi", for example, is actually promoted as "Your *personal* AI" and it tells the prospective user that "My goal is to be useful friendly and fun. Ask me for advice, for answers or let's talk about whatever's on your mind."

Such tools offer an experience of quasi-human emotional connection that can encourage vulnerable people, for example those who suffer from mental health problems or delusions, to develop unhealthy dependence on the chatbot. These kinds of problems pose huge challenges for the designers of AI systems and for those institutions that seek to monitor, regulate, and govern them.

An increasingly common downside of the chatbot generation of texts is that literary works and other forms of content are used by companies running AI applications in ways that are harmful or without the consent or knowledge of the original creators. With the headline "*My books have been used to train AI bots-and I'm furious*" the British author Sathnam Sanghera summed up the reaction of many writers, including Hollywood screen writers who have recently been successful, at least for now, in protecting their scripts from being used without permission.[2]

The anger and concern of those who see AI models build on their creative work without permission is mirrored in a more widespread unease that we are losing control over our own personal data and how that data is used. Among those who are concerned is the creator of the internet, Tim Berners-Lee. He argues that a key challenge – now that so much personal data is linked to web applications – is to build a framework enabling control by internet users so that they can protect their rights and personal data.

Berners-Lee has devised a system called Solid. Data about a user or entity is placed in a personal data store (a Solid Pod). Using Solid, it is the user who decides which web applications can access that data. Solid is already being trialed by the BBC among others. Will the Berners-Lee vision come to fruition? Only time will tell. But his willingness to experiment with alternative models is refreshing.

Berners-Lee reminds us that vast amounts of data are the raw material for huge numbers of commercial and other applications, including AI processing. Many voices have pointed out that the quality of the data mined is subject to many flaws, not least because the internal processes for collecting and processing are so opaque. Inevitably, lack of transparency means it is harder to filter out material that is derogatory, racist, abusive, deliberately misleading, simply incorrect or biased in a myriad of ways.

Women and girls, for example, are stereotyped more than men and suffer from less access to technology.[3] And sometimes removing toxic content can itself lead to exploitation. *Time Magazine* found, for example, that Open AI, in developing ChatGPT, used outsourced workers in Kenya earning less than $2 per hour to screen thousands of texts culled from the darker corners of the web.[4]

Moreover, the overwhelming concentration of data produced in the Global North means in practice *de facto* exclusion of a huge amount of material that reflects the concerns, tastes, perspectives and cultural insights of around 80% of humanity. In addition, the processes of AI data mining consume a huge amount of energy and financial resources while also contributing to an ever-growing carbon footprint. And, of course, any impact on climate change tends to disproportionately affect those living in the global South.

Regulating AI for the common good

Like all technological developments, the current AI wave does not determine the future. Human beings can and will invent creative alternatives. But they need to be much better informed about how the technology works and much more wary about the risks they face online. In short, there is a huge effort required to promote digital literacy and digital rights. This means involving citizens in the wider public discourse about how technologies like AI could be shaped and regulated for the wider public good.

Various initiatives by governments, big tech companies, think tanks, universities and civil society are under way to formulate regulatory and governance proposals that will provide some measure of oversight of the AI field. The AI Safety Summit, held in November 2023 at Bletchley Park, just north of London, brought together tech companies like Google, Meta and Microsoft and leading AI developers. Companies such as Stability AI (a partner of Amazon Web Services), Inflection AI, (developer of the personal AI assistant Pi), and Open AI (which developed Chat GPT) were, of course, central to the conversations at Bletchley. In addition, they were joined by stakeholders from governments, multilateral organizations like the European Commission and the UN. However, *only a handful of civil society organisations* including a few *human rights organisations* were invited.

Coinciding with the Bletchley Park summit the US issued an executive order requiring federal AI usage to respect civil rights and protect national security. The EU announced that it was close to passing legislation on regulating the use of AI. At the end the participants issued a *Declaration* which included pledges to ensure that AI is "designed, developed, deployed, and used, in a manner that is safe, in such a way as to be human-centric, trustworthy and responsible."[5] To the surprise and a certain relief of some sceptics, it also focussed not only on avoiding AI linked catastrophes, but also on wider "priorities such as securing human rights and the UN Sustainable Development Goals."[6]

The Summit was declared a success and participants committed to continue the process, yet two big questions were left unanswered. The first, to what extent will states actually be able

to regulate AI development and hold the technology companies accountable? The second, how can the process be opened up to bring in the insights and concerns of the wider public?

In a thoughtful article for the *Guardian* before the AI summit at Bletchley Park, the technology commentator John Naughton identified "three basic truths about AI" which democracies will have to recognize:

> "The first is that the technology is indeed fascinating, powerful and useful for human flourishing. The second is that – like all technology – it has potential for benefit and harm. It will also have longer-term implications that we cannot at the moment foresee… So we'll have to learn as we go. And finally – and most importantly – it's not the technology per se that's the critical thing, but the corporations that own and control it. Whether AI turns out in the end to be good or bad for humanity will largely depend on if we succeed in reining them in."[7]

What Naughton doesn't mention, however, is that the reining in of the tech giants (and, by extension, authoritarian states) has also to involve real partnerships with the countries of the Global South, especially those which are struggling to build and sustain democratic governance. As the Centre for AI Futures at the School of Oriental and African Studies (SOAS) puts it, smaller nations, which are "experiencing the many social, political and cultural disruptions brought about by new forms of algorithmic governance" often find their views pushed aside in favour of the interests of major players located in the US, EU and China.[8]

The need for agreement on the international governance for AI is highlighted in a recent article published by the human rights and digital technology company, Global Partners Digital. In a survey article published just before the Bletchley Summit, they commented:

> "Whatever form of international governance for AI emerges, the key takeaway from this research is the urgent need for it to be shaped in a more open, inclusive and transparent manner.…Only a diverse range of perspectives and stakeholders, especially from those in the Global South can ensure that benefits from AI are equitably harnessed across the world and that the implementation of AI technologies does not reproduce existing inequalities and power imbalances."[9]

In *Reframing AI in Civil Society* Jonathan Tanner and Dr John Bryden reveal how the British media and public think about AI.[10] Tanner and Bryden identify four dominant mental "frames" that shaped public attitudes: (1) AI represents progress; (2) AI is hard to understand; (3) AI presents risks to human beings; and (4) Regulation is the primary solution to AI risks.

Though the public is strongly in favour of regulation, and regulation is essential, it is not a panacea in itself. There are many questions, and there will be more, to ask about the kind of regulation needed, its oversight, accountability, and responsiveness in a fast developing sector. Civil society organizations that wish to raise public awareness and the level of public debate about AI, are urged by Tanner and Bryden not to get too focused on the regulatory issue:

> "The risk and regulation agenda strongly suits the interests of big AI companies who can position themselves as providers of technological solutions. System-wide or society-level risks could end up overlooked in favour of technical issues that AI companies can more easily demonstrate they are mitigating."

Tanner and Bryden point out that getting bogged down in regulatory questions, important as they are, may only strengthen a focus on short-term issues and neglect a long-term wider vision. There is a pressing need to draw attention to other questions.

What would a society look like that enables all citizens to leverage the upsides of digit-

al technology? What values would that society have to put at the heart of how technology is developed and deployed? What skills would people need in order to navigate that society effectively and which organizations have the courage to bring such a future to life? If we can answer these questions, we have a starting point.

According to Brian Christian's increasingly prescient book, *The Alignment Problem* (2020), the fundamental, pressing need facing society is to find robust ways to align AI systems with human values.[11] To quote D. Fox Harrell,

> "People can intentionally design computing systems with the values and worldviews we want… [but]… We need to be aware of, and thoughtfully design, the cultural values that AI is based on. With care, we can build systems based on multiple worldviews – and address key ethical issues in design such as transparency and intelligibility."[12]

This is the challenge facing WACC and other civil society organizations. The current debate, such as it is, centres on risks of AI, the harms it might cause, safety and regulation. How can we raise our combined voices effectively to bring to the forefront other vital issues too: human and cultural values, equity, ethics, digital rights and citizenship, questions of power and control, choice and transparency? ■

Notes

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Jim McDonnell (PhD) is a Member of the WACC UK Board of Directors. He has over 30 years' experience in communications and public relations specializing in reputation and crisis management. He has a long-standing interest in the intersection of communication technologies with culture, values, and ethics. In 2018 he wrote *Putting Virtue into the Virtual: Ethics in the Infosphere* (Media Development, December, 2018).

Community-led responses to challenges posed by digital technologies

Vassilis Chryssos

In the wake of a swiftly changing post-COVID landscape, there is a notable surge in digitization and datafication within economies and societies, raising concerns. Advocacy efforts for digital inclusion and internet rights face fragmentation, with diverse actors addressing overlapping issues. This article presents five cases from the global South, spotlighting challenges related to communication rights, digital governance, access to and control of the digital commons, and other issues posed by digital technologies. These cases exemplify how community-driven initiatives worldwide can collaborate to generate digital and social innovations that surmount these challenges.

Zenzeleni, translating to "Do it yourself" in isiXhosa, is a South African social enterprise dedicated to empowering communities by bridging the digital divide. Their two-tier community network model, developed through participatory action research, fosters community empowerment, education, health access, entrepreneurship, and social change.

This year *Zenzeleni* completed a multi-year project through which they have done considerable work in (i) organisational strengthening; (ii) national capacity building of several community networks; (iii) policy advocacy, awareness raising and impact activities.

As a result of their consistent engagement, the *Zenzeleni* networks are well known as a model for community networks and the term "community networks" has begun to appear formally and for the first time in South African policy.

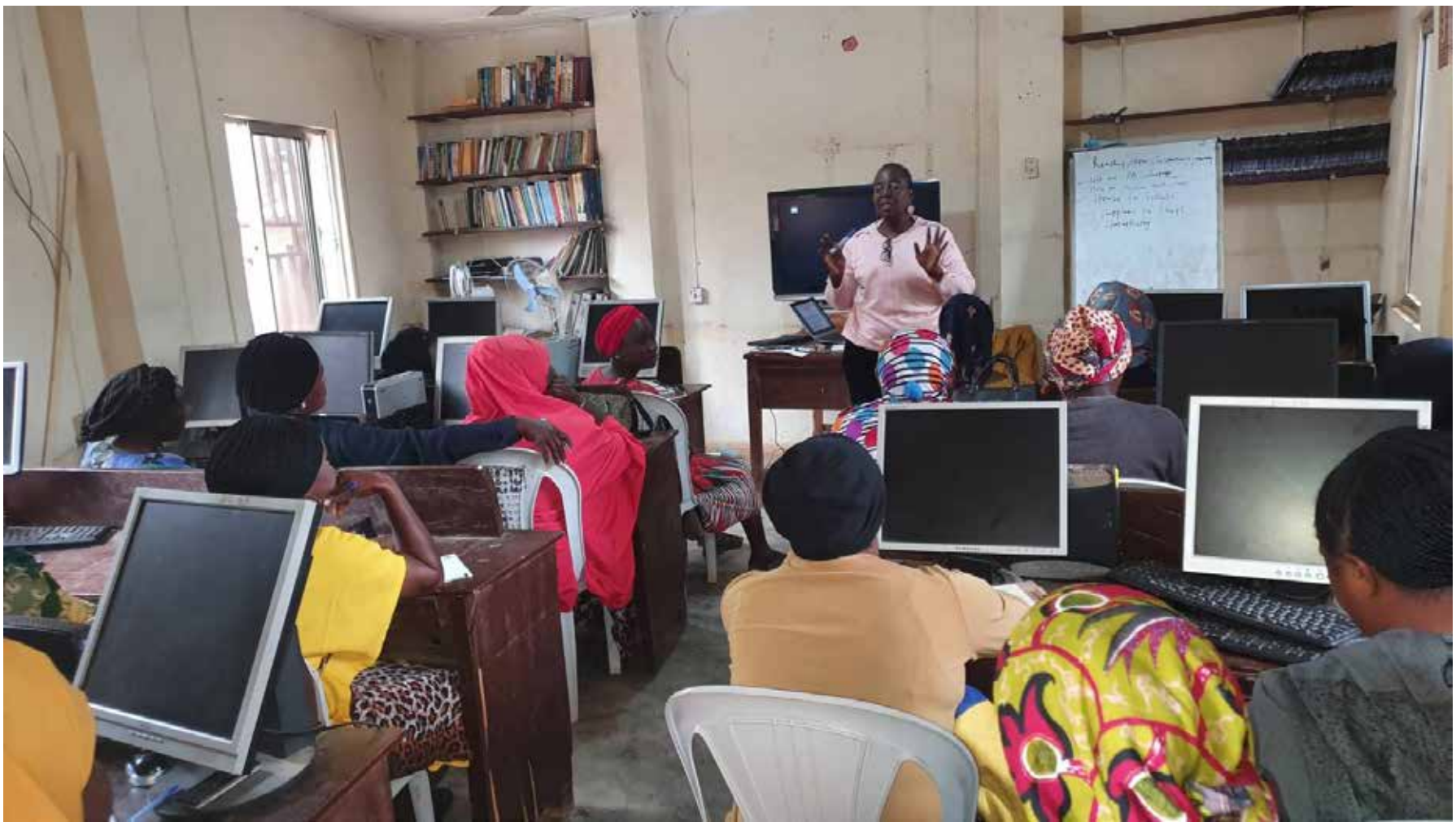
The *Centre for Information Technology and Development (CITAD)* in Nigeria is a non-governmental, non-profit organisation that promotes ICTs for development and good governance.

In partnership with another Nigerian organisation, the *Fantsuam Foundation*, they empowered 80 young rural girls and women with IT and digital entrepreneurship skills addressing gender and urban-rural digital divide. The project had an impact at multiple levels of the communities involved: at a personal level for the participants who gained new digital skills; at a collective level in terms of creating a shared space of trust and respect between Muslims and Christians; and at a community level in terms of empowering women and their role in their communities.

A year earlier, they had worked with the *Association of Technology, Education, Development, Research and Communication (TEDIC),* a Paraguayan NGO, to train women media professionals in Nigeria on how to stay safe online, protect their privacy and combat gender-based violence. The impact has been profound, contributing to women's political inclusion and giving Nigerian women the confidence to have an online presence.

Not far away, in the south-east of Nigeria, in the Republic of Congo, another APC member organisation, *AZUR Développement*, is waging its own battle against online gender-based violence. Drawing on the experience and digital expertise of a Colombian organisation, *Colnodo*, they are translating a mobile application into the local context to raise awareness and support victims.

Another Nigerian organisation, *Media Awareness and Justice Initiative (MAJI*), uses "people-centred" methods and technologies to



Fantsuam Foundation, Nigeria, empowers young rural girls and women with IT and digital entrepreneurship skills addressing gender and urban-rural digital divide. Photo courtesy of the author.

democratise information, raise awareness, build capacity and work towards sustainable development. Working with the Taiwanese *Open Culture Foundation (OCF)* and using the Community Networks approach, they are using environmental (air quality) monitoring sensors to generate environmental data in their communities. This data is used to inform local communities and support their environmental advocacy and data-based journalism.

In Argentina, another organisation, *Nodo Tau*, has been working on the digital inclusion of social and community organisations for 28 years. In recent years, they have focused on the environmental impact of technology, while also working on the refurbishment and donation of used digital equipment for social use.

For the last few years, they have been working with a Spanish organisation, *Associació Pangea,* an independent non-profit organisation founded in 1993 to promote the strategic use of communication networks and ICTs for development and social justice. Together, they are putting into practice the "Guide to the circular economy of digital devices", developed jointly by the APC Environmental Sustainability Group.

Power of the network

The Association for Progressive Communications (APC), a global network of grassroots activists and organizations primarily from the Global South, plays a pivotal role. Addressing communication rights, digital governance, and advocating for a feminist internet, APC facilitates regional collaboration and global advocacy.

These examples underscore the ongoing local struggles in the Global South for digital inclusion and communication rights for the less privileged. Through digital and social innovation, cross-regional collaboration, and the support of a global network, such initiatives illustrate how we aim collectively to shape the world we desire. ▪

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Notes on capacity building, communication, and community networks in Latin America

Carlos F. Baca-Feldman

Data on connectivity to telecommunications services in the world show very significant growth in the last five years. According to the International Telecommunication Union (ITU) report Measuring digital development. Facts and Figures (2023),[1] the number of internet users increased to 5.3 billion, or 66% of the population. This amount shows an increase over the 2020-2021 figures of 5.1%, and as noted in the report the percentage of the population with connection possibilities continues to grow. But the same report shows the wide disparities that exist between urban and rural areas, more and less developed countries, and women or men, to name a few examples.

Likewise, for Latin America, the Global System for Mobile Communications (GSMA, 2023)[2] report shows that in the region only 7% of the population live in areas without 3G and 4G network coverage, but only 62% are connected, as the rest do not have access due to user gaps, although there is coverage in their territory.

With these data we can see that the problem of access to telecommunications services is not solved by expanding coverage alone, but rather by paying attention to the other existing barriers that prevent people from having full access to these services. These barriers become more complex when we add economic, political and social factors that generate inequality between countries in the region. This is also reflected within countries, for example, when we look at the gap between access in rural and urban areas.

Therefore, when we talk about connecting the unconnected, we have to think, in addition to the lack of coverage in their territories, about other barriers that are key in the increase or decrease of the digital divide: affordability of services, relevance of content and applications, capacities of use and appropriation, and gender inequalities.[3]

For different social groups, including indigenous and rural communities, all these barriers are more difficult to break down due to the historical conditions of backwardness they have experienced, generated to a large extent by the systematic and historical violence that has been exercised against them, which is expressed, among other things, in the lack of basic services and social security.

The digital divide faced by this type of social groups and communities has been addressed by governments as a market failure. On the one hand, governments have generated a series of public policies that seek to increase coverage or generate social connectivity programs for the most vulnerable population or those living in rural areas, such as telecenters. However, most of these public policy strategies fail because they are not anchored in the way communities live, work and communicate.

On the other hand, these projects are usually developed through agreements with large operating companies who, after installing the networks, do not provide maintenance and stop working after a few months. This happens mainly because they will not obtain economic benefits as they would in urban contexts and the maintenance and operation costs are higher in remote areas.

Due to these problems and despite the large

number of failed public policies, many indigenous and rural communities around the world have decided to address the conditions of access to telecommunications services through projects developed by themselves and with characteristics and objectives that respond to their way of life and the territories where they live. These types of initiatives have been called: *community networks*.

Taking control and responsibility

In this sense, the technological solutions that, from this perspective, have been implemented by some indigenous and rural communities are in line with their way of life and understanding of the commons and the territory. In this way, they do not become projects designed externally and without knowledge of the way of life of the communities, but the decisions involving the processes are taken by the people who will be users of the service or those who take control of the creation, operation, administration, etc. of each of the communication networks that are generated.

The technologies used and types of networks generated by these processes are very diverse. To give some examples, in Latin America we find Internet access networks such as those promoted by Altermundi[4] in Argentina or Colnodo[5] in Colombia. But we also find experiences such as the use of HF radio for connectivity in the Amazon region of Ecuador and the Sierra Tarahumara in Mexico, as part of the Hermes project[6] promoted by Rhizomatica. Other communities have decided to create their own closed communication networks to meet their needs for access to certain content, such as IntraBach[7] in Mexico. And so, we could continue with many types of technological projects where communities decide, appropriate, and transform certain types of technologies to meet their communication and/or information access needs.

These experiences have in common a constant analysis of the technologies, a resignification of their uses, risks and possibilities, which allow their choice and functional structure not to be based on external decisions and with little relevance. By knowing how these tools work, the communities themselves establish mechanisms for risk reduction and enhancing of the possibilities that are woven from them.

Although these processes often appear to us as "new", it is important to remember that the paths towards connectivity and the use of technologies for the communication of indigenous and rural communities are historical processes that did not emerge with the arrival of the Internet, TV or radio. In other words, community communication in Latin America has a long history that goes beyond its mediation by technologies. Assemblies, festivals, *tequio* or *faena*, religiosity, etc. are some of the ways in which these forms of communication take place.

The paths taken by communities to appropriate, re-signify and transform communication technologies are already a long way ahead. And, moreover, they respond not only to the ways of communication mediated by technology, but also to the organizational and resource management forms that have allowed the subsistence of their culture for hundreds of years. In this sense, it is important to think more broadly about the ways in which technologies are woven as part of the ways of communicating specific to each community and linked to its territory and ways of life.

To understand the challenges and possibilities of the so-called community networks or local connectivity solutions, these historical premises on community organization for life and territorial management are key. Hence, among the strategies needed to encourage the creation of this type of community connectivity projects, fundamental is the training and capacity building that allows people in the communities to have the knowledge and skills necessary for the installation, maintenance, and operation of their networks.

However, it is not just any type of training. For these capacity building initiatives in community contexts to be successful, they must not only transfer the necessary technical knowledge, but also consider the ways of life, of sharing knowledge and experiences, of working, etc.

of the communities where they will be developed. A process like that shown with the choice of relevant technologies in the successful cases mentioned above.

These initiatives are diverse, because the type of communities in which they are inserted have different ways of life, organization, work, culture, economy, etc. However, although they are generated and implemented in very different territories, these programs tend to share some elements such as learning by doing through the solution of problems in real contexts, or the creation of communities for the exchange of learning and knowledge. In addition, they are training programs that not only transmit technical knowledge, but also address the economic, organizational, cultural, and social issues that make the sustainability of community networks possible over time.

A blend of tech and community work

One of these examples has been the Techio Comunitario training program[8] and its derived actions in the region. The name of this initiative is a suitable description of its purpose: *Techio* is the mixture between the abbreviation "Tech" and "Tequio" which is the form of community work developed by the indigenous peoples of the Oaxacan highlands in Mexico. This initiative was created using the stages of the Participatory Action Research (PAR) methodology,[9] involving Mexican organizations linked to indigenous communication processes. Thus, after an analysis and reflection, trainers in these topics and indigenous communicators identified the need to provide people working in community and indigenous media with the necessary knowledge for the operation, use, management, and maintenance of technological tools in the areas of radio broadcasting, and community-owned cellular and wireless internet networks.

Between 2016 and 2019, two face-to-face editions were developed in Mexico, consisting of eight modules that addressed technical, sustainability, organizational and legal issues for local media and community networks. Subsequently, within the framework of this program, in 2019 a collaboration was generated with the ITU for the development of the Training Program for Coordinators of ICT Networks in Indigenous and Rural Communities in Latin America. In its four editions, this hybrid program has trained more than 100 indigenous and rural communicators from 15 countries in the region.[10] Final-

ly, the PAR methodology implemented in these processes was the key to the development of the National Schools of Community Networks in Kenya, Nigeria, South Africa, Indonesia, and Brazil.[11]

A characteristic of these training processes, particularly those in Latin America, is that they take as their pedagogical and methodological references the educational practices that are part of the community vision of teaching, knowledge construction and the socialization of knowledge. They are also nourished by elements of popular education and take up approaches from free knowledge societies.[12]

Likewise, the link between the people who live in the territories and those who develop technologies to strengthen the communities' ways of life and autonomy becomes key. This type of relationship allows communities to regain control over their digital inclusion processes and strengthen their organization and cultural values. Therefore, the exchange of experiences, knowledge and know-how among people with different knowledge and specializations is a fundamental part of this process.

The mechanisms and strategies that allow these exchanges to take place, not only within the communities, but also with other community experiences or with specialists in the development of technologies, are a fundamental part of the creation and sustainability of community and indigenous telecommunications projects.

Spaces that strengthen communication and community life

In this sense, returning to the initial data on the digital divide and the lack of significant access to telecommunications services, we need to think not of connectivity but of the ways in which communities communicate and organize as the starting point. What is required is to reflect on the historical processes that have sustained communities for so long, the close links they establish with their territories, and their particular ways of communicating. In this way, community networks do not become merely instrumental processes, but spaces that strengthen communication and community life.

All this without losing sight of what the Zapotec anthropologist Jaime Martínez Luna[13] points out, that ICTs, like other types of processes external to the communities, are inserted in them through a process of imposition, resistance, and adaptation between what is their own and what is external. Therefore, the risks that technologies can bring to community life should never be overlooked; at the same time, we need to be aware that they can strengthen identity, access to information or health, to give a few examples.

To conclude this brief reflection, community networks and the capacity building processes that develop around them give us elements to understand that it is possible to rethink our relationship with technologies. This is becoming more urgent in a world that points more and more to hyperconnectivity and where those who do not have significant access to telecommunication services live at an increasing disadvantage with respect to those who are connected. Therefore, to understand the potential and transformational capacity of community networks, it is always necessary to start from their diversity and their relevance to the ways of life and communication needs of the communities in which they develop.

The path that communities have developed to consolidate the panorama of community and indigenous communication to strengthen their technological autonomy is an ongoing process. In this long-term process, with very strong links to community communication, the main thing is not the technology used but the processes in which connectivity projects are generated, contents are produced, or relevant information is accessed. On this path, training and capacity building are crucial elements for the development of projects that continue to show us that it is possible to generate "another type of connectivity" for the construction of "other possible worlds". ▪

Photo p. 29: Installation of solar panel for wireless network antenna during Bootcamp 2023 in Fusaga-

sugá, Colombia. (Photo courtesy of author.)

Notes

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Rights, community, and meaningful connectivity

Kathleen Diga

Civil society engagement around communication rights has become more important and relevant than ever, particularly at this moment where we observe shrinking civic digital spaces[1] for free expression without harassment or discrimination. Specifically, we see existent social platforms and, in some cases, governments flawed in their monitoring of communication channels as they are unable to counter the deluge of disinformation and censorship.

But even before engaging in these pressing topics, there is need to acknowledge that many, particularly in the global South and those most marginalised, remain left behind digitally and are not able to contribute to any digital spaces. For communication rights, there is a precondition that people would have communication access and with that, the "digitally included" can exercise their right to express themselves freely as was set out by Article 19 in the Universal Declaration of Human Rights. Digital inclusion remains at the forefront of issues among civil society.

Defending civic space is important. We have so much to celebrate in this world filled with the diversity of knowledge, cultures, and practices. The digital potential to express one's joy through culture, music, art and other artifacts is there. How then do we make sure we allow for such people-centred amplification? How do we avoid expressive disappearance particularly

amid the current domination of a one consumer monoculture or on an internet predominantly operating in one or two languages?

If we believe in a celebratory narrative of diversity and ultimately happiness in our differences and in the people, then supporting alternative digital ways especially for rural life expression is a must. Specifically, community-owned infrastructure can help to enable this expression and the revival of the essence of life. In this way, I only see the world becoming a better place to live.

Community-centred connectivity

The Local Networks (LocNet)[2] initiative is a collective effort led by the by Association for Progressive Communications and Rhizomatica in partnership with people and organisations in Africa, Asia, Latin America and the Caribbean. It aims to directly support community networks and other community-centred connectivity initiatives, while contributing to an enabling ecosystem for their emergence and growth.

But what does it mean to be "digitally included"? In partnering with remote and underserved persons and groups for the last six years, collectively we have learned that participatory collaborations or action research is an appropriate approach to seeing communication change. It is the grassroots communities who will have the strongest understanding of what is most meaningful and of high value and of high stakes. It is through the same communities who identify their needs and collectively help to strengthen their local ties.

Once some of the communications activities are identified, they could potentially be addressed through the digital. From such a starting point, mechanisms like the LocNet initiative can help support these communication needs and thereby catalyse the demand for community connectivity – whether it be to the internet itself or through local digital infrastructure within their remote or marginalised regions.

The LocNet initiative contributes to the narrative that civil society and local communities can be suitable and capable partners in bridging the digital divide, specifically where there remains little to no rural communications. The initiative aims to building partnerships collectively, bringing connectivity, inclusion, and ultimately improved quality of life to previously excluded persons in the global South. We have had some exceptional partners and grassroots communities contributing to this narrative.

Licensing and shared spectrum framework in Kenya

In Kenya, there have been major strides in working in a multi-stakeholder environment towards an amenable policy environment, specifically through the licensing and shared spectrum framework[3] for community networks. This framework gives smaller entities an opportunity for legal registration as a small rural operator or a community network through the low cost of registration. This simple act thereby legitimises their small businesses to provide local connectivity to small villages and hard to reach areas. "Twenty years of dreams were finally given a breath of life by a pandemic," states Twahir Hussein, the founder of community network Dunia Moja, in a telling statement of the wish to bring digital skills to their coastal community of Kilifi, Kenya.[4]

This contemporary act to enable small businesses had been missing for so long in a space dominated by large multinational operators. There were few openings for those who want to serve communication infrastructure to areas that the cell phone companies are uninterested in covering due to little profit from a low density, low income household population.

But this slight opening does not come without its hiccups. At the time of writing this article, the team had seen at least five Kenyan community partners now registered. One must note the context of small communities who have never registered or prepared administrative documents like these in their recent past, so it is a steep learning curve. The process of registration should be recorded so as to guide others in their footsteps as they seek to get over some of the

administrative hurdles.

We now see groups like Arid Lands Information Network[5] in Nairobi and their rural counterparts in Kenya and AheriNet in Kisumu legitimised and able to operate as a community network. They can work without fear of being shut down or operating in grey areas of the law. We hope to continue to accompany these organisations and to support robust and diverse participation of civil society with the newly formed Association of Community Networks in Kenya.[6]

Walkie-talkie in Costa Rica

Another example can be found in Costa Rica, where indigenous people know of their own interest and capabilities in utilising communications. This has driven the group to create their own appropriate technology mechanism. Specifically, the Alto Pacuare Cabécares Women's Association decided to set up a walkie-talkie system first in order to be able to use simple technologies of communication exchange for their local communication purposes.[7] They also set up a local server to create space and archive their indigenous knowledge.

By meeting groups coming from their own starting point, there is a belief that such efforts can lead to incremental and meaningful integration and use of emergent technologies, and perhaps with the long-term behavioural change of community connectivity. We respect diversity not only of indigenous persons, but the principles of feminist internet which advocate for appropriate access and technologies as central to community-led communications.

We want to keep opening up civic space to diversity and voice. Yet overarching factors to make an environment favourable for such small scale operators or civil society continue to hinder communication rights from being realised. There are still so few telecommunication regulators who have put in place small operator provisions and to some extent they may still be unaware of this option. Broadly speaking, there are powers or institutions who wish not to allow for competition or diversity of actors in the telecommunications ecosystem.

So we continue to advocate through collective action and informed participation and frame a point of view that highlights that by creating space for small scale operators, the communication world is opened up to a larger and diverse group. Many such people can bring fresh experiences, widen opportunities for activities, digital inclusion and adoption, and with the hope of catalysing improved local activities and possibly local economies. In terms of society as a whole, it can catalyse benefits for all. ■

Notes

1. https://www.giswatch.org/report-introduction/digital-rights-internet-advocacy-meaningful-access/preface
2. https://www.apc.org/en/node/35376/
3. https://www.ca.go.ke/sites/default/files/CA/Licenses%20Templatses/Community%20Network%20and%20Service%20Provider%20Licence.pdf
4. https://www.apc.org/en/blog/seeding-change-twenty-years-dreams-were-given-breath-life-pandemic-kilifi-kenya/
5. https://www.apc.org/en/podcasts/12-celebrating-community-networks-making-change-kenya-and-around-world/
6. https://www.kictanet.or.ke/towards-the-digital-superhighway-how-community-networks-will-shape-kenyas-digital-agenda
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Los medios comunitarios del gran Bioma Amazónico colombiano como alternativas de cambio en el marco de la Cumbre Amazónica de Belém

Oscar Felipe Tellez D.

Los escenarios internacionales, que reúnen a grandes gobiernos, son envueltos por la cobertura periodística que realizan los medios masivos de comunicación. Eso sí, la construcción del discurso crítico realizado por diferentes sectores académicos y sociales califica esta labor como una acción sesgada que responde a intereses de grandes grupos económicos. Así, surgen preguntas que, desde las bases, empiezan a tomar partido dentro de la acción social y la movilización comunitaria: ¿se accede a una información certera y veraz? ¿se puede generar un sentido crítico, que permita encaminar el cambio social, con aquello que presentan las grandes cadenas de noticias?

Pues bien, la tarea para dar respuesta a esas preguntas no pasa por una construcción teórica o académica, sino que obedece a la capacidad de análisis que pueda tener cualquier individuo o actor social, que a la larga son quienes asumen una posición individual que bien puede resultar común de acuerdo con el contexto. Pero ¿qué pasa cuando lo que está en juego es la existencia misma de la humanidad? En ese escenario, la dinámica ya debería ser otra e ir más allá de la exigencia realizada a los *medios masivos de comunicación* por dar información de forma responsable. Lo que corresponde es exigir a la humanidad misma la explotación de su capacidad de razonamiento y sentido crítico.

La Cumbre Amazónica realizada en Belém do Pará es un ejemplo claro que nos permite entender los escenarios ya presentados. Y es que, poner en la agenda internacional la defensa del territorio amazónico, no es más que buscar alternativas para salvaguardar la existencia de la raza humana. Por ello, la responsabilidad que tienen los medios de comunicación es la de llevar a sus audiencias la información más limpia posible, esa que relata en un lenguaje entendible o legible, el análisis y acuerdos que se hayan asumido. El 8 y 9 de agosto de 2023, los gobiernos de los países adscritos a la Organización del Tratado de Cooperación Amazónica (OTCA) se dieron cita en la ciudad de Belém, Amazonía brasileña, con el objetivo de buscar las alternativas que, en la próxima década, contribuirán a proteger el equilibrio en la selva amazónica.

El papel de los medios comunitarios

Para el cubrimiento realizado en la Cumbre Amazónica de Belém do Pará se desplegaron diferentes medios de cada uno de los países con jurisdicción en la Amazonía, agencias internacionales de noticias y medios que pertenecen a sectores académicos (sobre todo de Brasil). Del mismo modo, desde la Red de Reporteros del Gran Bioma Amazónico de Colombia, se realizaron todas las gestiones para tener una presencia alternativa en la cumbre, garantizando que sectores

populares, indígenas y campesinos se acercaran a los diálogos del alto gobierno. En esta oportunidad, una red de 11 emisoras comunitarias, de esa región denominada como gran Bioma Amazónico pasaron del anonimato a la participación en un espacio internacional para la toma de decisiones (foto arriba por cortesía del autor.)

Es válido afirmar que la *comunicación alternativa y popular* tiene un tratamiento distinto de la información que produjo la Cumbre Amazónica. Y es que, la diferencia entre periodistas y reporteros que se encuentran ligados a *medios masivos* y quienes están vinculados a *medios comunitarios*, radica en el conocimiento de la realidad que se vive en los territorios.

El tratamiento de la información es distinto cuando quienes la reportan viven un día a día sin acceso a servicios básicos (como agua potable y energía eléctrica), con dificultades para ejecutar alternativas de desarrollo, con un olvido estatal que repercute en las dinámicas sociales de la población y con esa responsabilidad de defender el territorio que salvaguarda la vida en un contexto por demás violento.

Es por ello, que más allá de emitir y enunciar un mensaje basado en los discursos y reflexiones de los funcionarios de gobiernos presentes en la cumbre, los reporteros comunitarios tienen la responsabilidad de hacerlo de forma clara, certera y veraz. Existe también, la invitación al análisis y al sentido crítico como una consigna fundamental de los *medios comunitarios y alternativos*.

Sumado a ello, queda un aspecto fundamental que fue aplicado por los representantes de esta red de reporteros comunitarios: la calidad en los contenidos, lograda a través de una estética que no tiene nada que envidiarles a los *medios masivos de comunicación*.

Se resalta que, cada uno de los productos comunicativos elaborados por los reporteros comunitarios en el desarrollo de la Cumbre Amazónica, alcanzaron una audiencia que supera los 5 millones de personas a lo largo de todo América Latina y el Caribe. Un hecho que más de ser una cifra concreta reivindica que la comunicación que se realiza desde las bases y los sectores populares aun juega un papel fundamental en suplir esa necesidad de movilizar, organizar, informar y entretener que persiste en comunidades, periferias y zonas marginales.

Los medios comunitarios y el desarrollo de la cumbre

En la preparación previa que se tuvo desde la Red de Reporteros del gran Bioma Amazónico colombiano se consideraron varios detalles: la coordinación para la emisión en las estaciones de radio que conforman la red y el establecimiento de una alianza con la Asociación Latinoamericana de Comunicación y Educación Popular (ALER) para la difusión en la programación de las distintas socias que la conforman. Además, se consideró una planilla de contenidos o productos comunicativos que se elaboraron durante los días que se desarrolló el evento.

Los días 8 y 9 de agosto de 2023 se realizó una recopilación de la información de forma exhaustiva que permitió a los *medios comunitarios y populares* contar con un total de: 6 notas escritas, 2 reportes audiovisuales, 2 programas radiales y un reporte radial para la red Panamazónica de Comunicaciones de ALER. Adicional a ello, se realizaron las publicaciones en la página web de ALER y las redes digitales de Grupo COMUNICARTE y el proyecto "Cumare: voces de los pueblos de la Amazonía y la Orinoquía".

El análisis y exposición de la información, realizados desde los *medios comunitarios*, se enfocó en los problemas estructurales y ambientales que tienen lugar en el actual contexto amazónico. Por ello, fue importante exponer a las audiencias de los *medios comunitarios* que temas como la explotación minera, la deforestación, la no delimitación de la frontera agrícola y el asesinato selectivo a líderes sociales, son realidades que debieron considerarse con mayor empeño en la así llamada "Declaración de Belém". A ello, se suma que la explotación de hidrocarburos es el principal agravante de la crisis climática y social de la Amazonía actualmente. La economía y el modelo de extracción caminan junto al desplazamiento, la privación de fuentes de agua saludables e incluso los atentados a la vida de quienes habitan y defienden la Amazonía.

En este tipo de contextos, es preciso retomar las reflexiones realizadas por *comunicadores populares* a nivel de América Latina. La responsabilidad que demanda el cuidado de la Amazonía y la vida en sí misma, es un escenario que requiere retroalimentación y la existencia de actores que sean *emisores-receptores* dentro del proceso de intercambio de información. En otras palabras, el actuar de los *medios comunitarios* pasa por informar abriendo los espacios para la reflexión de las audiencias y generando los momentos precisos para que las audiencias asuman el papel de informar el análisis elaborado luego de la recepción de información.

La Red de Reporteros del gran Bioma Amazónico colombiano asumió la posición anteriormente mencionada. Este modelo alternativo del *quehacer de la comunicación* responde a dos términos que son transcendentales para lograr cambios sustanciales dentro de los territorios, las comunidades y los sectores marginados: *el diálogo de saberes* y *la construcción colectiva del conocimiento*. Así, considerando la participación activa de las audiencias dentro de los *medios comunitarios*, la labor realizada dentro de la Cumbre Amazónica pasó de ser una mera exposición de acuerdos entre figuras gubernamentales, a ser el centro del análisis social que realizan las bases y quienes, realmente, habitan el territorio amazónico (todo a través de los *medios comunitarios*).

El sin sabor de la Declaración de Belém

El análisis, *el diálogo de saberes* y *la construcción colectiva del conocimiento* realizados por las audiencias de los medios comunitarios, han podido determinar que el documento final, elaborado por los representantes de los países miembros de la OTCA, carece de una inclusión total del *discurso popular*. Y es que, aunque se abordan y mencionan varias de las problemáticas que afectan el equilibrio del Bioma Amazónico, se dejan de lado aquellas reflexiones que "tocan" el sistema económico que rige actualmente en el planeta.

Uno de los productos con mayor fuerza, y que realizaron corresponsales de medios comunitarios, fue el resumen y análisis del discurso dado por Gustavo Petro, presidente de Colombia, quien en cualquier escenario público ha manifestado

el rechazo a la explotación de hidrocarburos. Así, el primer mandatario colombiano declaró que: "*El sistema económico actual ha alcanzado una estabilidad económica debido al uso de petróleo, gas y carbón… esta es la energía del capitalismo.*"

La repercusión de este tipo de frases dichas por el presidente de Colombia y recopilada en los informes emitidos por los *medios comunitarios*, son analizadas por el discurso crítico de las bases (en su mayoría audiencias de medios comunitarios), que a su vez exigen una posición clara sobre el asunto y las soluciones que se pueden plantear para evitar los daños al gran bioma por cualquiera de las prácticas extractivas. Eso sí, se debe aclarar que, en el documento final no se evidencia una posición fuerte para cambiar la extracción de combustibles fósiles o de promover una alternativa a dicho escenario.

También, *participación comunitaria* ha permitido identificar falencias como: la falta de una posición que asuma la visión ancestral de los pueblos indígenas y la armonía que los mismos han tenido con el territorio durante su existencia. Y a ello se agrega, desde las bases en los *medios comunitarios*, que pese a tener un antecedente técnico, científico y ancestral, representado en la reunión preparatoria de Leticia (desarrollada en el mes de julio de 2023) los acuerdos del documento final son un mero reflejo de las apuestas e indicadores que pretende cumplir el poder ejecutivo de las naciones con jurisdicción en la Amazonía.

Quedan más argumentos expuestos por la sociedad civil, las bases y la población en general del territorio amazónico, a través del escenario propuesto por los *medios comunitarios*. También, queda abierto el debate para tener una reflexión amplia sobre el papel que llegan a cumplir los *medios comunitarios* en un escenario que, por excelencia no se les había brindado. Eso sí, queda demostrado que existe una larga brecha entre la *comunicación comunitaria* y aquella que denominamos *masiva*, que está marcada por la forma en como los actores de ambos sectores entienden y viven la realidad.

La conclusión más adecuada debe estar dirigida a las audiencias, pues son ellas quienes deben dar la relevancia a quienes trabajan por una *comunicación inclusiva*, *participativa y reflexiva*, sobre todo cuando se trata de la protección de la Amazonía y de la vida en sí misma. ▪

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Imagining immortality

Philip Lee

Reflections on digital technologies and artificial intelligence, their potential to change the nature of being human, and the unintended consequences of a Promethean quest for scientific knowledge.

In his book *Irish Nocturnes*, philosopher and poet Chris Arthur observes the unease with which human beings contemplate how each and every one of us will be forgotten by the world in which we live:

> "Our physical extinction is close-shadowed by a series of scarcely audible echoes of oblivion as, one by one, the pinprick glints of memory which may hold some likeness of us for a while gutter and go out" (Arthur, 1999: 60).

Arthur asks what survives of individuals such as Ramesses II, Shakespeare, Rembrandt, or Beethoven, and, therefore, what will survive of you or me? Sadly, the answer at the moment is relatively little, although the nearer the person is to the present age, the more there is that may last.

Of Ramesses II (Ozymandias in Shelley's poem and the most popular candidate for the Pharoah of the Exodus), whose mummy is on display in Cairo's National Museum of Egyptian Civilization, there remains the empty shell that housed his soul, but nothing to tell us the timbre of his voice. Of Shakespeare, the greatest plays in the English language, yet few traces of the man. Of Rembrandt, a magnificent series of self-portraits, whose pen and ink drawings tell us he was right-handed. Of Beethoven, an ear-trumpet, but no photographs.

Digging up a Viking burial mound or reconstructing a Chalcolithic face using forensic techniques can throw a shadowy light on the past. Yet "time purges the particular, the individual, into the anonymity of the nameless mass" (Arthur, 1999: 63) and what is uncovered is sometimes also unremarkable.

Until very recently the recording of history was a political enterprise. Official histories were those that created and reinforced national identities, imperial and economic boundaries. A recent issue of this journal (2/2023) examined archival justice's claim for more fair and balanced representation in the public collections of information and data that frame society's interactions with itself. Here, new technologies increasingly offer the opportunity to remember alternative lives and points of view.

Capturing sounds and images

Until well into the 19th century having a portrait painted was the prerogative of the rich, so it was fortuitous that the rise of a more affluent middle class coincided with the invention of photography, which transformed at a stroke how ordinary people saw themselves. The new medium was relatively cheap and professional photographers began to flourish. People did not have to be wealthy to have a "portrait photo" taken and entire families could be photographed at one sitting. People were now able to be the subjects as well as the objects of visual social history.

The first device that could record and reproduce sound was the "phonograph", built in 1877 by Thomas Alva Edison (1847-1931), the most prolific inventor since Leonardo da Vinci. Essentially this was the machine that first allowed posterity to hear the voices and sounds of an earlier age. The initial success of sound recording was given a boost by the rapid development of radio and film. On Christmas Eve 1906, Reginald Fessenden (1866-1932), one-time chief chemist in Thomas Edison's research laboratories, succeeded in transmitting a short speech, thus inaugurating wireless broadcasting.

The indefatigable Thomas Edison turned his attention to film, accidentally capturing "Fred Ott's sneeze" as part of a publicity stunt

on 7 January 1894, although most people credit the invention of cinema to the Lumière brothers, who showed films of a steam train arriving at a station and workers leaving a Lyons factory to a paying public in Paris on 28 December 1895.

Motion pictures started out as scenic shots of interesting locales (which evolved into documentaries), short newsworthy events (which evolved into newsreels), and filmed acts of famous performers like the American sharp-shooter Annie Oakley. The "silent era" ran from the mid-1890s to the period 1928-35, when most film industries switched to production with sound – a further instance of technological convergence. In parallel, radio developed as a medium for news, drama, light entertainment, jazz, classical music, and advertising.

For the first time in human history, people could see and hear about contemporary events – and about themselves as actors in history. They could be recorded aurally and visually, but they could also record themselves. When magnetic tape was developed at the end of the 1940s, closely followed by videotape (developed in 1956 but only available domestically from 1969), tape recordings and home movies could be sent to distant relatives instead of letters. Audiocassettes replaced reel-to-reel, videocassettes replaced home movies, and people literally took communication into their own hands.

The other great invention that enabled people to visualise themselves and their world was television. By 1948, after a lengthy period of development, millions in the USA found themselves watching coverage of the Republican and Democratic parties' national conventions and the television era began with a vengeance. The public service broadcasting ethic of early television was increasingly challenged by commercial light entertainment in which the domestic and commonplace became daily fare and soap operas took up social questions such as teenage pregnancy, divorce, euthanasia, and homosexuality.

In 1969, the first version of the Internet was created and set up as a network (called ARPANET) between four university "nodes" in the USA. Rapid developments followed: email (1971); the Web (1993); web browsers; search engines; social media platforms. All were avidly seized upon as alternative ways of communicating that were initially unregulated and uncensored.

Digital convergence and integration

The first computers were assembled in the USA in the 1940s. The rapid developments that followed focused on reducing size and increasing speed and capacity. Today's computers use integrated circuits with microcontrollers comprising a system of multiple, miniaturized and interconnected components fixed into a thin substrate of semiconductor material. Computers are desktop, lap-top, hand-held, and "embedded" in other technologies and even in human beings. In mid-2022, scientists at the University of Michigan announced the development of a computerised "microdevice" measuring just 0.04 cubic millimetres – smaller than a grain of rice – whose potential use lay in a range of medical applications.

Digital technologies are used to store and interact with vast quantities of information. The Human Genome Project was a world-wide research effort aimed at analysing the structure of human DNA and determining the location of our estimated 70,000 genes. The information generated by the project became the source book for biomedical science in the 21st century, helping scientists to understand and eventually to treat many of the more than 4,000 genetic diseases that afflict humankind.

Important issues surrounding this research remain to be addressed. Who owns genetic information? Who should have access to it and how should it be used? How does knowledge about personal genetic information affect the individual and society's interactions with that individual?

Also in the USA, the Visible Human Project (VHP) created anatomically detailed, three-dimensional representations of both the male and female bodies. The first "visible human" was Joseph Paul Jernigan, a 39-year-old Texan

convicted of murder and executed by lethal injection in 1993. His body was frozen to minus 160 F and "imaged" with the same magnetic resonance and computer technologies used in medical diagnosis. He was then sliced into 1,878 millimetre-thin sections to be photographed and digitised.

By late 1994 Jernigan had been "reincarnated" as a 15-gigabyte database. One year later, the body of a 59-year-old woman from Maryland who died of a heart attack was given the same treatment. Her identity is unknown. Both digital bodies can be accessed via the Internet.

Little of the research that led to the Human Genome Project and the Visible Human Project could have been done without digitisation. The outcome of both projects is a *digital blueprint* of a human being. Couple this with work being done on AI – the science and engineering of intelligent machines (any machine that can accomplish its specific task in the presence of uncertainty and variability in its environment) – and it is only a small leap of the imagination to arrive at a *digital replica* that has the exact physical and mental characteristics of a particular individual.

And now there's AI

The term artificial intelligence (AI) was coined as early as 1955, not long after computer scientist Alan Turing (1912-54) created a test to measure computer intelligence and Arthur Samuel (1901-90) developed a program to play checkers. Traditional AI and machine learning systems recognize patterns in data to make predictions. Generative AI – the brainchild of artist Samuel Cohen (1928-2016) – goes beyond prediction by generating new data as its primary output.

> "The ideal characteristic of artificial intelligence is its ability to rationalize and take actions that have the best chance of achieving a specific goal. A subset of artificial intelligence is machine learning (ML), which refers to the concept that computer programs can automatically learn from and adapt to new data without being assisted by humans" (Frankenfield, 2023).

Such is the furore surrounding AI that it now comes with a warning. In early 2023, thousands of CEOs, technologists, researchers, academics, and others signed an open letter calling for a pause in AI deployments, even as millions of people started using ChatGPT and other generative AI systems. The letter began with AI's "profound risks to society and humanity" and chastised AI labs for engaging in "an out-of-control race to develop and deploy ever more powerful digital minds that no one – not even their creators – can understand, predict, or reliably control."

Of course, people were quick to exploit AI's capabilities. In June 2023, two New York lawyers were sanctioned for submitting a legal brief that included six fictitious case citations generated by an AI chatbot. The lawyers acknowledged using ChatGPT to draft the document and told the federal judge that they didn't realize the tool could make such an error.

In October 2023, actor Tom Hanks wrote on Instagram, "There's a video out there promoting some dental plan with an AI version of me. I have nothing to do with it." AI and its potential abuse were among the issues that led actors to go on strike in 2023 after warnings that "clones" – digital doubles – would prove disastrous for the profession.

In November 2023 in the United Kingdom, faked audio of London mayor Sadiq Khan dismissing the importance of Armistice Day and supporting the massive pro-Palestine peace march that weekend circulated among extreme right groups, prompting a police investigation.

AI has enormous potential in terms of helping to bring about greater social progress. It also holds the key to a form of immortality that challenges human notions of "Our brief finitude… in the vast darkness of space" (Holloway, 2004: 215).

Digitality anticipates immortality

By the end of the 19th century there were photographs of eminent and ordinary people. By the end of the 20th century there were digital audio-

tapes (DATs) of their voices and digital video discs (DVDs) of them in action. By the end of the 21st century, all that will have advanced immeasurably.

The logical outcome of convergent technologies and AI is that it will be possible to fabricate a digital replica of any person and to invest her or him with a complete biological and social life-history. Such a replica might take the form of a hologram that can dialogue about its/his/her life and even replicate certain abilities (such as dancing or playing chess). No soul – perhaps – but every other human attribute.

The idea seems fanciful until one looks at ongoing research into storage mechanisms for human memory, for which scientists are studying the architecture, data structure and capacity. Soon they will be able to design the kind of memory cards that today are plugged into PCs, devices connected to your brain that can record every moment of your lifetime. The idea is not new:

> "Another way of thinking about technologically enhanced memory is to imagine that for your entire life you have worn a pair of eyeglasses with built-in, lightweight, high-resolution video cameras… Your native memory [will be] augmented by the ability to re-experience a recorded past... Thus, someday you may carry with you a lifetime of perfect, unfading memories" (*Converging Technologies*, 2002: 168)

Attractive though such a scenario may be, it raises questions about the nature of human being (ontology) and human knowledge (epistemology). And, as we know from debates around surveillance capitalism and biogenetics, fundamental questions about ownership and control: Who will decide whose data are worth keeping? Who will decide on their validity and authenticity? What measures need to be in place to prevent tampering with or rewriting the data?

Unconstrained by natural mortality, digital cyborgs will come to represent all that it means to be human. Our ways of speaking, our gestures, our memories, our spiritual beliefs will be encapsulated and capable of being replayed ad infinitum. Perhaps this is the real conundrum: not that AI will replace us, but that we shall replace ourselves and lose the essence of being human:

> "Despite the immense power of artificial intelligence, for the foreseeable future its usage will continue to depend to some extent on human consciousness. The danger is that if we invest too much in developing AI and too little in developing human consciousness, the very sophisticated artificial intelligence of computers might only serve to empower the natural stupidity of humans" (Harari, 2018: 71-72).

There is still time to think again. ▪

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Submission to the High-Level Advisory Body on Artificial Intelligence (AI) on key issues of Global AI Governance

ARTICLE 19

In this submission, ARTICLE 19 responds to the call for papers on key issues on global AI governance, in advance of the first meeting of the Multistakeholder Advisory Body on AI (Advisory Body). We encourage the Advisory Body to consider a human rights-centred framework – particularly as it relates to the right of freedom of expression – as one of its thematic pillars. We further offer a suggested ten-point focus plan for this pillar, based on ARTICLE 19's analysis of existing guidance, best practices, and risk areas on AI and freedom of expression from a variety of stakeholders.

In the context of escalating and overwhelming application of AI across a variety of fields from government to the private sector, ARTICLE 19, as part of its ongoing advocacy about the impact of AI on freedom of expression,[1] welcomes the efforts to include a diversity of important themes to be addressed through global governance.

As a number of human rights bodies have recognized already, AI carries both benefits and risks for the enjoyment of fundamental rights and therefore implicates States' obligations under human rights law.[2] The development and application of AI by both the private and public sectors also heavily implicates the rights to freedom of opinion and expression, both directly and indirectly. These issues are particularly critical given recent calls[3] by a coalition of UN special procedures and other experts for urgent action on the "alarming" use of AI to undermine journalists and human rights defenders, as well as its use in the mass production of synthetic content to spread disinformation or promote incitement to hatred, discrimination or violence.

ARTICLE 19 therefore proposes that one of the thematic pillars for the work of the Advisory Body should be a human rights-centred framework for AI. This – as we provide in the ten-point framework – would serve as a reference for States, private actors, and civil society as they engage with a variety of timely topics that impact freedom of expression. In analyzing these issues, ARTICLE 19 echoes the calls of the High Commissioner for Human Rights to examine "AI's entire lifecycle", evaluating how technical standards may contribute to or undermine human rights.[4] The ten-point framework should address in particular the following issues:

AI and content-based interferences with freedom of expression. ARTICLE 19 observes that applications of machine learning algorithms and limitations on their use have the potential to limit expressive activity online. Where this occurs, it may constitute interference with freedom of expression that must be analyzed pursuant to Article 19(3) of the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights. Such content-based interferences include, but are not limited to, content moderation on social media platforms as they increasingly utilize AI for automated multimedia content analysis, moderation, or blocking.[5] AI is often poor at detecting nuance – especially for content deemed to be hate speech or 'disinformation', and thus may be excessive in its removal of legitimate expressive activity.[6] Already vague notions of hate speech[7] may be exacerbated by AI systems that struggle with contextual nuance. At the same time, AI may con-

tribute to the problem by amplifying inherently unfair, discriminatory, or biased trends in training datasets.[8]

Therefore, the Advisory Body could reiterate that any measures to address these problems must comply with international standards,[9] including the guidance of the UN Special Procedures and Human Rights Council.[10]

1. AI and surveillance. ARTICLE 19 observes how AI and biometrics are used for facial recognition in public spaces and municipal infrastructure, to develop profiles on individuals, monitor movements and relationships, and even predict criminality.[11] ARTICLE 19 recommends that the Advisory Body provide a framework on the collection, use, and sharing of biometrics consistent with international standards; i.e. that surveillance only be conducted on a targeted basis on grounds of reasonable suspicion, and personal data protections must be in place.[12]

2. AI and safety of human rights defenders, journalists, and activists. AI impacts multiple groups – who are often subject to intimidation, harassment, and threats of violence in a transforming media environment[13] – via means such as bot network harassment,[14] doxing, the use of generative AI to create materials for blackmail,[15] and AI-based surveillance (see above). AI can also be utilized to 'de-anonymize' individuals, undermining journalist-source relationships. ARTICLE 19 suggests the Advisory Body provide best-practices for oversight and mechanisms for remedies to protect these groups.

3. AI and media freedom. AI impacts the work of newsrooms in novel ways. These include automated news creation, promoting broader dissemination (such as quickly translating stories for new audiences), or curating access to stories based on reader patterns.[16] These should not be used as a pretext for media regulation, and as such ARTICLE 19 suggests the Advisory Body monitor any attempts of governments to regulate the media. ARTICLE 19 recommends media self-regulation on how it deploys AI in order to promote a pluralistic media environment.

4. AI industry best practices. ARTICLE 19 suggests the Advisory Body collect and share existing ethical codes and various industry standards on artificial intelligence. These have important implications for the protection and promotion of freedom of expression by directly impacting the manner in which the private sector develops and deploys AI. Such efforts are already underway through the private sector and civil society.[17]

5. Respect for human rights safeguards. As States increasingly adopt long-term strategic plans relating to their implementation of AI,[18] ARTICLE 19 urges that these plans reference existing rights obligations and safeguards. The High Commissioner on Human Rights has stressed the urgent need to pause the use and sale of AI negatively impacting human rights until adequate safeguards are in place.[19] We suggest the Advisory Body provide best-practice safeguards for States to include in their strategic plans.

6. AI and transparency. The opacity of machine learning algorithms presents particular challenges for individuals, regulators, civil society, and even designers of systems, as it is often unclear when and how systems are utilized, and therefore difficult to audit their human rights implications.[20] ARTICLE 19 suggests that the Advisory Body recommend standards for developers of "high risk" AI systems,[21] which are particularly prone to impact human rights, to provide meaningful public and civil society access to those activities, including but not limited to requirements for public registration either nationally or internationally.

7. Impact assessments. ARTICLE 19 suggests that the Advisory Body provide that users of high-risk AI systems have an obligation to conduct and publish human rights impact assessments prior to their deployment. These propos-

als also further the aim of transparency, and have been echoed at the national level.[22]

8. Accountability. ARTICLE 19 suggests that the Advisory Body develop and recommend mechanisms to empower individuals whose rights are violated, including a right to lodge complaints, a right of representation, and rights to effective remedies.

9. Prohibition of dangerous AI. At the broader level, there must be a full ban on certain AI systems that go beyond "high risk" but pose a fundamental, unacceptable risk for rights, consistent with rights standards. These include all types of remote biometric identification, emotion recognition, and biometric categorization using sensitive attributes. We invite the Advisory Body to define standards for unacceptable AI systems.

In sum

A rights-centred pillar on freedom of expression and privacy would accomplish several key objectives and aid the Advisory Panel in the following ways:

* It would offer consistency, clarity, and guidance for States as to their human rights obligations in this complex field;

* It would provide a participatory mechanism for stakeholders, including the private sector, Special Procedures, and civil society, to engage with creating human rights-centred best practices;

* It would reinforce the critical importance of protecting and promoting human rights, including rights to freedom of expression, through the continued development and application of AI;

* It would provide a process for transparency and accountability in the application and any abuses of AI.

ARTICLE 19 is prepared to offer any additional assistance and expertise that would be helpful to the Advisory Body as it considers these topics. ▪

Notes

1. ARTICLE 19 has monitored key developments in AI, including participating in a coalition for proposals to the European Parliament and Council for the Artificial Intelligence Act. We have made expert submissions to, e.g., the Institute of Electrical and Electronics Engineering (IEEE), the UK House of Lords Select Committee on AI, and the Article 29 Working Party of the European Data Protection Board. Together with Privacy International, we published Privacy and Freedom of Expression in the Age of Artificial Intelligence, in April 2018.
2. See e.g. the UN Special Rapporteur on freedom of expression, Report on Artificial Intelligence technologies and implications for freedom of expression and the information environment, U.N. Doc. A/73/348, 29 August 2018; or Council of Europe, Artificial Intelligence: Ensuring respect for democracy, human rights and the rule of law.
3. UN Office of the High Commissioner on Human Rights, New and emerging technologies need urgent oversight and robust transparency: UN experts, 2 June 2023.
4. UN Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights, Artificial intelligence must be grounded in human rights, says High Commissioner, 12 July 2023.
5. Carey Shenkman, Dhanaraj Thakur, Emma Llansó, Do You See What I See? Capabilities and Limited of Automated Multimedia Content Analysis, Center for Democracy and Technology, May 2021.
6. Office of the OSCE Representative on Freedom of the Media, Freedom of the Media and Artificial Intelligence, 16 November 2020, p.1.
7. ARTICLE 19, Self-regulation and 'hate speech' on social media platforms, 2018, p. 4.
8. Michelle Hampson, Combating Hate Speech Online With AI, IEEE Spectrum, 21 February 2023.
9. Esha Bhandari, Regulation of generative AI must protect freedom of expression, Open Global Rights, 2 June 2023.
10. Disinformation and freedom of opinion and expression, Report of the Special Rapporteur on the promotion and protection of the right to freedom of opinion and expression, U.N. Doc. A/HRC/47/25, 13 April 2021; Human Rights Council, Role of States in countering the negative impact of disinformation on the enjoyment and realization of human rights, U.N. Doc. A/HRC/49/L.31/Rev.1, 28 March 2022.
11. ARTICLE 19, Emotional Entanglement: China's emotion recognition market and its implications for human rights, January 2021; ARTICLE 19, EU: AI Act must protect prioritise fundamental rights, 19 April 2023.
12. UN Human Rights Council, Report of the Special Rapporteur on the Rights to Freedom of Peaceful Assembly and of Association, U.N. Doc. A/HRC/41/41, 17 May 2019, para. 57.
13. Council of Europe, Conference of Ministers responsible for Media and Information Society, Artificial Intelligence—Intelligent Politics, Resolution on the safety of journalists, 10-11 June 2021.
14. Reporters Without Borders, Online Harassment of Journalists: Attack of the trolls, 2018, p. 13.
15. Paul M. Barrett and Justin Hendrix, Safeguarding AI: Addressing the Risks of Generative Artificial Intelligence, NYU Stern Center for Business and Human Rights, June 2023.
16. Council of Europe, Implications of AI-Driven Tools in the Media for Freedom of Expression, 28-29 May 2020, p. 8, 16.

17. OECD, Artificial Intelligence & Responsible Business Conduct, 2019; Amnesty International and Access Now, The Toronto Declaration: Protecting the right to equality and non-discrimination in machine learning systems, 16 May 2018; Partnership on AI, About Us, 2023; IEEE, Ethically Aligned Design: A Vision for Prioritizing Human Well-being with Autonomous and Intelligent Systems, 12 December 2017, pp. 83-112.
18. Foundation for Law & International Affairs, China's New Generation of Artificial Intelligence Development Plan, 30 July 2017.
19. Human Rights Council, Report of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights, U.N. Doc. A/HRC/48/31, 13 September 2021, paras. 39, 42, 59(c); Human Rights Council, New and emerging digital technologies and human rights, U.N. Doc. A/HRC/53/L.27/Rev.1, 12 July 2023, p. 4
20. Side-event of the Internet for Trust Global Conference, 7 February 2023.
21. The European Commission, for instance, defines "high-risk" AI to include systems of law enforcement that may interfere with fundamental rights, or migration, asylum, and border control management. The Commission recommends that these systems, if deployed, be subject to strict obligations before they can be taken to market. European Commission, Proposal for a Regulation laying down harmonised rules on artificial intelligence, 21 April 2021.
22. Australian Human Rights Commission, The Need for Human Rights-centred Artificial Intelligence, 26 July 2023, p. 49-50.

Ten core principles in a human-rights centred approach to the Ethics of AI

UNESCO

1 PROPORTIONALITY AND DO NO HARM

The use of AI systems must not go beyond what is necessary to achieve a legitimate aim. Risk assessment should be used to prevent harms which may result from such uses.

2 SAFETY AND SECURITY

Unwanted harms (safety risks) as well as vulnerabilities to attack (security risks) should be avoided and addressed by AI actors.

3 RIGHT TO PRIVACY AND DATA PROTECTION

Privacy must be protected and promoted throughout the AI lifecycle. Adequate data protection frameworks should also be established.

4 MULTI-STAKEHOLDER AND ADAPTIVE GOVERNANCE & COLLABORATION

International law & national sovereignty must be respected in the use of data. Additionally, participation of diverse stakeholders is necessary for inclusive approaches to AI governance.

5 RESPONSIBILITY AND ACCOUNTABILITY

AI systems should be auditable and traceable. There should be oversight, impact assessment, audit and due diligence mechanisms in place to avoid conflicts with human rights norms and threats to environmental wellbeing.

6 TRANSPARENCY AND EXPLAINABILITY

The ethical deployment of AI systems depends on their transparency and explainability. For example, people should be made aware when a decision is informed by AI. The level of transparency and explainability should be appropriate to the context, as there may be tensions between transparency and explainability and other principles such as privacy, safety and security.

7 HUMAN OVERSIGHT AND DETERMINATION

Member States should ensure that AI systems do not displace ultimate human responsibility and accountability.

8 SUSTAINABILITY

AI technologies should be assessed against their impacts on 'sustainability', understood as a set of constantly evolving goals including those set out in the UN's Sustainable Development Goals.

9 AWARENESS AND LITERACY

Public understanding of AI and data should be promoted through open and accessible education, civic engagement, digital skills and AI ethics training, media and information literacy.

10 FAIRNESS AND NON-DISCRIMINATION

AI actors should promote social justice, fairness, and non-discrimination while taking an inclusive approach to ensure AI's benefits are accessible to all.

Policy Area 9: Communication and Information

112. Member States should use AI systems to improve access to information and knowledge. This can include support to researchers, academia, journalists, the general public and developers, to enhance freedom of expression, academic and scientific freedoms, access to information, and increased proactive disclosure of official data and information.

113. Member States should ensure that AI actors respect and promote freedom of expression as well as access to information with regard to automated content generation, moderation and curation. Appropriate frameworks, including regulation, should enable transparency of online communication and information operators and ensure users have access to a diversity of viewpoints, as well as processes for prompt notification to the users on the reasons for removal or other treatment of content, and appeal mechanisms that allow users to seek redress.

114. Member States should invest in and promote digital and media and information literacy skills to strengthen critical thinking and competencies needed to understand the use and implication of AI systems, in order to mitigate and counter disinformation, misinformation and hate speech. A better understanding and evaluation of both the positive and potentially harmful effects of recommender systems should be part of those efforts.

115. Member States should create enabling environments for media to have the rights and resources to effectively report on the benefits and harms of AI systems, and also encourage media to make ethical use of AI systems intheir operations. ■

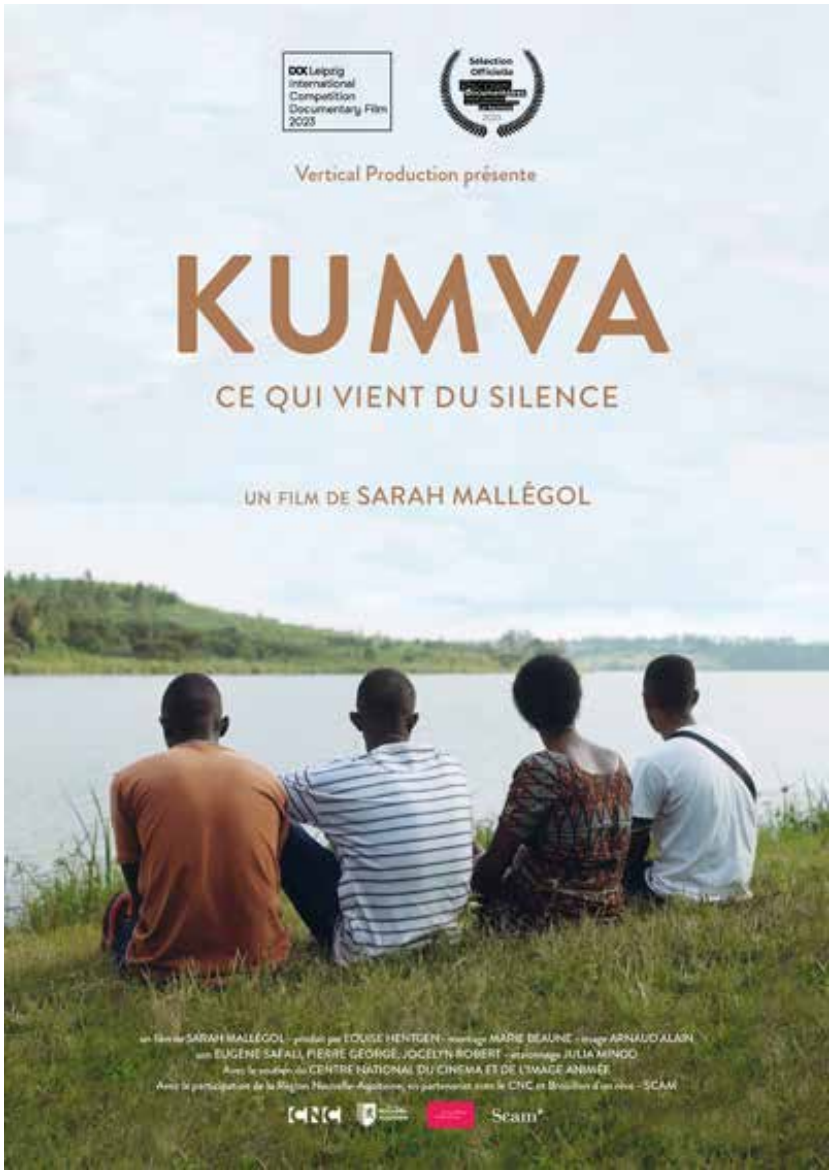
ON THE SCREEN

Leipzig (Germany) 2023

At the 66th International Film Festival for Documentary and Animated Film (8-15 October 2023), the Interreligious Jury, appointed by INTERFILM and SIGNIS, awarded its Prize of € 2.250, donated by the VCH-Hotels Germany together with VCH-Hotel Michaelis in Leipzig as well as the Interreligious Round Table and the Oratorium Leipzig to *Kumva – Ce qui vient du silence* (Kumva – Which Comes from Silence) directed by Sarah Mallégol (France, 2022).

Motivation: The jury appreciates the film's main topic, as silence not only gives rise to terrible memories of the 1994 genocide in Rwanda, but also to the need for new generations to live together in dialogue and with respect.

Summary: Quietly and discreetly, the French director Sarah Mallégol follows a group of thirty-something protagonists who survived the 1994 Rwanda genocide as children. They



have no memory of the events – neither those whose fathers were murdered nor those whose parents were responsible. A confrontation begins: focused conversations between generations which, captured by a gentle camera, are meant to cautiously break the long silence – in order to be able to understand, process and mourn.

Members of the 2023 Jury: Barbara Guggenheim (Germany); Chantal Laroche-Poupard, (France); Bojidar Manov (Bulgaria); Mohammad Rezaeian (Switzerland).

Warsaw (Poland) 2023

At the 39th Warsaw Film Festival (6-15 October 2023), the Ecumenical Jury, appointed by INTERFILM and SIGNIS, awarded its Prize for a film in the International Competition to *Kein Wort / Not a Word* (Germany, France, Slovenia, 2023) directed by Hanna Slak.

Motivation: The successful conductor Nina is living in Munich with her teenage son. Lars closes himself off in his grief because a friend burned to death. Nina doesn't want to believe that her son is involved in the tragedy. Neither can talk about it, but spend a few days on an island. After a long silence they find their communication. The movie is about mother love, difficulties of generations, of communication, mourning and finding together in rough surroundings.

Members of the 2023 Ecumenical Jury: Anna Karapetyan (Armenia); Thomas Kroll (Germany); Christine Ris (Switzerland), President.

Lübeck (Germany) 2023

At the 65th Nordic Film Days Lübeck (November 1-5, 2023), the INTERFILM Jury awarded the Church Film Prize, endowed with €5,000 by the Evangelical Church District Luebeck-Lauenburg, to the film *Paradiset Brinner* (Paradise is Burning) directed by Mika Gustafson (Sweden, Denmark, Finland, Italy, 2023).

Motivation: They live in involuntary anarchy and their living conditions are precarious and chaotic. In order to survive, they create their own small community and invent rituals that create a sense of belonging and try to overcome the chaos. For the Jury, the film shows that rituals are part of the immanent human condition and diminish the vulnerability of life.

Members of the 2023 Jury: Melanie Pollmeier, Switzerland (President of the Jury); Mia Lund Rao (Denmark); Arnis Šablovskis (Latvia); Ulrike Scholderer (Germany).

Cottbus (Germany) 2023

At the 33rd FilmFestival Cottbus - Festival of East European Cinema (7-11 November 2023), the Ecumenical Jury, appointed by INTERFILM and SIGNIS, awarded its Prize to

Blackbird Blackbird Blackberry directed by Elene Naveriani (Georgia, Switzerland, 2023).

Motivation: The film tells the story of a strong, independent woman in the middle of her life, with poetic images and rich colours. The way Etero finds her very own happiness, the bodies that do not correspond to any external beauty, and the unexpected turn of events encourage us to stay true to ourselves, far from conventions.

Synopsis: Etero has no family, and that is precisely why he has eyes for so much else, for example the beauty of blackbirds. But then an accident awakens a longing in her never felt before. Unexpectedly, she falls passionately in love and is suddenly faced with the decision of entering into a relationship or maintaining her independence. Etero must rediscover her feelings and needs to find her own path to happiness.

Members of the 2023 Jury: Brigitta Rotach, Switzerland; Beáta Kézdi, Hungary.

Mannheim-Heidelberg (Germany) 2023

At the 72nd International Film Festival Mannheim-Heidelberg (16-26 November 2023), the Ecumenical Jury, appointed by INTERFILM and SIGNIS, awarded its Prize, endowed with €2500 by the Catholic German Bishops' Conference (DBK) and the Evangelical Church in Germany (EKD), to the film *Una sterminata domenica* (An Endless Sunday) directed by Alain Parroni (Italy, Germany, 2023) – still photo from the film below.

Motivation: Three teenagers on their own in a desperate search for affection embark on a wild trip through the Eternal City. The film is both a road movie and a coming-of-age story. The teenagers instinctively ask themselves the important questions about the meaning of life. Disorientation and frustration drive them to a real warning shot. Visual allusions to archaic biblical images give the film a multi-layered meaning. The birth in the final scene opens up new perspectives for the three of them.

Members of the 2023 Jury: Markus Leniger, Germany (President of the Jury); Lotta Lundberg, Sweden; András Petrik, Hungary. ▪