The Centre for Internet and Society (CIS)

invites you to

BIG DATA IN INDIA
Benefits, Harms, and Human Rights

A workshop to discuss benefits, harms, and
human rights implications of big data technologies,
and explore potential research questions

1st October, 2016, Saturday, 10 am - 5 pm

The Maple Room, India Habitat Centre
Lodhi Road, New Delhi, 110003
Location on Google Maps

In the last few years, there has been an emergence of the discourse of big data viewing it as an instrument not just for ensuring efficient, targeted and personalised services in the private sector, but also for development, social and policy research, and formalising and monetising various sections of the economy. This possibility is premised upon the idea that there is great knowledge that resides in both traditional and new forms of data made possible by our digital selves, and that we may now have the capability to tap into that knowledge for insights across diverse sectors like healthcare, finance, e-governance, education, law enforcement and disaster management, to name but a few. Alongside, various commentators have also pointed to the new problems and risks that big data could create for privacy of individuals through greater profiling, for free speech and economic choice by strengthening monopolistic tendencies, and for socio-economic inequalities by making existing disparities more acute and facilitating algorithmic bias and exclusion.

From a regulatory perspective, big data technologies pose fundamental challenges to the national data regulatory frameworks that have existed since many years. The nature of collection and utilisation of big data, which is often not driven by immediate purpose of the collected data, conflict with the principles of data minimisation and collection limitation that have been integral to data protection laws globally. This compels us to revisit existing theories of data governance.

Additionally, use of big data in public decision-making highlights the question of how algorithmic control and governance must be regulated. This raises concerns around taking determining a balanced position that recognises the importance of big data, including for development actions, and ensures unhindered innovation with simultaneous focus on greater transparency and anonymisation to protect individual privacy, and various big data risks faced by population groups. In order to answer these questions, we need to begin with identifying the different harms and benefits of big data that could arise through its use across sectors and disciplines, especially in the context of human rights.

This workshop is designed around an extensive study of current and potential future uses of big data for governance in India that CIS has undertaken over the last year. The study focused on key central government projects and initiatives like the UID project, the Digital India programme, the Smart Cities Challenge, etc.

We will initiate the workshop with a detailed presentation of our findings and key concerns, which will then shape the discussion agenda of the workshop. We look forward to discuss aspects of big data technologies through the entry points of harms, opportunities, and human rights.

The final session of the workshop will focus on identifying key research questions on the topic, and exploring potential alliances of scholars and organisations that can drive such research activities.

We look forward to making this a forum for knowledge exchange for our friends and colleagues attending the discussion and discuss the opportunity to for potential collaboration.

RSVP

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