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T7 Task Force Strengthening social cohesion

POLICY BRIEF

DATA CITIZENSHIP

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Abstract

G7 governments must lead in providing citizens with the same protections and facilities in the digital, online realm as are established in the physical, offline realm. To defend liberal democracy, social participation, freedom of science and of the press, tackle disinformation, and promote digital order and digital progress requires states to step up to their foundational responsibility to protect their citizens.

The G7 should create the standards and taxonomy to enable globally verifiable digital identity that allows every citizen to authenticate themselves, control their personal data, and participate in the development of public data goods.

Challenge

The innovation, productivity, and behaviour change needed to address the existential challenges of greater social and environmental efficiency all require a renewed commitment to free and open democracy. Democracy requires that social cohesion be rooted in shared perceptions of facts and realities; thus, establishing data citizenship is central to the long-term health of democratic governance.

Maximising the use of data to more ambitious outcomes such as improving the quality of life and prosperity for citizens across the G7 and beyond is not solely about improving public service delivery but most importantly, rebalancing the flow of benefits away from the big corporations and into the hands of citizens. Governments need to address the very serious issues of corporate power and digital exclusion.

Insecurity threatens liberal democracy and sets the stage for disinformation which is exploited to dismantle civil society and the rule of law. The solution to that is to provide citizens with the same support and protections in the digital realm as exist in the physical realm.

Proposals

Accessing the power of digital governance will require putting the citizen at the centre of a new data citizen contract — using a framework of ‘data citizenship’ that generates protections and benefits for citizens, creates new ways of participation, enhance democracy and create value in society, in particular, social value. This is at the core in our recent work with the London Borough of Newham, London in establishing a thriving data society.¹

Physical and digital connectivity are crucial to social cohesion, with research in a G7 country such as the UK, demonstrating that communities are more likely to feel disempowered and cast aside by the state if they lack sufficient forms of physical and digital connectivity.

Digital agency should be incorporated into definitions of public goods.

Implementations

- i. G7 countries formally commit to putting citizen’s interests at the centre of policies governing digital and data, by establishing “data citizenship” as an integral part of the protections and the public goods provided by government.
- ii. In practice this means committing to creating and protecting every citizen’s digital identity. G7 countries should commit to establishing an international taxonomy for digital identity that allows cross border identity validation. The digital equivalent of a passport.
- iii. Citizens should be empowered to use their digital identities to encrypt their private information wherever it is stored, thus providing a practical ability to withdraw their consent through their control of their encryption keys. Enabling citizens with rights that supersede permissions solicited through online consents.
- iv. The public data generated by citizens should be designated as a public good.

Endnotes

¹ <https://www.newham.gov.uk/NewhamSparks>

References

Percy, A., Lorgat, R., & Woodcraft, S. (2022). *Unleashing the power of data to drive shared prosperity: A roadmap to a transformative data society*. London: Institute for Global Prosperity.
<https://www.newham.gov.uk/downloads/file/4306/newham-sparks-second-chapter>

About the Authors

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Professor Henrietta L. Moore is the Founder and Director of the Institute for Global Prosperity and the Chair in Culture Philosophy and Design at University College London (UCL). A leading global thinker on prosperity, Professor Moore challenges traditional economic models of growth arguing that to flourish communities, businesses and governments need to engage with diversity and work within environmental limits. Her work crosses disciplines, from social science to the arts to business innovation and she applies these different perspectives to inform research and policy at all levels.

Her recent work has seen her transition beyond academia into the public sphere providing commentary on topics such as Universal Basic Services, Brexit, Artificial Intelligence, displaced people and the gender pay gap as a respected leading intellectual. She retains ongoing interests on issues of globalisation, mass migration, gender, social transformation and livelihood strategies, new technologies and agroecology which have shaped her career and her engagement with policy making. She is committed to involving grassroots communities in the production of new types of knowledge through citizen science.

Professor Moore is an Advisory Panel Member for the Dasgupta Review of the Economics of Biodiversity and part of the Rebuilding Macroeconomics Management Team. She serves as President of the British Institute in Eastern Africa and on the Scientific Advisory Council at DEFRA, UK Government. She is a Trustee at the Barbican Centre Trust, a Fellow of the British Academy, a Fellow of the Royal Society of Arts, an Academician of the Learned Societies for the Social Sciences, and a Member of the Institute of Directors.

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Andrew Percy is Co-Chair of the Social Prosperity Network at the Institute for Global Prosperity, UCL. He leads the IGP's work on 21st century welfare and was the lead author on the 2017 IGP report on Universal Basic Services.

Andrew joined the IGP in 2016 to launch the Social Prosperity Network, a cross discipline research collaboration focused on the contribution of social safety to sustainability and prosperity.

Andrew has worked in cybersecurity in the UK and USA since the early '80s, as well as stints teaching in Egypt, producing UK's first hip hop album with Positive Beat Records, and in finance.

Current work: examining the political paralysis in developed societies to understand how we move forward in the face of parallel challenges of climate crisis, insecure livelihoods, and democratic participation.

Latest works:

Universal Basic Prosperity (2021):

[<https://discovery.ucl.ac.uk/id/eprint/10138869/>]

National Contributions (2021):

[<https://discovery.ucl.ac.uk/id/eprint/10138866/>]

The Case for Universal Basic Services (2020) - Polity Press, co-authored with Anna Coote, NEF.

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Katrina joined the IGP as a Research Associate in 2021, supporting the Institute's portfolio of work on the UK economy. She holds a PhD in History from the University of Cambridge and has research interests in food systems, gender inequalities, and social injustice.



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