Call for Abstracts

Call for Abstracts: "Digitalisation and Development in the Global South. Progress by Technology?"

TATuP special topic in issue 2/2019

Submission of your abstract until 25 October 2018!

A "digital divide" separates the countries of the Global North and South: they are unequal in terms of access to and the use of information and communication technologies (ICT) such as computers, mobile phones, and the internet. It is widely believed that bridging this divide will positively affect people in under-connected world regions: ICT are assumed to increase economic productivity and prosperity and to have a democratizing effect. They also allegedly support education and the delivery of health care and create new opportunities for cultural and religious expression, social networking and entertainment. In short, ICT may combat numerous prevailing challenges to development and global justice.

The present digital divide has inspired much debate in numerous disciplines including Sociology, Library Science, Economics, Anthropology and Development Studies, where an entire new research area on "ICT for development" (ICT4D) emerged. The divide has also become a focus area of many policy-makers working on development and has e.g. been incorporated into the United Nations' (UN) Millennium Development Goals and the ensuing 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development. More tangibly, international organisations such as the UN and the European Union (EU), development organisations and multinational corporations like Alphabet/Google, Microsoft and Facebook have launched numerous initiatives to implement ICT in the Global South.

These initiatives are at least professedly driven by the idea of closing the global digital divide in order to improve the quality of life and well-being of individuals and communities in less connected regions. They frequently involve the export of (often-innovative) technologies developed in China and in the Global North, in particular in Europe and North America, to other countries in the Global South. Besides, digital skills trainings and the launch of start-up hubs and incubators aim at supporting local design and innovation for development. Examples of international and local digitalisation projects and technologies range from free access to specific content on the internet ("zero-rating") to e-health, e-education, e-government, e-agriculture and mobile banking applications, and also include ICT infrastructure such as satellites, drones and white spaces technology.

These technologies bear great opportunity for global justice and human development in the Global South. Notwithstanding, with growing activity in the fields of digitalisation and ICT for development, critical questions must also be raised. In other words: There is a need to critically examine the potentials and risks of ICT for global justice and development from the perspective of technology assessment.

Expected contributions

The TATuP special topic in issue 2/2019 "Digitalisation and Development in the Global South. Progress by Technology?" offers a platform to advance such a critical assessment from an interdisciplinary perspective. It welcomes contributions from all disciplines working on the subject, including Philosophy, Sociology, Ethnology, Political Science, Development Studies, Engineering, Information Science, Library Science, Media Studies, Economics, and Geosciences.

Contributions to the TATuP special topic in issue 2/2019 may address (but are not limited to) the following questions:

- What are the motivations behind ICT export and digitalisation programmes?
- How and to what effect are ICT used in the Global South? Which current digitalisation projects may innovatively contribute to human development in the Global South?
- Who is excluded from ICT use? Which divides (e.g. gender, rural/urban, educational) persist and are potentially even reinforced by ICT? What impact does digitalisation have on marginalized groups such as women, economically deprived persons, indigenous peoples or persons with disabilities?
- What are challenges to the successful implementation of digitalisation projects? What are ethical criteria for sustainable ICT implementation for development?
- What kind of development do ICT4D initiatives promote?
- What ethical questions arise from the export of ICT from the Global North to the Global South in terms of responsibility, accountability, equality, justice, and power? Which theories of justice can help evaluate the practice of digitalisation in the Global South? What are local perspectives on global justice in the context of ICT implementation?
- Bearing in mind that technologies are not neutral but have certain values inscribed in them, how are digital technologies designed, e.g. in terms of privacy and access to information? What role do local content, languages, and knowledge play?
- What kind of data is collected? What is the role of (tech) companies, governments, and non-governmental organisations in data protection/misuse?
- How do understandings of privacy and access to information differ between cultures?
- In which ways do ICT change (moral) norms of action, cultural traditions and the distribution of power? What is their impact on the values of privacy and access to information?
- Does the export of ICT by companies and development programmes to the Global South have "neo-colonial" effects?

Editors of this TATuP special topic

PD Dr. Jessica Heesen (IZEW Tübingen), Laura Schelenz (IZEW Tübingen), Kerstin Schopp (IZEW Tübingen), Maria Pawelec (IZEW Tübingen)

Submissions

Please send your abstract by email to redaktion@tatup.de by 25 October 2018 at the very latest. Please respect the following directions: max. 3000 signs incl. blanks; the editorial office will correspond with the author submitting the abstract; name all authors with full names, email addresses and institutional affiliations.

Schedule

25 October 2018: deadline for submitting your abstract.
Mid-November 2018: decisions on inviting authors to submit a full manuscript.
Mid-February 2019: deadline for submitting your full manuscript.
March 2019: peer review process.
End of March/early April 2019: feedback to the authors from the reviewers and editors of the special issue.
April 2019: authors' revisions.
May 2019: copy-editing.
July 2019: Publication in TATuP issue 2/2019.