"Development Implications of Digital Economies" (DIODE) Workshop Report (Manchester, 11-12 Apr 2018)

Report of the fourth workshop of the ESRC GCRF strategic research network, "Development Implications of Digital Economies" (DIODE), held in Manchester, UK.

A. Emerging Research Themes

Feminist Digital Economics
- Not just training more women in ICT skills but also addressing the broader institutional context, and recognising its impact: of wider patriarchal structures but also differentiation of these structures and their impact between countries
- Identifying the digital economy gender asymmetries of context, activity and impact
- Three areas of activity: changing the discourse on the digital economy in developing countries; recognising women's digital labour (including addressing gig economy pay gaps); enabling access to the digital commons (recognising women tend to be more dependent on commons than men)

Digital Labour
- Problem areas that need to be addressed include: employment status; pay rates; unpaid labour; rejection of work; limited voice
- Longer-term perspective on the nature of work in digital gig economy: skilled, well-educated workers in developing countries are undertaking relatively low-value-addition, low-skill work, and thus making sub-optimal use of their "human capital" in developmental terms
- Design: how do we design labour platforms that are fair? For workers: enabling them to see the bigger context of their tasks; allowing their data to be portable; giving them a voice; making algorithms transparent and fair. For platforms: enabling them to manage responsibly. For clients: overcoming barriers to accessibility; enabling relationship building with workers.
- Perceptions of digital labour: how does the context of, and relation to, other local labour markets impact how digital labour is perceived; what is the gap between actual shortfall from decent work standards vs. perceived experiences of workers in developing countries
- Domestic and South-South markets: what are the implications of growth in domestic, regional and broader Southern demand for digital labour; are their opportunities for greater demand for impact sourcing and decent digital work
- Impact sourcing: how does growth of impact sourcing relate to wider digital gig economy; what is the consequence of growing use of digital platforms within impact sourcing
- Platformisation: what are the impacts of IT and other digital work gradually shifting from value chains involving traditional IT firms to value chains intermediated by platforms
- Client motivations: what are the motivations of individual and corporate clients in outsourcing digital work; what are the opportunities for clients to demand or support decent digital work standards
- Longer-term: what are the trajectories of digital labour livelihoods over time

Digital Platforms
- Platforms are the key institution of the digital economy, and their institutional features thus shape the digital economy: network effects, tendencies to monopoly, turning data into "digital intelligence", these may be "post-market" types of institution
- Those who control "digital capital" – the value chains that capture data and convert it into knowledge and control – will shape the trajectory of digital economies
- Can developing countries create their own digital platforms or will they be like "birds caught in a storm" and dependent on the two digital platform superpowers, US and China
- Three elements of platform policy: a) Data policy: e.g. on local ownership and use of data and data platforms including collective ownership; b) Data/digital infrastructure: options for mixed models that are neither wholly-private (as in US) or wholly-state (as in China); c) Platform regulation: enabling better governance, ownership, control
- Typology: what are the different types of platforms operating in the digital economy in developing countries and what is the different development value of the different types
- Digitality: how do the specific functionalities and affordances of the digital impact the development impacts of platforms
- Value: who captures the value created by platforms
- Platform alternatives: hybrid business—welfare platforms; state-owned and state-initiated platforms; platform co-operatives; open platforms

Digital Enterprise/Entrepreneurship
- Geography of digital enterprise e.g. how physical space and positionality within networks impact trajectories of digital entrepreneurs and enterprises in developing countries
- Development of local markets for digital goods and services, including for IT impact sourcing as an alternative to the currently dominant North->South impact sourcing value chains; analysing size, nature and implications of local markets esp. BoP digital markets
- Understanding the causes of digital enterprise failure, including: a) weak context (ecosystem, institutions, location); b) weak markets (e.g. small size); c) weak finance (lack of adequate sources); d) weak human capital (lack of skills but also of "start-up mindset")
- Digital social enterprise: initiating, growing and orchestrating digital social enterprise with hybrid business-development models; understanding funding sources, funding/business models, and development implications of digital social enterprise; understanding DSE legal frameworks of incorporation
- Materiality: how do the specifics of digitality impact the nature of digital enterprise
- Longer-term/broader impacts of digital entrepreneurship and enterprise including on inequality

Digital Policy
- Beyond content: analysing the processes and structures – particularly the politics – of digital economy policy-making and implementation
- Understanding how the developmental role of the state is different vis-à-vis the digital economy compared to other/earlier sectors
- Charting direct state intervention in the digital economy: including state-run or state-sponsored digital platforms
- Cross-country comparative studies of digital economy policy
- The big picture: helping policy-makers understand the major shifts arising from digital and their different options for action
- Ensuring regional digital policies and trade deals are more local market-oriented and less of a "red carpet for digital multinationals"

Digital Economy Theory & Methods
- Developing new theory at the intersection of digitality/materiality + institutions/power + networks
- Evaluating "digital density": ways to measure not just breadth of digital economy in developing countries but also depth of impact
- Researching digital economy research: how do we cross the research—policy/practice gap and ensure that digital economy research is translated into action

B. Digital Economy Policy

Policy Content
- Digital Legislation e.g. e-signatures; taxation of digital labour, digital enterprise and other digital activity
- Digital Infrastructure: 3G/4G/5G; security; data centres and cloud
- Digital Skills and Education
- Digital Enterprise: e-commerce; IPR; tech parks
- Digital Jobs & Growth
- Digital Platforms: specific policies on platform governance, ownership (including state-run and state-sponsored platforms), data
- Digital Demand: balancing the largely supply-side focus of other policy components with the need to foster greater local demand for digital goods and services

Policy Process/Structure
- Managing the politics of inter-agency co-ordination/competition; the need for top-level leadership
- Policy continuity: how to set digital economy policy outside the cycles/rhythms of domestic politics

C. Workshop Timetable

Wednesday 11th April 2018

Timing	Content
9:00 - 9:30	Introduction: *Richard Heeks*
9:30 - 11:00	Session 1: Talks 1-3 *Wirawan Agahari*: Digital economy initiatives in Indonesia and their impact on inclusive development *Nagwa Elshenawy*: Development implications of digital economies: the case of Egypt *Becky Faith*: Why we need feminist digital economics
11:00 - 11:30	Tea / Coffee
11:30 - 13:00	Session 2: Talks 4-6 *Uma Rani Amara*: Work and income security among workers in on-demand digital economy: Issues and challenges in developing economies *Payal Arora & Linnea Thompson*: Crowdsourcing as a platform for digital labor unions? A critical analysis of how crowdsourcing enables dialogue between brands and global laborers *Mark Graham & Jamie Woodcock*: A Fairwork Foundation: towards fair work in the platform economy
13:00 - 14:00	Lunch
14:00 - 15:30	Session 3: Talks 7-9 *Parminder Jeet Singh*: Policy for digital industrialisation in developing countries *Andrea Jimenez & Yingqin Zheng*: Tech hubs and development: a spatial perspective *Sumandro Chattapadhya & Saman Goudarzi*: Digital payments platform in India
15:30 - 16:00	Tea / Coffee
16:00 - 17:00	Session 4: Talks 10-11 *Linda Gabel*: The digital transformation of work in the developing world: challenges and opportunities *Christopher Foster*: Power and relations in theories of digital economies and development: current approaches and directions forward

Thursday 12th April 2018

Timing	Content
9:45 - 10:00	Introduction: *Richard Heeks*
10:00 - 11:30	Session 5: Talks 12-14 *Kasi Pooparadai*: Digital economy in Thailand: from policy to implementation *Balaji Parthasarathy*: The developmental state and the platform economy *Rauf Jabarov*: Factors underpinning failure of digital start-ups in developing countries
11:30 - 12:00	Tea / Coffee
12:00 - 13:00	Session 6: Panel/Discussion session: Future research priorities relating to digital economies and developing countries *Niels Beerepoot*; *Carla Bonina*; *Emmanuel Fiagbenu*; *Jacki O'Neill*; *MN Ravishankar*
13:00 - 14:00	Lunch
14:00 - 15:30	Research group break-out activities: digital economy policy (G0.17, ground floor); digital platforms (G0.16, ground floor); digital entrepreneurship (Nile, first floor); digital labour (Boardroom)
15:30 - 16:00	Tea / Coffee
16:00 - 17:00	Research group activity report back and workshop close

D. Workshop Photograph