



# **Socializing Data Value**

**How Can Data Governance Meet  
the Challenge?**

**Roundtable Concept Note**

**May 11 & 12, 2021**



# Concept Note

---

The past year has seen an increasing buzz around the need to address prevailing deficits in the governance of the digital economy. With data power becoming central to market power, reining in platforms' abuse of their dominant, often monopolistic, control over society's data has assumed urgency.

Current efforts at regulating digital power, like competition law reform, data protection laws and taxing digital services, may succeed in tempering digital power to some extent. However, they do not address the core problem of who exercises control over the immense socio-economic value of data.

70% of the new value created in the global economy over the next decade is likely to be generated from data capital-intensive platform businesses. Yet, the platform model as we know it has only spawned an exponential increase in inter-firm and capital-labour inequality. It is built on the grand premise that data is no one's property, a 'non-rivalrous' resource that is available to all. However, the truth is that if newcomer firms are unable to effectively compete with dominant platforms such as FAANG, it is because the latter's data ecosystems are enclosed. Rules about the governance of data ecosystems are therefore crucial to reappropriate the public and social value of data for all sectors of the economy. This is important not just for national digital development and economic security, but also for political sovereignty, and socio-cultural independence and diversity.

While ideas such as data cooperatives – also outlined in the EU's draft Data Governance Act (2020) – aim to remedy the status quo, they leave unanswered the prior question of the collective claims that data subjects and economic actors implicated in the dominant platform ecosystems have over the value of 'their' data, and the intelligence generated therein. The concept of 'data commons' has also been invoked to suggest alternative resource governance regimes for data. However, a commons framework – privileging collective over individualistic approaches to data governance – calls for deeper thinking around related issues of access/claims, excludability, boundary management, abuse by dominant players and more. Furthermore, such an approach is likely to need contextualisation across sectoral data ecosystems.

At IT for Change, we believe that urgent efforts are required to evolve a bold institutional design for the data economy. Recognising the systemic relationality, and hence, the systemic value, at the core of data's resource structure is a precursor to this – providing the basis for collective claims over data, and a just and equitable future.

With a view to exploring the elements of an institutional governance framework for data that can democratise value creation and distribution, we are hosting a dialogue with a small group of scholars, scholar-activists and practitioners over two virtual sessions of two-and-a-half hours each, on 11th and 12th May 2021. By building on participant reflections (shared as a one-pager/500-word inputs by 3rd May 2021), we hope the roundtable will contribute to cutting edge discussions in the domain.