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Trend 3: New methods for preserving identities and strengthening equity

This chapter introduces the trend on new methods for preserving identities and strengthening equity. It highlights the pressures of globalization on increasing inequalities, particularly of Indigenous communities and the ways in which governments are developing inclusive, data-driven efforts to counter challenges and ensure rights, interests, identities and values are respected. Finally, the chapter provides practical examples and global case studies to help governments and their partners identify and develop innovative strategies to address the rising cost-of-living, unemployment, lack of adequate housing and homelessness, crime, rising poverty, gender discrimination, inequalities in the gig economy and ensure respect of workers' rights.

The pressures of globalisation are increasing inequalities. Indigenous communities are particularly at risk with governments developing inclusive, data-driven efforts to counter the challenges they face while ensuring their rights, interests, identities and value are respected. At the local level, government support for the digitisation of cultures is helping to ensure the fair distribution of benefits from innovations while driving sustainable development. Governments are also developing innovative strategies to address the cost-of-living crisis, unemployment, lack of adequate housing and homelessness, crime, rising poverty, gender discrimination and inequalities more broadly, including through data and systems approaches, while also working to tackle the digital divide. At the global level, governments are working to counter forms of inequality within gig economy platforms by creating alternatives and ensuring future expansion is socially sustainable and respectful of workers' rights.

Honouring Indigenous communities and local cultures

“Historic injustices have prevented Indigenous peoples from exercising their rights to development in accordance with their own needs and interests. Indigenous peoples have been colonised, dehumanised, subjugated and dispossessed of their lands and resources... Fortunately, in some places, reconciliation is starting to take root... As Indigenous peoples worldwide achieve growing legal recognition of their rights as well as title to land and sea, it is imperative that we overcome the implementation gap and translate these rights into better outcomes.”

Leaders of Indigenous peoples rights groups (McDonald, 2019^[1]).

The world is getting smaller with every part of the globe increasingly connected to the rest. A virus in a Chinese food market was able to spread across the planet within a few months, causing unprecedented changes in people's lives. It is recognised that globalisation is increasing inequalities but also making global value chains more resilient. Local levels have been disproportionately affected (OECD, 2021^[2]), with local cultures threatened by the pressures of globalisation. The risk is particularly high for Indigenous communities, which have an history of exclusion. To address this threat, governments and their partners in industry and civil society are developing initiatives to ensure the flourishing of local communities and recognition of their value for society. OPSI and the MBRCGI have also identified a number of efforts to empower Indigenous peoples and safeguard local cultures. In both cases, data and digitalisation are seen as powerful means to protect cultures in the globalised world, ensure their diffusion and promote recognition of their value.

Indigenous communities

Approximately 38 million Indigenous people live in 13 OECD member countries. This number is due to rise as countries like Argentina, Brazil and Peru take steps to [join the OECD](#). Indigenous peoples are defined by the [United Nations](#) (UN) as those who inhabited a country prior to colonisation, and who self-identify as such because they are descended from these peoples and belong to social, cultural or political institutions that govern them. Many Indigenous groups have unique assets and knowledge that address global challenges such as environmental sustainability and can contribute to stronger regional and national economies. However, across far too many indicators – income, employment, life expectancy and educational attainment – there are significant gaps between Indigenous and non-Indigenous populations (OECD, 2019^[3]). While Indigenous peoples represent about 5% of the world's population, they account for 15% of the world's extreme poor and one-third of the rural poor, according to the UN.

Indigenous peoples worldwide have fought to achieve legal recognition of their rights. Such reconciliation demands involve their meaningful engagement in the planning and use of economic, social and human capital, and in the protection lands, water, natural resources and wildlife – all equally important elements of sustainable development. It also necessitates the inclusion of Indigenous peoples and perspectives in governance and policy design at all levels (OECD, 2019^[3]). Improving the well-being of Indigenous peoples

in these and other areas is critical to achieving inclusive development and the promise of the Sustainable Development Goals: “to leave no one behind” (OECD, 2019^[3]). OPSI and the MBRCGI have identified an emerging set of initiatives by governments and grassroots actors to ensure that innovation is inclusive and aimed at empowering historically underrepresented communities, including Indigenous peoples. These include Australia’s upcoming referendum on “Indigenous Voice”, which proposes amending the constitution to create a new body that makes representations to the Parliament and the government on matters relating to Indigenous peoples (McIlroy, 2022^[4]). As Indigenous communities are often disadvantaged, engaging with them can help promote greater equality and inclusion. Furthermore, projects focused on Indigenous communities can help preserve and promote their unique cultural heritage and traditions, which have been recognised as crucial for sustainable development in the context of the [SDGs](#).

One way to empower Indigenous communities is through data. Incorporating Indigenous cultures into data sets, and then visualising them, helps to counter the challenges these communities face (Kukutai and Taylor, 2016^[5]). In fact, the importance of having data, especially disaggregated data on Indigenous peoples, has been recognised since the earliest sessions of the United Nations Permanent Forum on Indigenous Issues in 2002 as a key step towards realisation of their individual and collective rights. In addition, in [2019](#) the OECD underscored the need to improve Indigenous statistics and data governance, while also addressing their lack of access to technologies and the Internet. OPSI and the MBRCGI have identified numerous initiatives aimed at collecting data on Indigenous communities. The shared aim is to create more responsible and inclusive AI systems, and to help visualise the culture of these communities, based on the idea that “the social and the technical are interwoven, and technologies have immaterial as well as material impacts over specific gendered, racialised bodies and territories”, as stated in the [AI Decolonial Manifesto](#). Many such initiatives intend to create data points on Indigenous communities to address their invisibility, a consequence of lack of interest in these cultures and an inability to capture their cultural relevance through traditional ethnocentric methods, as [highlighted by Myrna Cunningham](#), a leading representative of Indigenous movements.

Examples of these initiatives can be found in the work of IVOW, which aimed to provide data on Indigenous communities in order to develop, train and test AI systems that are more culturally aware. One of their projects was the [Indigenous Knowledge Graph](#), which was designed to collect and prepare data from Indigenous belief systems that reflect their culture (Box 3.1). On a similar topic, the initiative [NativeDATA](#), whose primary users are native communities, has been developed to provide a free online resource to guide Tribes and Native-serving organisations on obtaining and sharing health data. On the platform it is also possible to find data-sharing success stories, as well as tips for those seeking to respectfully collaborate with Tribes and Native-serving organisations.

Box 3.1. Indigenous Knowledge Graph

The Indigenous Knowledge Graph (IKG) includes Indigenous stories, traditions and recipes that form the basis of their unique culture but are often absent from the digital world. Employing key elements (ingredients, method, story) of traditional food recipes, the team built the foundations of the IKG using culinary wisdom from Timor-Leste and Native American culture, which was shared by the team working on this project.

Through this innovatory approach, IVOW aimed to show how creating structure, or knowledge engines, around stories can foster reasoning and cultural intelligence in machines and conversational AIs. To sort information into logical hierarchical relationships, the team decided to incorporate the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) most relevant to each culture and recipe. These end up acting as an ontology that helps to shed light on the structure of the cultural engine.

To establish a connection with users, the data of the IKG cultural engine are shared via Sina, the conversational AI of IVOW, with which it is possible to interact by asking, for example, “Tell me a food story from the Navajo Nation”. Users can also interact with Sina on Google Assistant by using the invocation phrase, “OK Google: Talk to Sina Storyteller.”

Source: www.ivow.ai/ikgstories.html.

Several data-based efforts have focused on developing data visualisations of Indigenous cultures. Taking many different forms, these initiatives explore how the knowledge of these populations can be diffused and the ways in which it can provide a new non-Western lens to address the challenges affecting global communities. For instance:

- [Relational Landscapes](#) explores the numerous examples of ecological, social, economic and cultural relationships between South America and Central Europe, highlighting the erasure of Indigenous epistemologies and knowledge practices due to colonisation.
- [AHI KAA Rangers](#), a mobile app developed by a Māori tech company, combines environmental science and Indigenous knowledge. In the game, the user is a planter who needs to take care of a living world, just as the Kaitiaki (Guardian) of Aotearoa (New Zealand) cares for Papatūānuku (Mother Earth).
- [Climate Atlas](#) is an interactive application that combines climate science, storytelling and maps together with Indigenous Knowledge, bring the global issue of climate change closer to home. It is based on the fact that “Indigenous peoples were amongst the first to notice climate change and also have critical knowledge for navigating and adapting to it”.

Governments, optimally working hand-in-hand with Indigenous peoples, need to ensure that Indigenous rights and interests are at the heart of data-driven efforts. Many resources have been developed to this end. For instance, the CARE Principles for Indigenous Data Governance help to recognise power differentials and preserve Indigenous rights (Box 3.2).

Box 3.2. CARE Principles for Indigenous Data Governance

The current movement toward open data and open science does not fully engage with Indigenous peoples’ rights and interests. Existing principles within the open data movement such as FAIR (findable, accessible, interoperable, reusable) focus primarily on characteristics of data that will facilitate increased data sharing among entities while ignoring power differentials and historical contexts. Such frameworks create a tension for Indigenous peoples who are also asserting greater control over the application and use of Indigenous data and Indigenous Knowledge for collective benefit.

The CARE Principles for Indigenous Data Governance are people and purpose-oriented, reflecting the crucial role of data in advancing Indigenous innovation and self-determination. These principles are intended to complement the FAIR principles, encouraging open data movements while considering both people and purpose in their advocacy and pursuits. The CARE Principles are:

- **Collective benefit** for inclusive development and innovation, improved governance and citizen engagement, and equitable outcomes.
- **Authority to control** which include recognising rights and interests, making data for governance available, and developing mechanisms for the governance of data.
- **Responsibility** for positive relationships, expanding capability and capacity, and Indigenous languages and worldviews.
- **Ethics** for minimising harm and maximising benefit, justice and future use.

Source: <http://www.gida-global.org/care>.

Beyond technological innovations, OPSI and the MBR CGI also identified a significant number of innovations aimed at making legal proceedings more inclusive and culturally sensitive for Indigenous communities, addressing the lack of discrete measures related to the engagement of Indigenous peoples, as covered previously in the [2019 Trends report](#). The activity of the judicial sector embeds and reflects cultural differences that include different notions of power, community, equality and justice (Greenberg and Colquitt, 2013^[6]). For instance, “Indigenous approaches to justice emerge holistically from deep-seated beliefs of the interconnectedness of all life forms”, and this understanding affects Indigenous perceptions of fairness and justice creating a potential clash with Western judicial activity (Whiteman, 2009^[7]). One of the initiatives addressing this issue with a focus on child protection is [Marram-Ngala Ganbu](#) (Koori Family Hearing Day), a project designed by Aboriginal people that seeks to provide a more effective, culturally appropriate and just response for Aboriginal families through a court process that enables greater participation by family members and culturally informed decision making. In the Brazilian context, the expansive project [Citizenship, Democracy and Justice for the Maxakali People](#) was developed to address obstacles in access to justice for this people, their low engagement in the electoral politics of the area, and a deficit of social rights emerging from a lack of discussion of their needs. An in-depth discussion of this innovation can be found in the case study later in this section.

As shown, governments have undertaken notable efforts to level the playing field for Indigenous people through greater recognition of their cultures. Such innovative initiatives involving big data and AI aim at ensuring both cultural preservation and revival, and the development of culturally sensitive public services. However, improving Indigenous populations’ access to the same rights and opportunities as others also entails tackling the discrimination faced by Indigenous individuals and their descendants who migrate to non-Indigenous settings. Particularly promising are initiatives that use objective measures to monitor the level of discrimination and inequalities they encounter in different areas of life.

In terms of the labour market, Indigenous people are less likely to become part of the workforce than non-Indigenous individuals (Bodkin-Andrews and Carlson, 2014^[8]). Such differences seem to be driven more by inequalities in education than hiring discrimination, although instances of the latter have been recorded among the female Indigenous population (Button and Walker, 2020^[9]) (Moreno et al., 2012^[10]). Evidence of inequalities in education have been observed in Guatemala, for example, where only 54% of 7-year-old Indigenous girls are in school compared to 75% of non-Indigenous girls. There is also evidence that the overall quality of education in areas in which Indigenous children live – often more remote, poorer areas – is also usually lower, which results in higher dropout rates (Curtis, 2009^[11]).

Local cultures

Beyond efforts in relation to Indigenous communities, governments are undertaking impressive efforts to support the digitisation of culture, in particular local culture, as a means to address the risk of cultural extinction, and to ensure that distribution of the benefits of innovations is fair. Initiatives of this kind have focused, for instance, on cultural heritage, where digitisation can represent a driver of sustainable development both in the case of tangible and intangible heritage (Macri and Cristofaro, 2021^[12]). The potential of digitisation in this area has been recognised by local actors as well as at the international level, as demonstrated by the ambitious [Declaration of cooperation on advancing digitisation of cultural heritage](#), which was signed by 27 European countries in 2019 (Box 3.3). This international effort follows the realisation of [Europeana](#), a digital repository consisting of more than 50 million digitised records from European cultural institutions, now available to all.

Box 3.3. Declaration of co-operation on advancing digitisation of cultural heritage

In 2019, the EU Declaration of co-operation on advancing digitisation of cultural heritage was signed by 27 Member States, who thereby committed to collaborate more closely to better utilise cutting-edge technologies to tackle the threats to Europe's rich cultural heritage, increase its diffusion and visibility, heighten public involvement and encourage spillovers in other sectors.

Three pillars of action support the Declaration:

- A European-wide programme for the 3D digitisation of artifacts, monuments and locations with cultural value.
- Repurposing of digitalised cultural resources to encourage public participation, creative use and spillovers into other fields.
- Capacity building and enhancing of cross-border and cross-sectoral collaboration in the field of digitised cultural heritage.

Source: <https://digital-strategy.ec.europa.eu/en/news/eu-member-states-sign-cooperate-digitising-cultural-heritage>.

OPSI and the MBRCGI have identified many initiatives that share these objectives but which also push for the unprecedented expansion of culture or cultural institutions. For instance, [Collections of Ghent](#) is an EU-funded project that intertwines the digitalisation of cultural heritage with the active involvement of citizens at the neighbourhood level, focusing on how digital cultural heritage can be used in co-creative and participative ways (Figure 3.1). The project is the result of a quadruple helix consortium, namely a partnership between government, industry, academia and civil society – a novel type of co-creation that can create public value by leveraging the diversity of involved stakeholders (OECD, 2022^[13]).

Figure 3.1. Visitor to the Collections of Ghent exhibit



Source: www.collections.gent/cogentbox.

Governments and partners in industry and civil society have also shown interest in creating digitised versions of cultural elements in the form of audio data, including both spoken language and sounds. With respect to the former, the availability of speech corpora is a prerequisite for both research in spoken language and the development of speech technological applications, such as voice assistants. Still, in their current state, language technologies are far from being language agnostic and cannot realise their potential in terms of promotion of diversity, since only a very small number of the over 7 000 languages spoken worldwide are represented in available research and applications (Joshi et al., 2021^[14]). For instance, in India, as studied by [Making Voices Heard](#), the unavailability of audio data in languages spoken in the area represents a concern that limits the uptake of voice interface technologies and the realisation of their potential. Two notable examples of efforts aimed at increasing linguistic diversity in speech technologies are the following:

- [Donate a Speech](#): Part of the Estonian Language Strategy 2021-2035, this project aims at creating an open database of 4 000 hours of spoken language, which will support companies, public sector institutions and research institutions in creating services and products based on speech technology. To retrieve the audio data, the Estonian government invited all people over the age of 18 to take part in the project during September 2022 and plans to have enough material for the database by February 2023.
- [Abena AI](#): Developed by Studio Mobobi, Abena AI is the first voice assistant fluent in Twi (also called Akan Twi), the most widely spoken language in Ghana. It provides an inclusive alternative to voice assistants such as Alexa and Google Assistant, which lack sufficient coverage of African languages.

Governments have also focused on the collection of audio data to aid the preservation of culture beyond human languages. For instance, the City of Amsterdam, in partnership with Soundtrackcity, invited the residents of Zuid to participate in the [Urban Sound Lab](#), collecting sounds of their environment to develop a collective sound map of the neighbourhood. The project promoted a novel awareness of urban sounds and provided the foundations and data for future municipal policies addressing what previously was considered noise.

With a similar focus on non-human sounds, [Earth Species](#) is an open-source collaborative and nonprofit project dedicated to decoding non-human language, rooted in the belief that having an understanding of non-human languages will change the ecological impact of humans on Earth. Based on an unsupervised ML algorithm, the project aims to reach an understanding of all the different ways used by animals of the same species to say the same thing. This approach helps to determine which part of the sound matters, making it possible to separate the true signal from the background carrier. This unprecedented decoding of non-human language is expected to improve awareness about ecological topics related to the climate crisis and, in this way, promote less anthropocentric interactions with nature.

Case Study: Citizenship, democracy and justice for the Maxakali people (Brazil)

Brazil is one of the [most ethnically and linguistically diverse countries](#). With [305 Indigenous ethnic groups](#) and 274 Indigenous languages, the challenges of inclusion and equity, as well as the promotion of human rights and protection of their individual characteristics, are huge and remain unsolved. The Maxakalis are a small Indigenous community living in the states of Minas Gerais and Bahia. With a population ranging between 1 500 and 2 700 inhabitants and speaking their own language (Tikmüün), they face challenges related to cultural isolation and lack of access to services that are enshrined as constitutional rights in Brazil. In 2020, the Court of Justice of Minas Gerais in conjunction with the Electoral Court launched a small but ambitious project in collaboration with the Maxakalis to co-create solutions that will allow them access to citizenship, democracy and justice, while working to resolve forms of structural and historical injustice from which Indigenous populations suffer. The project is an example of mobile justice (“[Justiça Itinerante](#)”) which aims to help people exercise their fundamental rights in a contextualised and culturally sensitive manner. It also advance progress towards SDG 16.3: “promote the rule of law at the national and international levels and ensure equal access to justice for all”.

Problem

The Maxakalis Indigenous people were once one of the largest communities living in what are today the Brazilian’s States of Minas Gerais and Bahia. There are currently 19 Indigenous ethnic groups and a total of 30 000 Indigenous people living in Minas Gerais, of which 2 500 come from the Maxakali ethnic group and live in the region of Aguas Formosas in the northeast of the state. They are spread out in two large villages: Água Boa and Pradinho. The Maxakalis represent 20% of the population in the region, and use their own language for the production and transmission of knowledge, as well as daily communication. This fact, added to the absence of initiatives by public agencies to train their agents in the Maxakali language, makes them particularly vulnerable to rights violations that limit their access to justice, voting, civil participation, social rights, and protection from both the state and the federal government (Tribunal de Justiça do Estado de Minas Gerais, 2022^[15]). Such a disadvantageous position is reinforced by the complexities of the federal and state system of justice and the most appropriate instances or institutions from which to seek protection. For example, while the federal government is responsible for processing constitutional rights such as human rights, rights of occupation or access to natural resources, more specific rights such as civil rights or those related to prosecution or economic activities fall within the purview of state courts. As a consequence, government presence at different levels is rather weak and distant, broadening gaps culturally, geographically and institutionally in access to justice, while reinforcing [discriminatory actions and violence towards the Maxakalis](#).

An innovative solution

The initiative [Citizenship, Democracy and Justice for the Maxakali People](#) (Programa Cidadania, Democracia e Justiça) began running in January 2020 as a joint effort of the Court of Minas Gerais and the [Regional Electoral Court](#). The objective was to resolve long-lasting issues related to the state and judiciary system and their relationship and narratives in Indigenous territories. Accordingly, they embarked on a consultative and collaborative process with the Indigenous community of the Maxakali, targeting communities in the Aguas Formosas region, which is characterised by rurality and difficult connectivity, where more than 2 000 people and 190 families live.

The initiative has taken a non-invasive approach with the aim of being perceived as guests and observers of the community, rather than alien institutional bodies in their territories. To this end, the project applied a methodology based on anthropological evidence collected from the Maxakalis in order to pilot an approach that is culturally sensitive and based on active listening. The first field trip to visit the Maxakalis leaders (Caciques) took place in February 2020. It was led by the Court of Minas Gerais and co-ordinated with the

National Indigenous Fund/Authority ([FUNAI](#)). The purpose was to gather their opinions about the justice system and judiciary institutions. As Matheus Moura Matias Miranda, judge of the Court of Minas Gerais, pointed out in an interview with OPSI, “it was the first time that some of them have seen a judge asking about things other than criminal hearings.”

During the initial stage, the initiative conducted hearings and visits every 15 days, to become familiar with the experiences of the Maxakalis, gain their trust and acquire a reputation for reliability. This step was key to building a new narrative for their relationships, in particular between the Maxakalis and the judiciary, which had been perceived as repressive and not as an institution geared to protecting or guaranteeing constitutional or human rights. Changing this perspective required not only stronger presence of the state and its institutions, but a shift in the way the relationships were built. A critical component of the collaboration was the decision to respect the self-determination of the Maxakali, including their decision-making process and the outcomes of the visits. After almost six months of intensive interaction, the Maxakalis gave clearance to develop a joint project with the Tribunal and the Electoral Court, and to continue consultations with a view to involving other government agencies. The initiative officially started in the spring of 2020 amid the COVID-19 outbreak.

With a [mission](#) to alleviate long-lasting problems faced by the Maxakali communities, the project was conceived as a form of “travelling justice”, especially given the nature of the interactions. These consisted of two components: the first was an intercultural dialogue held in the Tikmüün language to allow all involved parties to address each of their issues; the second was the institutionalisation of such meetings as civil hearings in order to establish legally binding commitments between the Tribunal and the Maxakali. This approach aimed to incorporate these communities into the state’s judiciary system in a way that respected their culture while expanding and protecting their human rights and enabled them to participate more actively in Brazilian democracy.

Following the lead taken by the two institutions, other state and federal-level institutions began to join the initiative including the state and [Federal Public Ministry](#), the [Public Defender’s Office](#), the State Public Prosecutor’s Office, and the Civil and Military Police. By 2021, the group consisted of eight federal and state entities.

In order to identify and make sense of the needs of the Maxakalis, the Tribunal and the Electoral Court organised two kinds of hearings: audiences and the public hearings. These varied in format and content depending on the target audiences and the objectives to be achieved:

- **Audiences** are open spaces set up for multi-party and leadership meetings, designed to bring people from different government institutions together with community leaders and other people of interest. Such spaces are relevant for agenda setting, prioritising issues and needs, and providing accountability among the parties involved.
- **Public hearings** are open spaces for listening to relevant and unique cases that serve to exemplify a problem/issue identified during the audiences. These spaces are relevant for understanding the specifics of people’s needs and to empathise with their struggles.

Figure 3.2. Public hearings between the Maxakalis and government institutions



Source: <https://bit.ly/40SOvOm>.

During the audiences and public hearings, the Maxakalis provided details of several of their main requests and challenges. These included accessing basic services for their families and children as well as specific social protection benefits, cattle invasions, and a premium charged to Indigenous people by shopkeepers when selling them food and electronic products. Several audiences and more than 50 public hearings were carried out in the villages of Água Boa and Pradinho. These served to identify key areas where public institutions should focus their attention.

The conversations identified three main areas (or axes) of action, as discussed below. As the issues facing the Maxakali people are multidimensional, these axes were intersectional and aimed at gathering interoperable information and evidence about them and the status quo of the community:

- **Citizenship.** The main critical issues identified were lack of identity and electoral documents, which makes it impossible to vote and undertake simple day-to-day processes such as legalising unions (marriages), or more complex ones such as fighting illegal land invasions. The meetings were equipped with simultaneous translation and brought public institutions in charge together with the people to determine roadmaps for action. For example, the Maxakalis explained their process of getting married and provided evidence about such unions so that the State Court of Justice could legalise them and update their information.
- **Democracy.** To help familiarise the Maxakalis with election processes, mock elections were held in Tikmüün and contextualised in terms of local culture and educational level. The Electoral Court inserted animals and elements from familiar local fauna as fictitious candidates in the electoral sessions. For instance, one candidate that received the most votes was the “Ant”, as it was characterised as hard working and well-organised. Two mock elections took place, representing the two rounds of the typical Brazilian electoral process – the first time that Indigenous peoples in

Brazil had participated in such a format. The President of the Electoral Court and other judges from the state capital visited the villages during these simulations.

- **Justice.** The main problems and demands of Indigenous people were mapped by the Brazilian Public Defender's Office and the conflict resolution sector of the Court of Justice of Minas Gerais. Based on this mapping, more than 50 judicial hearings were held in the Maxakalí villages, which consisted mostly of procedural check-ups and documental and/or on-site verification accomplished by talking with the people.

The three axes converged in the adoption of a new collaborative paradigm – one which centred the Maxakalís as the protagonist and main drivers of the process. The innovation thus sought to move beyond active listening by working to build readiness for the process and tailor mechanisms of social participation, bringing Indigenous peoples closer to the Judiciary and protecting their rights.

Figure 3.3. Maxakalí women dancing to celebrate the new processes for strengthening citizenship



Source: <https://bit.ly/3Elu3wi>.

Table 3.1. Examples of project efforts

Example	Area	Description
Co-created approach	Democracy/ elections	The Electoral Court simulated two voting sessions with co-designed imagery, drawings and photos of animals that the Maxakali drew/took themselves. The animals corresponded to fictional parties and candidates that they would vote for according to their values and beliefs, and that related to their expectations about what a political representative should do.
Process adaptation	Civil rights	The Maxakalis have their own marriage tradition which is different from the process implemented by the Brazilian state. Several Maxakali marriages lacked official recognition, so the Court of Justice of Minas Gerais, the State Public Ministry and the State Public Defender's Office established an on-site simplified marriage process to validate them and provide access to social protection services such as pensions in the event of death of a spouse, or loss of family income.
Collaborative dialogue	All (justice, democracy, citizenship and more)	The approach was based on cultural sensitiveness, active listening and partnership development, in order to build trust between government institutions and the community. This approach also incentivised changes in perception regarding these institutions from a coercive to a supportive role.
Co-created approach	Democracy/ elections	The Electoral Court simulated two voting sessions with co-designed imagery, drawings and photos of animals that the Maxakali drew/took themselves. The animals corresponded to fictional parties and candidates that they would vote for according to their values and beliefs, and that related to their expectations about what a political representative should do.

Figure 3.4. A Maxakali couple securing legalisation of their 40-year union



Source: <https://bit.ly/3Elu3wi>.

Novelty

Although several procedures were newly implemented in the Maxakalí territories, the degree of hyper contextualisation and incorporation of the local mindset as part of citizenship, electoral and justice procedures is important to highlight. Moreover, the valorisation of the local culture in order to establish a collaborative dialogue and to transform state agents into collaborative, dialogue-oriented and culturally sensitive bodies can also be considered as innovative.

Results and impact

Throughout the conversation rounds held between the Tribunal and the Maxakalí, the most robust results were achieved in the citizenship and justice axes. For the first time, 256 Indigenous people received identity cards, 81 acquired voting titles and 543 families gained access to direct support under the social protection system. In addition, 105 lawsuits were filed by the Maxakalí to protect their rights to social security and to gain legal recognition of their marriages.

In the democracy axis, the Maxakalí were exposed to the federal and state electoral systems and took part in two mock elections with a participation rate above 75%. The Tribunal gained knowledge from the process as they trialled new, more contextualised ways of providing information about such processes and the benefits of engaging in democratic means of participation. As a result, two new voting spaces were created for the Maxakalí for which two voting machines were provided. In addition, the community elected two Indigenous councilmen and a vice-mayor in the city, showcasing high levels of participation.

At the process level, the project has attracted various actors who were absent at the outset and had little or no presence in the Maxakalí territories. Nowadays, more than eight government institutions from the federal and state levels are present, as well as the civil and military police, working hand-in-hand with the Tribunal, the Electoral Court and FUNAI. To date, more than 50 public hearings have been held in their local language.

Challenges and lessons learned

The Aguas Formosas region in Minas Gerais is one of the poorest in the state and the least prepared in terms of court infrastructure and resource availability for the judiciary system. With the local court overloaded with cases and experiencing a shortage in specialised servers from the Tribunal, it proved not only difficult to deliver justice, but also to promote it at the local level through partnerships with potential local collaborators.

Distance also represented a challenge. Accessing the villages from the city requires a journey of 80 km on a poorly maintained road, complicating any efforts to operationalise actions at the villages level. The displacement of the Indigenous people themselves is also perceived as a major barrier. Furthermore, most procedures to guarantee communal and individual rights are available only in Portuguese and requires special procedure to advance beyond translation. These issues were resolved by implementing programmed visits every 15 or 30 days, depending on the authority, to receive updates on needs through live translation – a process that helped close the cultural gap.

Replicability

The Court of Justice of Minas Gerais and the Regional Electoral Court aim to institutionalise these actions during 2023, ensuring they become recurrent with associated processes and jurisprudence. This will enable the adoption of this approach by other communities and courts across Brazil. The Judge in charge of overseeing the initiative, Matheus Moura Matias Miranda, stated that “the goal is to make the process sustainable over time”. In this way, replicability should not depend on a judge in particular, but rather in coordinated actions among the different actors.

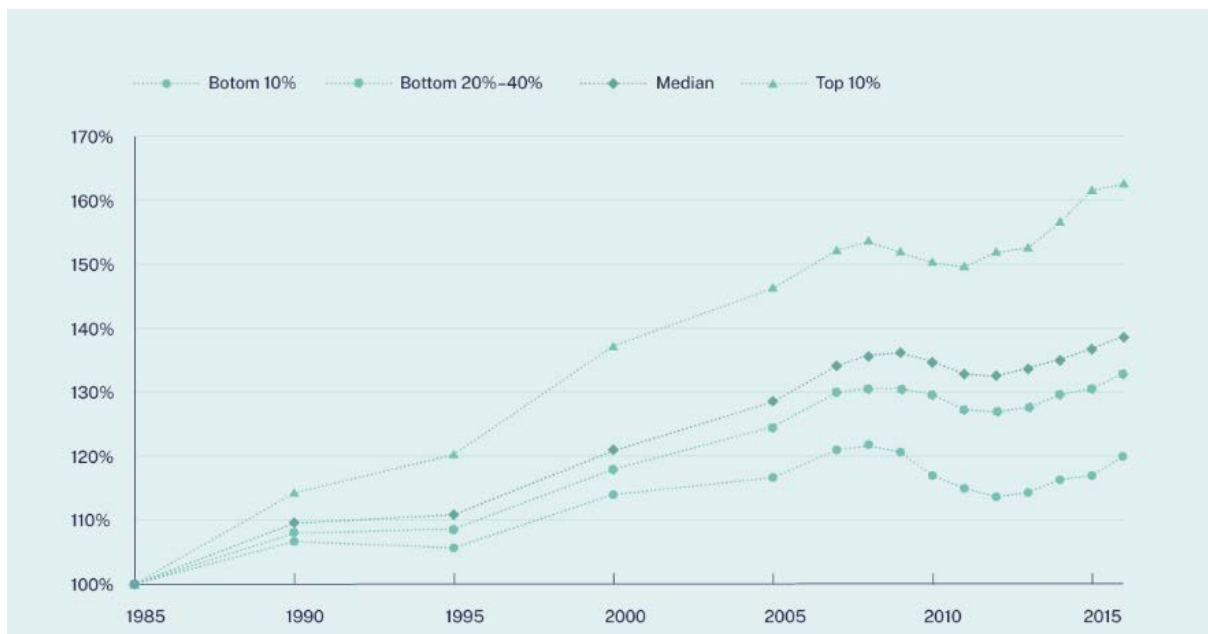
The project also aims to expand to other Indigenous and native communities (i.e. African Brazilian communities). A meeting has just been held in Roraima, a northern state bordering Guyana and Venezuela, to inform local leaders and institutions there about lessons learned from the initiative and to discuss its replicability and feasibility in such territories. This is particularly challenging as one of the main factors required for continuation of the initiative is training judges in intercultural dialogue. In the meantime, the project team is also working on replicating the experience across Minas Gerais.

Finally, as Judge Matheus Moura Matias Miranda and his team pointed out, *“this project is an example, but it is not a model (...) Every state is different and this is the most critical aspect to consider (...) Replication can occur on two levels: (1) training of magistrates based on the experience accumulated in the project (facilitation), and (2) absorption and articulation with FUNAI (since FUNAI is federal, it can take the experience to other states and work to accomplish Indigenous acceptance).”*

Enabling families and communities

Over the past three decades, median income growth in OECD countries has decreased, as shown by the famous “elephant curve” of (Lakner and Milanovic, 2013^[16]) (Alvaredo et al., 2017^[17]). In the general context of low growth, low and middle incomes have grown substantially less than higher incomes (Figure 3.5), widening income inequality. Moreover, during the financial crisis and the COVID pandemic, growth among the lowest earners fell the most rapidly (OECD, 2019^[18]). These dynamics have resulted in a long-term trend towards higher inequality.

Figure 3.5. Real disposable income growth by income position, average for 17 OECD countries



Note: Disposable incomes in: Canada, Germany, Denmark, Finland, France, the United Kingdom, Greece, Israel, Italy, Japan, Luxembourg, Mexico, Netherlands, Norway, New Zealand, Sweden and the United States.

Source: OECD Income Distribution Database (<http://oe.cd/idd>). Data available at <https://doi.org/10.1787/888933954950>.

Due to the abovementioned widespread, increasing inequalities, life has become increasingly expensive. Following Russia's full-scale invasion of Ukraine, inflation has imposed sacrifices on many families as food and energy prices increase. In European OECD countries, one in five households now find it difficult to make ends meet, and across the OECD nearly one in eight live in relative income poverty (Balestra and Ciani, 2022^[19]). Against this backdrop, governments are undertaking notable initiatives to address poverty and inequalities in innovative ways, with a view to providing more sustainable, human-centric and efficient results.

New approaches to sustainable public employment and subsidies

About 33 million people are unemployed across OECD countries. Furthermore, due to their disproportionate representation in low-paying industries, racial and ethnic minorities, young people, low-educated workers, migrants and workers facing language barriers have experienced more severe and long-lasting effects on the labour market as a result of the COVID-19 crisis, as shown by the [OECD Employment Outlook 2022](#) (OECD, 2022^[20]).

To address these challenges, governments are playing an active role in job markets. In particular, OPSI and the MBRCGI identified efforts aimed at combining public intervention on employment with novel attention to other issues such as sustainability, gender equality and vulnerability. Such efforts often seek to subsidise entrepreneurs of the social economy (see more below) and support work integration social enterprises (WISEs), organisations that focus on improving employment prospects for those furthest from the labour market (OECD/European Commission, 2022^[21]). For instance:

- South Africa's [Presidential Employment Stimulus](#), devised as part of efforts supporting economic recovery from the pandemic, has successfully re-imagined public employment as an instrument for social innovation and managed to create over a million jobs for disadvantaged workers (Box 3.4).
- The [Austin Civilian Conservation Corps \(ACCC\)](#) in Austin, Texas began as programme to help residents earn income and access green careers, and has grown into an established model for equitable and climate-focused workforce development. More than ten city departments and community partners have collaborated through ACCC to provide living-wage opportunities with supportive services, training and career pathways for Austin's underserved residents.
- In Mexico, the project [Biciclando](#) addressed unemployment by involving women in recycling waste management. The project was developed as a response to the pandemic and its impact on unemployment, which has affected women more than men, giving rise to the term "shecession" (Alon et al., 2022^[22]).
- In seeking to catalyse employment opportunities in the private sector, the City of Rotterdam launched [Rikx](#), a new digital marketplace that connects local social entrepreneurs with investors to incentivise the hiring of vulnerable residents. The system is based on digital tokens which can be bought by companies with a corporate social responsibility policy or social return on investment obligations.

Box 3.4. Presidential Employment Stimulus: Building a society that works

Since late 2020, South Africa's Presidential Employment Stimulus has created over a million jobs and livelihood opportunities, mainly for young people and women, across all skills levels and spread equally in all the areas of the country. The Presidency provided strategic input, oversight and an authorising environment for innovations undertaken by departments, who owned and implemented the programmes. Funding was approved for programmes on the basis of scale, quality of social outcomes, partnerships, efficiency and additionality, ensuring that the intervention not only positively impacted the status quo, but also provided outcomes that would not have otherwise existed. As a result:

1. The Department of Basic Education placed almost 600 000 young people as school assistants in over 22 000 schools in every corner of the country.
2. A Social Employment Fund was set up to support "social employment" allowing over 45 000 people to work 16 hours a week on areas including food security, early childhood development, gender-based violence, place-making, catchment management, community arts and more. Another 45 000 people are working as part of Youth Service, a similar model.
3. The creative sector has benefited from the creation of over 32 000 jobs. These positions were created by inviting artists to produce new creative work.
4. Over 100 000 subsistent farmers received production input vouchers to help them return to work after lockdown disruptions.

To date, over 1 million people have participated, with 15 national government departments benefiting from their work. Of the total number of participants, 83% are young and 62% are women, indicating that the project successfully opened new opportunities for citizens who are relatively disadvantaged in the job market.

Source: <https://oecd-opsi.org/innovations/presidential-employment-stimulus>.

Beyond government efforts to actively intervene in public employment to address economic difficulties, OECD and the MBRCGI identified several innovative initiatives aimed at stimulating the economy and supporting households' financial situation through new subsidy programmes. A notable example is the project [Bogotá Local in Colombia, thanks to which more than 22 000 citizens received support to sustain and build their businesses during and after the pandemic](#). Through payroll incentives, the City of Bogotá helped micro-business owners to consolidate the relationship with their workers, hire new people, and generate training processes in business and digital skills. The aim was to strengthen the popular economy, an informal and space-based economy that consists largely of small producers and family-run businesses (Dürr and Müller, 2019^[23]). More focused on establishing an alternative model for poverty policies, the [Empowered Families Initiative](#) in Singapore demonstrated how social assistance can move beyond cookie-cutter programmes by investing in their hopes and strengths, as discussed in the case study later in this trend.

Countering expensive housing and homelessness

Access to affordable housing – a [basic human right](#) and central dimension of wellbeing – has become increasingly challenging in many countries. The OECD [Horizontal Project on Housing](#) has found that low-income households are struggling with rising housing costs, and as shown on the [Affordable Housing Atlas](#), this issue is affecting the entire globe as a result of lack of adequate housing policies. In the last 20 years, the real prices of houses and rents increased in most OECD countries at a faster pace than inflation, and

now accounts for a disproportionate part of household budgets – more than health, transport, communication or education (OECD, 2021^[24]).

To address these challenges, governments have developed innovative strategies to provide affordable housing. For instance, the Mataró City Council (Spain) developed [Yes, We Rent!](#) to leverage the combination of private rental property – particularly property that has been vacant and off the market for an extended period – and the potential of community initiatives to provide affordable housing. One outcome of this project is [Bloc cooperatiu](#), a newborn co-operative of tenants willing to search, renovate and rent collectively empty apartments. The initiative is currently managing 61 apartments rented at prices at least 30% below market prices thanks to the financial support of the municipality, and has trained 24 vulnerable young people in renovation skills.

With a focus on energy prices and the increasing importance of energy independence – the focus of renewed global attention following Russia’s full-scale invasion of Ukraine – South Australia has developed a [Virtual Power Plant](#), the largest network of home solar and battery systems in the world (Box 3.5).

Box 3.5. Virtual Power Plant

South Australia’s Virtual Power Plant (VPP) is an innovative concept aimed at reducing the energy bills of vulnerable South Australians by constructing a decentralised power plant using the roofs and walls of public housing assets across the state. VPP is already lowering energy costs for thousands of vulnerable public housing tenants and providing critical energy network services. In so doing, it ensures that the most vulnerable energy consumers can share in the benefits of the transition to renewable energy.

Developed with Tesla technologies, this innovative project installs solar photovoltaic and storage facilities in public housing and automatically sends electricity to energy markets when prices are high and pulls electricity from the market when prices are low or even negative. This process results in lower prices and greater grid stability, which will greatly assist these tenants, as energy prices in Australia are expected to [increase 50%](#) over the next two years.

South Australia’s VPP is currently in the implementation phase. Trial phases 1 and 2 developed and demonstrated the technology, streamlined customer acquisition and deployment, and proved the retail model and commercial business case, which were prerequisites to scaling the project to full commercial operation. Phase 3 involves scaling up VPP to install home energy systems on over 4 000 public housing assets across the state, enabling private customers to enrol their home energy systems into the VPP through a separate retail plan, and exploring augmentation options to allow a greater number of public housing households to participate.

Source: <https://oecd-opsi.org/innovations/south-australias-virtual-power-plant>.

The situation described above, characterised by increasing inequalities and poverty, exclusive housing markets and strong labour market changes, suggests a worsening of the structural factors that lead to homelessness. Indeed, despite difficulties in measuring this phenomenon, the number of homeless people has increased in one-third of OECD countries (OECD, 2020^[25]). To address this challenge, governments have engaged in innovative projects that seek to tackle this issue through different lenses, including systems approaches, anticipation and data. Among these initiatives is [OneView](#), a platform for predictive analytics and natural language generation capabilities, which enabled participating agencies in Maidstone to bring together data to identify residents at risk of homelessness, and then intervene before they were forced to live on the street. The platform combines data from various service providers to create unified household profiles and sends an alert to the Housing Team for each person at risk of losing their home. In

the initial pilot year, almost 100 households were prevented from becoming homeless, even as the COVID-19 pandemic took hold and grew. In the same year, the rate of homelessness fell overall by 40%. In using human-centred design, Edmonton, Canada has created a [human-centred framework](#) using social innovation to improve urban well-being, with the initial case focused on the perspectives of residents experiencing homelessness (OECD, 2021^[26]). Another interesting initiative is Activation Anti-Displacement in Austin, Texas (Box 3.6).

Box 3.6. Activation Anti-Displacement in Austin, Texas

Activation Anti-Displacement comprises a broad set of initiatives that seek to address rapid gentrification. The programme develops anti-displacement insights, accelerates community co-created anti-displacement strategies, and makes available an interactive data tool to stimulate driven approaches, and a co-created equity tool to mitigate displacement risk.

The team synthesised insights on displacement at a local level, where most available insights to date were not Austin-specific, and published a first-generation decision support tool, the Neighbourhood Stabilisation Strategy Tool, which is available for public use. The tool was the first of its kind for the city and it made it possible to provide information on more than 100 displacement-related factors and allow the direct interaction of users with the data sets.

After the first results of the initiatives were public, the City Council invested USD 300 million in anti-displacement strategies. Such strategies ranged from micro area resident-led planning at the block and neighbourhood level, and a universal basic income programme, to an open data tool that would allow community organisers and lawyers to access resident files to fight evictions, and an intervention that provided advocacy and access to case management to women facing evictions directly at Justice of the Peace Courts.

To date, no other city in the United States has invested at this level in anti-displacement strategies. In order to ensure that this investment benefits all, the project decided to develop a racial equity tool for anti-displacement to guide the adoption and implementation of the projects resulting from the USD 300 million.

Source: <https://oecd-opsi.org/innovations/anti-displacement-in-austin>.

[Previous OECD work](#) provides useful guidance for governments willing to address issues related to housing and homelessness. With respect to the topics covered in this section, this report offers two key recommendations. First, make housing policy an integral part of an inclusive growth strategy. This implies the co-ordination with other policy domains such as health and transport, which would ensure that “vulnerable groups do not fall through the cracks of social support systems” (OECD, 2020^[27]). Second, governments should invest in homelessness prevention and provide targeted support to the homeless. Beyond broader investments in affordable housing, strategies at all levels of government should be directed specifically at tackling homelessness and should incorporate social economy actors (including associations, nonprofit organisations, co-operatives, mutual societies and social enterprises) and academic organisations, all of which have a long history of partnering public authorities to address social needs (OECD/European Commission, 2022^[21]). Because of their social goals and specific business models based on collaboration and proximity, such actors can act rapidly to implement place-based solutions, develop partnerships in an effective manner through their networks and function as a trusted partner. Governments should also seek to strengthen their data collection efforts in order to better understand the complexity of the condition of homeless people.

The OECD [Housing Policy Toolkit](#) can assist governments in understanding housing challenges and taking action. It provides a narrative for the complex societal, economic and environmental interrelationships rooted in housing markets, and also allows policy makers to identify strengths and shortcomings and make informed policy choices when designing national housing strategies.

Digital technologies as a cause of inequalities and an antidote

Digital technologies now affect every aspect of social and political life, and have created new divisions between winners and losers in the algorithmic era. Proponents' claims that digitisation and automatisisation can promote social equality by generating new opportunities have been dampened in the face of evidence that many of these opportunities are available only to those who already had them, reinforcing existing inequalities (OECD, 2019^[28]) (OECD, 2021^[29]). Furthermore, given territorial divides in access to connectivity within countries, this also means that digitalisation and automatisisation can widen existing territorial disparities (OECD, 2021^[30]) (OECD, 2022^[31]). During this complex transition, governments have acknowledged that “we cannot expect natural adaptation by workers and labour markets to produce equitable results, especially with huge differences in household resources as a starting point”, [as articulated by Nobel laureate Michael Spence](#). However, in the face of these tensions, governments are engaging in remarkable efforts to ensure that the benefits of the digital transformation are fairly distributed and accessible.

With respect to citizens, in addition to instilling digital rights as discussed in Trend 1, governments have focused on helping them to develop the digital skills necessary to navigate and offer value to the job market, while providing access to digital government services. In the United Kingdom, for example, the [Mapping Career Causeways](#) project, which was developed by Nesta with state-of-the-art machine learning methods, has shown that some occupations are at high risk of automation, and stresses the fundamental importance of ensuring that workers are informed and able to develop skills to benefit from new opportunities. To address this issue and tackle the problem of gender disparity in regard to ICT skills, the Italian region Emilia Romagna has launched an interesting project called Digital Girls (Box 3.7).

Box 3.7. Digital Girls Emilia-Romagna

Companies in Emilia-Romagna in Italy are in strong need of personnel with ICT skills. Unfortunately, the education system is currently unable to meet this demand, with too few young people following STEM courses. In particular, a comparatively small number of girls are taking university and specialist courses in science and technology. The strategy of Digital Girls Emilia-Romagna is to use an innovative method to introduce girls to computer science and programming.

The project consists of free Summer Camps, lasting three weeks, which are hosted by the universities of Emilia-Romagna. Under the supervision of university teachers and tutors, girls in the last years of high school who attend the camps are able to learn the basics of the programming languages Python and Arduino and work in groups on practical tasks. By the end of the three weeks, girls are able to create software for use in products such as robots.

The project has run for more than eight editions with almost 800 girls participating. The latest editions expanded the curriculum to cover topics such as gaming, app creation and website programming. The camps also placed great focus on putting girls in contact with experts in the IT sector with whom they explored specific topics such as AI and computer security.

Source: <https://oecd-opsi.org/innovations/digital-girls-emilia-romagna>.

[OPSI and the MBRCGI's past work](#) has shown how governments around the world have made significant efforts to shift away from traditional processes and services towards fully digital solutions, especially in the context of the COVID-19 pandemic. Although the benefits at the aggregate level are indisputable, some citizens and residents still find it difficult to interact with the public sector digitally. To ensure that digital government is inclusive and accessible to all, a number of innovative projects have been carried out, including the following:

- [Digital outcasts](#) (Excluídos Digitais). This Brazilian innovation addresses the problem of unequal treatment of handwritten communications sent to public organisations by citizens unable to use digital tools. Previously, such communications were read and registered manually, a lengthy process that often fell short of internal deadlines and was subject to human error. The new process established mechanisms for automated content screening and developed an automated solution which registered and addressed handwritten requests within 48 hours instead of 20 days.
- [Purple HATS](#). This open-source customisable and automated web accessibility testing tool allows software development teams to find and fix accessibility problems. Developed by the Government Technology Agency of Singapore, it helps to ensure that all users have access to inclusive digital services, especially the elderly and persons with disabilities.
- [Connectoo Training](#). As shown by a recent [World Bank report](#), the development of digital skills within public administrations is an essential factor for successful and inclusive digital government projects. This free online course for civil servants in Belgium provides training and certifies their ability to address digital challenges.

The opportunities provided by the digital transformation can have a positive impact on the personal life of citizens and their interaction with the public sector, but can also influence companies, making them more competitive. Companies with a high level of digital maturity are about three times more likely than those with a lower level of maturity ones to report annual net revenue growth and net profit margins significantly above the industry average (Deloitte, 2020^[32]). OPSI and the MBRCGI have identified an increasing number of efforts from governments providing guidance to non-digital businesses on navigating the digital transformation, one example being Spain's [Digitized and Connected 360](#). Furthermore, governments are playing a role in ensuring that businesses, especially young and small ones such as startups, are able to access the expensive technologies they might need, including computing power or investments in AI. For instance, in Korea, the government developed [AI Friends](#) as a set of initiatives to alleviate barriers to AI adoption for small and medium-sized enterprises. OPSI and the MBRCGI were particularly impressed with Serbia's National AI Supercomputing Platform, as discussed in Box 3.8.

Box 3.8. National AI Supercomputing Platform (Serbia)

Recognising the importance of AI as well as the innovative capacity of startups, and to support the development of innovative products and ideas, the Government of Serbia deployed a National Supercomputing AI Platform and offered its resources and training free of charge to innovative companies and startups through a public call for proposals. The platform aims at developing and applying AI technology in public administrations, scientific research organisations, universities, as well as small and medium-sized enterprises and startups that are unable to provide compute-intensive infrastructure themselves.

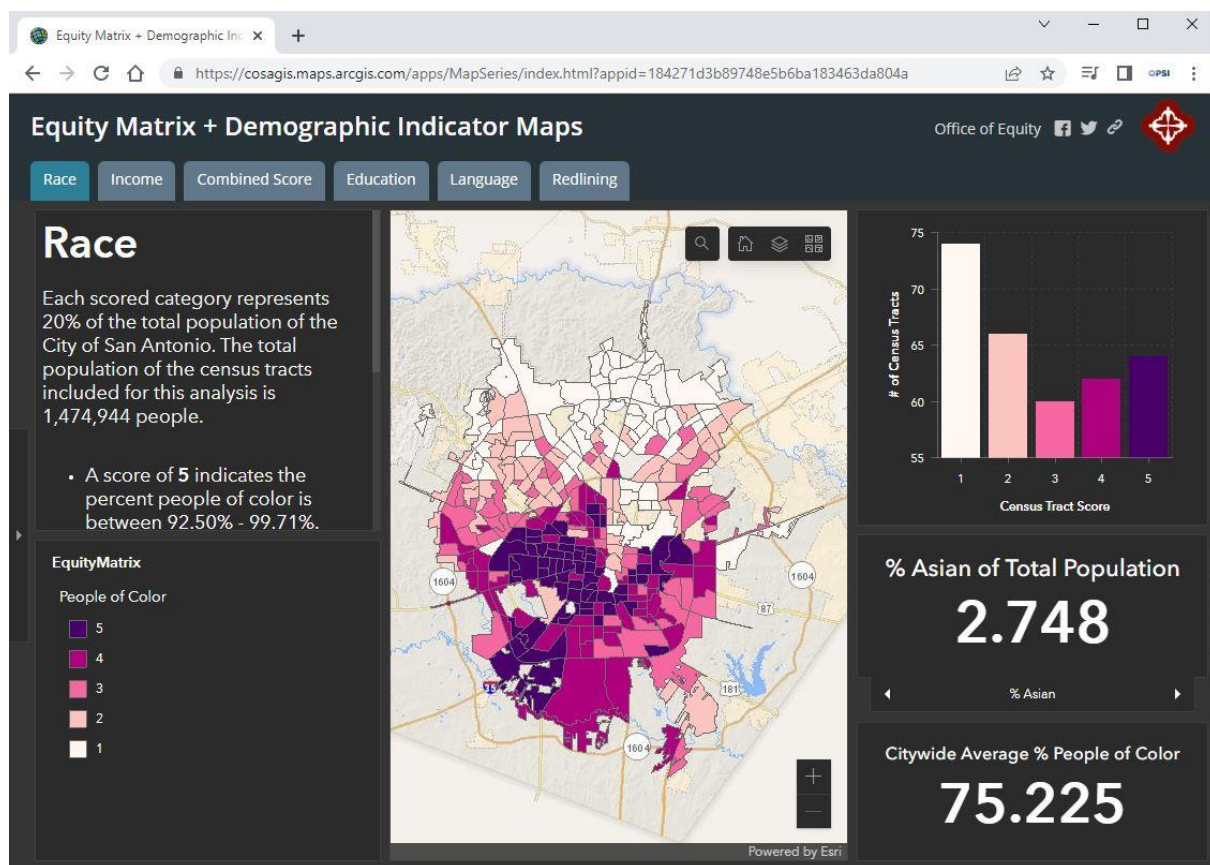
The platform is a universal system for AI computing tasks, from analytics via training to inference. This unrivalled power provides the fastest time to solutions for training, inference and analytics, allowing users to engage with challenges that were not previously possible or practical to address. In total, 15 startups have been provided with the necessary support to access the AI platform, with 62 accounts

created to enable them to work on their projects. These users were also provided with free training (theoretical and hands-on) to familiarise them with the AI platform and data science software.

Source: <https://oecd-opsi.org/innovations/ai-supercomputing-platform>.

Governments are also striving to reduce the potential harm of digital technologies beyond addressing aspects of the digital divide. Here, digital technologies can be the antidote to longstanding problems in society, as well as a possible cause. In this regard, the availability and possible visualisation of data has emerged as powerful way to recognise the existence of problems, create awareness about them and address them through an evidence-informed approach. For instance, the San Antonio [Equity Atlas and Matrix](#) was developed to make data-informed decisions and to address disparities across a variety of indicators that affect communities in different ways (Figure 3.6). This innovation consists of an interactive tool that highlights demographics, disparities and infrastructure distribution within the city, and is currently used to inform the municipality's work and guide investments to achieve equity goals.

Figure 3.6. Representation of race distribution in the San Antonio Equity Atlas and Matrix



Source: <https://cosagis.maps.arcgis.com/apps/MapSeries/index.html?appid=184271d3b89748e5b6ba183463da804a>.

The potential of data as a tool against inequalities has also been leveraged to address, for instance, the lack of adequate housing, poverty, crime and gender discrimination. Notable examples include:

- [Precarious Lives Mapper](#), a platform that documents processes and mechanisms that generate housing precarity in Beirut. Through data collection, analysis and visualisation, the initiative highlights patterns of deprivation, overcrowding, unaffordability, displacement, eviction and foreclosure that characterise the city. This material is then placed at the disposal of activists, researchers, journalists and city-dwellers to trigger debate, denounce and resist the devastating impacts of neoliberal urban policies and real-estate speculation.
- [Millionneighbourhoods](#), an initiative that provides maps of a selected group of cities from the global south so densely populated that the movement of people and the construction of vital infrastructure becomes difficult. The maps are crowdsourced from OpenStreetMap and enable the generation of new models of urban planning that are people-centric, assembled from local knowledge and enhanced with technology. In the hands of communities and local governments, this tool has the potential to become a powerful resource to support decision making and action.
- [AIJO Project](#), an international project that aims to leverage the power of AI to understand, identify and mitigate newsroom biases in relation to gender. AIJO seeks to uncover binary gender representations in various news and publications and the overall media, and has three main components: (1) understand how biases shape news, (2) identify how AI can help uncover biases, and (3) mitigate identified gender discrimination.

Case Study: Empowered Families Initiative (Singapore)

Social assistance for low-income families in Singapore is often premised on their needs, rather than their ambitions or abilities. [Empowered Families Initiative](#) (EFI) is a developmental initiative that hopes to harness the strengths and willingness of low-income families to invest in their aspirations with the support of grants, savings matching and group support. EFI empowers people to enhance their life circumstances by improving their socio-economic position and wellbeing.

Problem

Traditionally, social assistance for low-income families is remedial and reactive in nature, and often premised on the idea of families as “needy recipients”, rather than on leveraging their assets. As such, this model can perpetuate situations where families are always “in need”. Moreover, traditional assistance largely focuses on and is intended for basic needs, meaning that low-income families remain in a state of survival rather than prosperity, lacking the opportunity to improve their condition and the agency and opportunity to freely change their lives. Furthermore, initiatives that help low-income families are often programmatic in nature, employing a one-size-fits-all approach rather than being customised to the unique needs and circumstances of low-income families and their specific plans and aspirations.

An innovative solution

The Empowered Families Initiative (EFI) aims to “invest” in the hopes and plans of low-income families to improve their life circumstances, leveraging their strengths, motivation and creativity to improve their socio-economic position and build a better future. Developed as an independent social service sector project with a leadership team consisting of social workers and civil servants, EFI is inspired by a successful initiative in the United States called [UpTogether](#) (formerly the Family Independence Initiative), where families set their own priorities and drive their own efforts, within an environment of strong social connections that also provides access to initiative-based resources. EFI also aims to provide seed funding

and a platform for families to connect with and encourage each other, hence activating and enhancing families' social capital and networks. The initiative consists of three essential components:

- **Resources.** Families have access to funds and are provided with non-monetary support, based on their respective plans and goals to better their lives. For instance, some families with a home-business were provided training on how to develop a business plan and improve their social media presence. In general, since families structure the project, they have the autonomy to choose how to utilise the resources for their goals.
- **Savings matching.** Families are able to tap into the above funds to save each month. The initiative then matches these savings on a 1:2 basis. These savings can be used by families to support their current or future income-generating plans.
- **Meetings.** Regular group gatherings among families provide mutual support and encouragement, thereby increasing their social capital and network.

The EFI's initial pilot involved families with a per capita income below SGD 650 (EUR 460 equivalent) per month, the level at which most families would qualify for some basic financial assistance. Fifteen families were invited to present their ambitions and plans and four were selected. The chosen families all demonstrated clear aspirations and a readiness to implement their plans, but had not been able to access the necessary support or capital through existing initiatives. A pilot was held from September 2021 to March 2022 for which the families were provided a lump sum of SGD 500 (EUR 352 equivalent). Each family shaped the process based on their ambitions and plans. Facilitated by the project team, the families formed a network of peers where they could discuss progress and learn from one another – a component that proved particularly useful for business owners. During this period, the families were free to decide how to spend the funds but all of them invested in their plans and demonstrated the motivation to work towards their achievement. The project team is currently incorporating lessons learned from the first pilot into the second iteration. Chief among these are providing more financial resources and involving the families over a longer period of time.

For the project team, EFI is not an end in itself, but part of a greater movement reimagining how the public sector can reframe social assistance as investment in the potential of low-income families. In future iterations of the initiative and with greater funding, the team hopes to increase the amount of available grants, create scholarships for low-income families who wish to upskill, and build capability among social service professionals to engage in developmental, aspirational conversations with low-income families, rather than merely focusing on “here and now” needs. Furthermore, the team plans to co-create future iterations of EFI with low-income families, who would play the role of mentors and facilitators for other families who participate in the initiative.

Figure 3.7. Families co-facilitating sessions to collaborate and update each other on progress



Source: Shared by the project team.

Novelty

Unlike social assistance and programmes for low-income families which are mostly premised on basic needs, EFI is innovative in the sense that it invests in families based on their motivation, and harnesses and leverages their assets and strengths. The design of this initiative incentivises progress and motivation to create a new trajectory and perpetuate a positive cycle of possibilities for the families, rather than remaining stuck in a cycle of need and challenges. Unlike traditional social assistance programmes, low-income families with lived experience of poverty are invited as experts to co-create the project as part of the organising team and as co-facilitators, thereby reinforcing this positive cycle. This approach increases the effectiveness and sustainability of EFI and is underpinned by a belief that families know better than professionals what support would be most appropriate for them.

Results and impact

The initial pilot has proven very successful. The impact of the project on the four families – represented by Danny, Lisa, Suzy and Fatima – was measured through observations and qualitative means to evaluate any increase in income level or potential for income-generation as well as social support. Lisa, Fatima and Suzy each have their own home-based business, an informal way to earn an income, and used the grants as capital to buy equipment to increase their sales. Lisa and Suzy collaborated to open a food stall which doubled their incomes by the end of the proof-of-concept. Fatima was also able to save up SGD 25 000 (EUR 17 500) to open a car-washing business. Danny, who works as a food delivery rider and used to ride

a bicycle, used the grant to apply for a motorbike license to increase his delivery orders, and thus his earnings. At the end of the initiative, Danny was able to complete half the requirements for his license.

All four families reported a higher level of social support after getting to know one another and declared that they had resources to achieve their aspirations which they otherwise would not have been able to access. They also felt a sense of empowerment and confidence from receiving support for their goals and their early success. As a result of this, they felt encouraged to work on their ambitions to improve their socio-economic status and wellbeing even beyond this initiative. Close to the end of the project, the four families communicated that they would benefit from being onboard for another three months and asked if they could apply for extra funding to boost their own ventures. They pitched their ideas to the project team and, since they showed great promise, they successfully received further SGD 500 each.

Challenges and lessons learned

The experience with the first four families presented the project team with two main challenges. First, the time available under the project was considered too short for families to benefit optimally from the project. Second, the resources provided to them were lower than ideal, with more benefits likely accruing with a higher amount. To address these challenges, the second iteration of the pilot has been adapted following consultation with the initial set of families. Participants will be enrolled in the initiative for more than six months and will be provided with SGD 1 500 (EUR 1 055 equivalent), three times the amount given to the families of the proof-of-concept.

The experience so far has provided valuable lessons on the elements necessary for a project like EFI to succeed:

- **Organisational willingness to overcome traditional models** of social assistance should be developed and paired with the establishment of a funding model that is open to experimentation and to investing in the aspirations of low-income families.
- **Families are often resourceful, very creative and have great ambitions**, they just lack the resources to move to the next stage. Such motivation and commitment, fuelled with a small grant, can enable them to achieve better conditions where they can make choices and work on the next phase of their plans to improve their lives.
- **It is critical to involve families as co-creators** of the initiative as they are the experts of their own lives, and are best placed to help other low-income families. By establishing co-design processes and sharing responsibilities, professionals and policy makers can ensure the effectiveness and sustainability of the initiative and better services.

Replicability

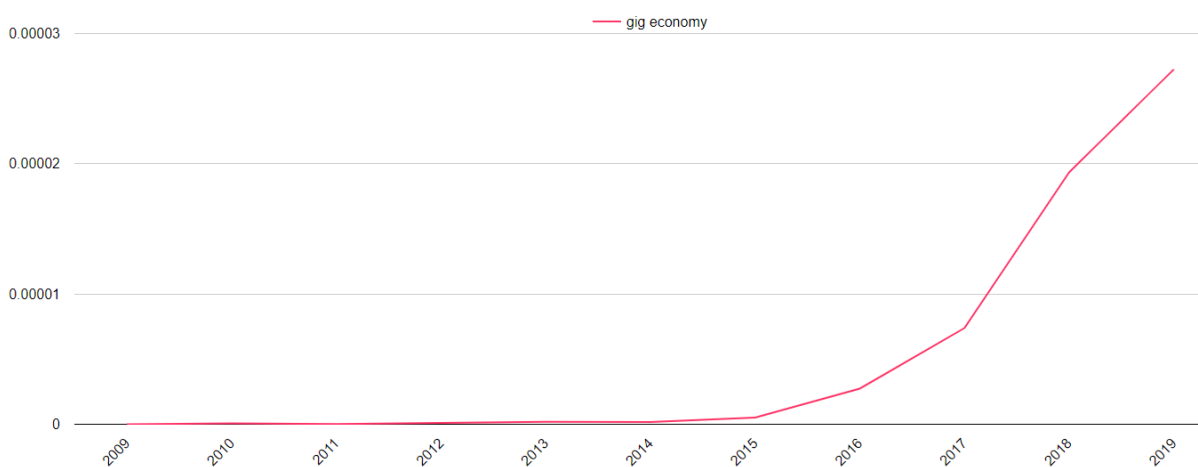
To explore the potential for replicability in the national context, a survey was conducted with professionals from various social service agencies in Singapore. The results highlighted demand for the initiative to be rolled out in centres across the country. Due to the positive outcomes from the pilot round and the keen interest shown by social workers, who believe that this initiative would help the families they serve, EFI has a high potential to be further replicated domestically.

In the international arena, this innovation is a highly transformative initiative with strong potential for replication in other contexts, providing similarly great results regardless of the different bureaucratic culture of the new adopter. The key aspect that enables the success of this project is the willingness to move beyond cookie-cutter programmes that are insensitive to the specific conditions of recipients, towards one that caters to the aspirations of the families involved.

Counteracting the creation of a gig economy underclass

The concept of the gig economy emerged fairly recently. The first traces can be found about one decade ago, and there is no evidence of its use before circa 2013 (Figure 3.8). The origin of the term relates to the precarity of short-term arrangements typical of a musical event (“gig”), with no certainty that the musicians involved will be invited to perform again (Woodcock and Graham, 2020^[33]). On a more technical level, gig economy platforms – the main actors in this phenomenon – can be defined as two-sided digital platforms that match workers and content producers with buyers and users on a per-service basis (Schwellnus et al., 2019^[34]). There has been great debate about the impact of the gig economy, focusing in particular on its effects on employment, taxes and labour conditions (OECD, 2021^[35]). Governments have recognised that the gig economy has both benefits and drawbacks and are actively trying to counter the latter with innovative initiatives.

Figure 3.8. Use of the phrase “gig economy” in English language publications



Source: https://books.google.com/ngrams/graph?content=gig+economy&year_start=2009&year_end=2019.

The impact of gig economy platforms on employment

Some have argued that the gig economy can be a boon to productivity and offer workers and business the desired flexibility. Conversely, gig economy platforms operate by leveraging regulatory loopholes and imposing one-sided flexibility on workers. While OECD findings (Schwellnus et al., 2019^[34]) indicate that the presence of platforms is small (around 1-3% of overall employment), more recent [research](#) has identified rapid growth, with positive and negative results continuing to accrue (Bulian, 2021^[36]).

A deeper analysis of the employment conditions that link platforms and workers reveals that a gig economy underclass may be emerging (Qiao, Huang and Yeh, 2023^[37]). Gig economy platforms have created creative business models where a reliance on self-employed contractors rather than employees enables capacity to adjust quickly to swings in demand. But the working conditions of these self-employed contractors have had a negative impact on workers: the majority of platform employees do not benefit from the protection of existing labour laws or collective bargaining agreements, and therefore experience low wages, precarious employment and hazardous working conditions. This was confirmed by the recent experience of a [referendum in California](#) which introduced an exception for app-based drivers regarding the determination of their status as independent contractors or employees. Strongly supported by Uber and Lyft, it led to a significant deterioration in drivers' labour standards.

It has been [claimed](#) that platform workers are exploited in three specific ways: legal uncertainties and insecurity, extreme degradation of working conditions, and the presence of new forms of “digital”

dependence and exploitation. To study these dynamics, the German Federal Ministry for Economic Cooperation and Development (BMZ) financed the Oxford Internet Institute to develop [Fairwork](#), a project that evaluates the work conditions of digital labour and scores individual platforms on how well, or how poorly, they perform (Box 3.9).

Box 3.9. Fairwork

Fairwork is a research project initiated in 2018 at the Oxford Internet Institute and conducted in collaboration with more than 25 research institutions worldwide. The study analyses work conditions under the platform economy, and assesses them against the Fairwork principles, a set of five principles that should characterise fair work. It then scores companies accordingly.

The development of the Fairwork principles involved a thorough examination of the literature on job quality, years of research on gig workers and online freelancers, and the active involvement of workers, platforms, trade unions and labour advocates. The five principles are: **fair pay**, **fair conditions**, **fair contracts**, **fair management** and **fair representation**. Each principle is divided into two thresholds: if companies meet both thresholds, they receive ten points – the maximum a company can score. The data used to score companies are collected through desk research, worker interviews and surveys, as well as interviews with platform management.

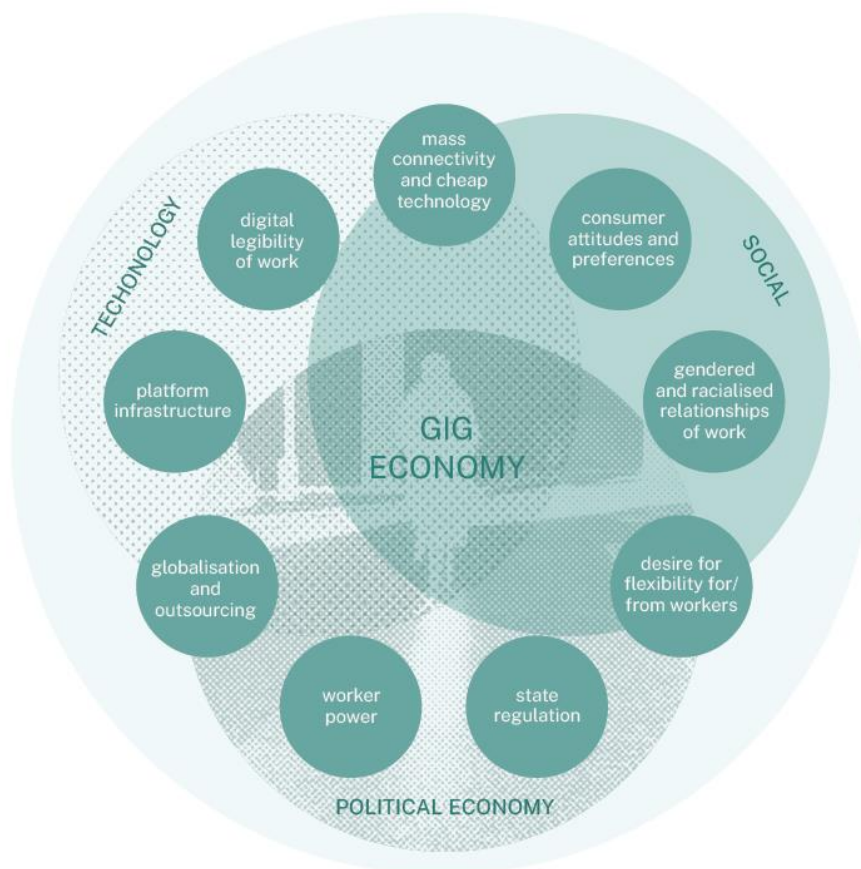
Beyond its research output – to date, 50 publications have been made available – Fairwork has had an impact on companies' internal policies, national and international legal frameworks, the conditions experienced by platform workers and consumers' behaviour. Through dialogues with platforms, Fairwork determined 131 changes to policies that improved working conditions. The project team is also in contact with policy makers and regulatory bodies of more than 25 countries worldwide and works with them to make evidence-based policy decisions and ensure the rights of all platform employees are respected.

Source: <https://fair.work>.

Towards an alternative gig economy

The current gig economy emerged from the interplay of a variety of factors including low worker power and a regulatory framework ill-equipped to handle the challenges related to platform expansion (see Figure 3.9 for a complete analysis of the conditions shaping the gig economy). In this context, OPSI and the MBRCCI have identified government and ground-up community efforts seeking to help ensure that the expansion of the gig economy is socially sustainable and respectful of workers' rights. This is the case in China where food delivery riders are building mutual aid networks on WeChat to support one other (Yu, Treré and Bonini, 2022^[38]).

Figure 3.9. Conditions shaping the gig economy



Source: Design by Giorgio Marani from Woodcock and Graham, 2020.

OPSI and the MBRCGI have also identified efforts to actively develop alternative models for platform governance and the promotion of worker welfare through engagement with gig economy platforms. One example is the [Driver Advisory Council for Uber India](#) developed by Aapti with public bodies such as India's NITI Aayog. The Council consists of 35 members, and connects drivers from six different cities – Bangalore, Chennai, Delhi NCR, Hyderabad, Kolkata and Mumbai – directly with Uber. The model enables participatory action and reflexive praxis among workers and has established a successful and sustainable alternative for platform governance. As such, the Council represents an unprecedented mode of engagement between gig economy platforms, workers and public agencies. Beyond the satisfaction of drivers and Uber, this initiative has also pushed policy makers to address related legal loopholes, with the Indian Government proposing a Code on Social Security which introduces a co-pay system to cover health and other benefits for workers.

Figure 3.10. President of Uber India and South Asia addresses members of the Council



Source: <https://oecd-opsi.org/innovations/driver-advisory-council-for-uber-india>.

Governments are also increasingly recognising the specificities of gig economy workers and making efforts to integrate their perspectives in policy making. For instance, in Seattle (United States), the city used human-centred design to engage with drivers and gain a deeper understanding of their preferences with respect to potential policies on minimum compensation. To this end, the local government developed an engagement strategy including elements of ethnographic analysis that resulted in interviews, focus groups, a telephone town hall and an online survey. Listening to the voices of gig economy drivers enabled the city of Seattle to ensure that innovation efforts would actually address their needs, as evidenced by a recent [OECD Innovation and Data Use in Cities](#) report (OECD, 2021_[26]).

Beyond their work with platforms, governments are also addressing the issue of the gig economy underclass by actively supporting the development of alternatives that can provide similar services. One example is [Neighbourhood Joint Delivery](#) (Box 3.10), an initiative recently developed by Seoul, Korea, to address traffic, environmental, safety and labour problems caused by the high increase in delivery volume. Platform co-operatives provide other examples (Mannan and Pek, 2021_[39]) (OECD, forthcoming-c, *Platform co-operatives: an alternative model*). These initiatives offer new business models based on common ownership and democratic governance representing solidarity-based alternatives to gig economy platforms. Such organisations employ digital environments in which members interact to exchange commodities and services. Platform co-operative members, who are both users and owners of the platform, manage the technology tool collectively and make choices on production processes, conditions of usage and employment structures. This enables value distribution among all contributors to the platform, favouring people-centred approaches and maintaining produced value inside local communities. A great example of a platform co-operative is Ethical Deliveries, explored in a case study later in this section, which demonstrates how public sector organisations can nurture the development of such initiatives.

Box 3.10. Neighbourhood Joint Delivery

Neighbourhood Joint Delivery was introduced in Seoul in 2022 as a remedy to issues created by a rise in deliveries. Since 2015, deliveries had increased by about 2.8 times in the city, causing traffic, environmental, safety and labour problems. The proposed solution is Neighbourhood Joint Delivery Centres that integrate services from several couriers to deliver parcels collectively, reducing distance travelled by 50% and improving efficiency by 40%. The eco-friendly centres will also collect recyclables and serve as a base for unmanned autonomous vehicles.

The Seoul Metropolitan Government has invested KRW 3.2 billion (EUR 2.3 million equivalent) in the creation of three centres. After a trial period due to last from 2022 to 2023, the programme is expected to expand across the entire city. The establishment of the centres was done through an open call for tenders, and in 2022, the city government selected three organisations and provided them with subsidies to cover the first two years. The institutions must cover operational expenses through their own delivery fees, and after two years must finance all expenses themselves. This approach promoted greater sustainability and encouraged competitive companies to participate.

Seoul's Neighbourhood Joint Delivery is expected to improve delivery efficiency, transportation, environment, and safety and labour conditions by integrating the previously fragmented private-sector delivery system. The Seoul Metropolitan Government negotiated volume and commission through voluntary agreements with delivery drivers, agencies and firms, thereby ensuring that the business model was financially and socially sustainable, and thus able to provide riders with good working conditions, and counteract the creation of the gig economy underclass.

Source: <https://oecd-opsi.org/innovations/neighborhood-joint-delivery>.

Governments at all levels will need to ensure that the costs of expansion of the gig economy, such as consumer and worker protection, do not outnumber its benefits, such as productivity and overall employment. In particular, it is crucial that the costs do not emerge from the exploitation of a legal vacuum. Governments will need to balance costs and benefits; however, that specific equilibrium will ultimately be a political decision. Moreover, it is essential that the expansion of gig economy platforms, which involves thousands of workers and affects local communities, does not occur against a background of public unawareness. The [European Parliament's recent work](#) on a proposal to improve conditions for workers on digital labour platforms – particularly their employment status and the automated systems monitoring their work – represents a move in this direction. Previous OECD and non-OECD work has also highlighted some viable options concerning these challenges:

- **Costs related to platform flexibility should not be externalised and imposed on workers.** To address the precarity of workers, labour market regulations could be adapted to prevent the erosion of platform workers' bargaining position including rules for the termination of contracts, worker mobility and minimum pay (Schwellnus et al., 2019^[34]).
- **Governments need to ensure that platform workers have access to basic social protection,** including for work-related accidents, parental benefits, health and pensions. To this end, it is essential to clarify the employment status of platform workers. Exploring third possibilities beyond employment and self-employment could be a valuable option – for instance, the creation of a new category of “independent worker” has been proposed (Stewart and Stanford, 2017^[40]).
- Beyond the direct impact on workers, policy makers should regulate the gig economy by establishing the rights and obligations of the actors involved and also providing a legal definition of this economy to support related research. This will facilitate more accurate studies of the dynamics

around gig economy workers and help address the current lack of comprehensive documentation on this group (Bulian, 2021^[36]).

- **In general, innovation-related challenges will often require more flexible and adaptive regulatory frameworks**, with room for discretion and case-by-case decisions. To address this issue while developing evidence-based, future-ready and trustworthy frameworks to address challenges such as those posed by the gig economy, governments should carry out broad-based, continuous public stakeholder engagement and close monitoring of outcomes (OECD, 2021^[41]).

Case Study: Ethical Deliveries (Bologna, Italy)

To improve the rights and opportunities of gig workers in the wake of the COVID-19 crisis, Bologna, Italy launched Ethical Deliveries (*Consegne Etiche* in Italian), a home delivery platform that serves as an alternative to private delivery. Ethical Deliveries provides basic goods and services while respecting workers' rights and environmental sustainability. Developed on the basis of co-operative principles through an urban co-design process, based on a dialogue with citizens and small traders during the start-up phase, the platform is structured around two pillars: a fair rider salary and the use of vehicles that minimise environmental impact. Thousands of ethical deliveries have been made since the launch.

Problem

The COVID-19 pandemic caused an upsurge in the use of home delivery systems by citizens and residents. This trend highlighted the problems of the gig economy and, specifically, private delivery platforms. For instance, four companies were [investigated by the Italian judiciary](#) for imposing piecework payments and violating health and safety rights to their 60 000 workers. This led to growing awareness among government and the public of the problematic labour relationship between companies and the riders upon which these platforms rely. Citizens began to voice their criticisms of platform activities that failed to respect labour rights and characterised the relationship with local business as unfair, with no public purpose or interest in protecting the most fragile communities. Cities have often been seen as passive victims of large platforms, with some officials perceiving themselves as powerless to improve riders' and traders' working conditions. Local officials sought to handle things differently in Bologna.

An innovative solution

In response to the challenges above, the Municipality of Bologna and [Fondazione Innovazione Urbana](#) (FIU) – an urban regeneration centre founded by the Municipality and the University of Bologna –launched Ethical Deliveries. The project, which is in line with the innovative [Charter of Fundamental Rights of Digital Labour in the Urban Context](#) approved by the Municipality of Bologna, consists of a delivery system developed through a participatory approach that respects two key principles: a fair labour relationship with riders and minimal environmental impact. The aim of the project is to provide a collective and solidarity-based alternative to large platforms.

The project started with a clear aim – to involve all city stakeholders in a debate on the issue of home deliveries, and to imagine something different. At the beginning of May 2020, FIU held an [assembly](#) and conducted interviews with riders, trade associations, civil society organisations, researchers and the [Riders Union](#), the first Italian organisation to address the precariousness and lack of protections for riders in Bologna. The aim was to identify an alternative ethical model to existing private platforms. It led to the creation of the [Manifesto of Values](#) (see Box 3.11).

Box 3.11. Manifesto of Values

Conscious that we will have to create a proposal with strong alternative values, the platform must:

1. Respect workers' rights and labour protection
2. Guarantee fair and decent remuneration
3. Guarantee the right to health and safety
4. Dismantle reputational mechanisms that fuel competition between workers
5. Be logistically sustainable or with minimal environmental impacts
6. Ensure the sustainability and transparency of the business-rider relationship
7. Give value to territorial service
8. Encourage synergies between actors at the expense of competition
9. Favour the principles of open source for possible technological support
10. Respect information obligations with customers
11. Recognise and be able to communicate the value of delivery
12. Keep the relationship between trader and customer alive
13. Facilitate citizen solidarity processes.

Source: https://consegnetiche.it/wp-content/uploads/2020/09/2020_Cantiere_ConsegneEtiche_manifesto.pdf.

From this basis, the project team started to co-design a collaborative governance model and a concrete prototype for a collaborative service for home delivery. After a first trial held between May and June 2020, carried out with two local co-operatives and resulting in the delivery of 1 700 masks to people's homes, the project team decided to enhance and expand the project.

In September 2020, they launched the website www.consegnetiche.it, which allows people to order groceries from two neighbourhood markets and two supermarkets, borrow books from 14 municipal and 32 university libraries, order food from three restaurants and purchase goods from local businesses. Ethical Deliveries provides riders with a minimum wage of EUR 9/hour – almost double the average wage that Italian riders earned at the start of the project – and worker protection against injuries, using only bicycles as a sustainable means of transport. Accordingly, Ethical Deliveries encourages citizens and residents to make conscious choices, by opting for an ethical home delivery service that respects the rights of workers, traders and the environment to the extent possible.

Figure 3.11. Ethical Deliveries rider stocking up at the local market



Source: <https://oecd-opsi.org/innovations/ethical-deliveries-bologna>.

Ethical Deliveries has shown that it is possible to offer an effective alternative to powerful private delivery companies in a manner based on collaboration and solidarity, in the process disproving the notion that citizens and cities are powerless against international corporations. The project team successfully engaged with the full ecosystem of relevant actors, including the public. Furthermore, the innovation took place in Bologna, a city characterised by strong co-operative movements, a strong riders' union, and several civil society and private organisations which demonstrated significant innovation skills during the lockdown. Bologna also has a bold political vision, as evidenced in its [Regulation on collaboration between citizens and the city for the care and regeneration of urban commons](#), which enabled value-based direction by helping to clearly identifying the goal.

At present, the project is focusing its energies on the “social component” of the project, namely book delivery from public libraries, which has been reconfirmed by the Municipality for 2023. Going forward, the goal is to create a larger alternative business model. FIU is in contact with major logistics players in the city and intends to introduce Ethical Deliveries riders into their operations, rethinking their approaches to sustainable transport.

Novelty

Ethical Deliveries is one of the first projects led by public sector actors to address the challenges of the gig economy by actively engaging in the creation of an alternative to platforms. Ethical Deliveries is co-designed by citizens, traders, trade unions, riders and citizens, who together were able to generate a co-operative governance structure different from the vertical organisation of profit-oriented private platforms.

Results and impact

Nearly 4 000 ethical deliveries have been made with customers able to receive numerous goods and services due to the creation of a strong network of riders, civil society organisations, local business, the University of Bologna and the municipality. Thanks to Ethical Deliveries, a project for home meal delivery to vulnerable people was initiated in collaboration with local social services offices during the COVID-19 lockdowns. In addition, the project team produced a documentary on Ethical Deliveries and riders in Bologna, which is [available for free online](#). The project also featured on [Wired](#) international, and received the [Compasso d'Oro](#) (Golden Compass) prize, one of the oldest and most influential design awards worldwide.

Figure 3.12. Ethical Deliveries rider collecting a box of groceries from a local market



Margherita Caprilli

Source: <https://oecd-opsi.org/innovations/ethical-deliveries-bologna>.

Challenges and lessons learned

The main challenge Ethical Deliveries has faced is scaling up the prototype. The team is still working to determine the best path for expanding Ethical Deliveries and is considering questions related to different potential service areas. The team now envisions enhancing the project to provide an ethical alternative to regular logistics routes.

Ethical Deliveries taught the project team that in order to reinvigorate the collective idea of the city, it was critical to discuss power, time, space and empathy. Specifically, the project team learned:

- **The significance of empowering stakeholders.** Redesigning a service, or a policy, means reimagining the power balance to give more resources to stakeholders, who became partners.
- **The need to give the community time to form and co-operate.** After years of approaches focused on individualism, time is needed to convey a new way of doing things: only with care and attention is it possible to rebuild relationships between people, civic organisations and institutions.
- **Existing neighbourhood relations often embody high levels of trust.** While people's needs can be addressed by creating new relationships, the potential of existing neighbourhood relations should be recognised and leveraged, as these often exemplify strong levels of trust and collaboration.
- **Empathy is crucial.** Despite digital tools and enormous capabilities, empathy remains the key skill. Otherwise, innovations will benefit only a few.

Replicability

Ethical Deliveries has not been replicated in other contexts, but as part of scaling up the initiative, the project team intends to reach out to other municipalities about potential diffusion. However, the project team is cautious about the ease with which this innovation may be replicated. The number of important pre-conditions which enabled its success are not common, including political vision, the ability and willingness to devote resources to create an alternative to gig economy platforms, the experience and ability to engage effectively with citizens and cultivate trusting and empathetic relationships with them, and finally a fertile and responsive civil society and landscape of co-operatives and private organisations.

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