digitainable

Introduction

Digitalization is a major driver of change in many aspects of our lives, and there is an intense debate whether it impacts sustainable development positively or negatively. It is the principal goal of "digitainable" to shed light onto this question. The most systematic formulation of our current understanding of sustainability is provided by the UN Agenda 2030, adopted by the UN member states in September 2015. With its 17 Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), specified by 169 targets, and more than 200 indicators, the sustainability landscape is charted comprehensively, including such diverse domains as improving health, eradicating poverty, gender equality, climate change and many others. To achieve these goals in the planned time, they require a breakthrough in terms of speed and degree of progress. It is believed that with the help of Digitalization and Artificial Intelligence (D&AI), the progress in the achievement of the SDGs can be boosted significantly. However, it is still unclear how well D&AI are helping in managing and monitoring the complex interlinkages of the broadly defined SDGs and their indicators, and where they might even inhibit progress. “Digitainable” aims to uncover these complex relations between the indicators of the SDGs and to understand the influence of D&AI on the SDGs' progress by utilising the expertise from the natural and technological side as well from the social side.

Approach

Considering the framework, it is crucial to take an integrated approach to seek and scale up the synergies, mitigate tradeoffs existing between goals. The task is complicated by the fact that D&AI are hardly addressed explicitly, neither in the SDGs nor in the targets and indicators. Therefore, the connections are mostly of an indirect nature. The project’s approach to answering the identified questions is divided into the following phases:

Phase 1: The project will identify the influence of D&AI at indicator level both at the individual level as well as over the interlinkages. In order to explore the influence of D&AI, the project will, among other approaches, use the Theory of Change (ToC) as a method to realise the possible ways in which D&AI can interact with the indicators.

Phase 2: It is well known that there are numerous synergies and trade-offs existing between indicators. The project will investigate possible impacts of D&AI on these interrelations, and particularly seek to identify options where D&AI can enhance synergies and alleviate trade-offs.

The natural and technological aspect of the project is covered by Dr. Shivam Gupta and the social aspect is covered by Dr. Mahsa Motlagh.

Research Questions

The research questions project “digitainable” aims to answer are as follows:

RQ1 How are D&AI contributing and how can they contribute further to the implementation of the SGDs, and where could they even inhibit progress?

RQ2 How efficiently are D&AI used for the achievement of the SDGs considering the complex synergies and tradeoffs between indicators?

Phase 1

RQ3 What are the current best practices and gaps in D&AI for the SDGs?

RQ4 What new approaches do we need in D&AI to foster digital cooperation, and who should be involved in the transformation required to timely achieve the SDGs?

Phase 2

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