

[Development in the Data Economy, Harvard University](#)

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In a world of automation, both promises and perils persist. New digital technologies can promote increased productivity, dynamic growth returns, sectoral change and enable the accomplishment of a large number of sustainable development goals ranging from energy to health care, to infrastructure. But these promises co-exist with the perils of data extraction, rising costs of innovation, predatory firms and privacy concerns. Efforts to reconcile these issues have trail-blazed discussions on how best to regulate data markets, what forms of innovation are desirable, how to safeguard labor and employment, and protect privacy.

Policymakers, agencies, firms, and practitioners are all engaging and experimenting with a number of responses, ranging from digital strategies to data localization, to new rights definitions, to collaborative models of engagement for data use and re-use. And yet, there is no real consensus on how to articulate the elements of a successful digital transformation, especially from the perspective of developing countries, where development remains a critical imperative.

Making the data economy work for development calls for a thorough deliberation on how data extraction, data use, and re-use can foster the creation of competitive advantage, enable local businesses, create jobs, and promote structural change. It calls for a new discourse that factors in development as a central component of the data economy, taking into account the different starting points of countries as they enter and engage with data. A discussion on comprehensive data strategies that are based on a better, and more nuanced understanding of data-policy-institutions interfaces for development is long overdue, in order to enable the emergence of skills, competencies and data-driven innovation locally, alongside new data-models, and collaborative data governance mechanisms (data co-ops, open data use, data trusts). Alternate perspectives on privacy, localization and community rights and competition are highly relevant, to see how best to balance the technical, market and policymaking challenges with the needs of all countries in the data economy. This one-day workshop at Harvard University aims to engage academics, private sector actors, policy experts and practitioners on these highly relevant issues.

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