Call for Papers: The Digitalizing Continent: Examining Challenges and Opportunities of Digital Transformation for Africa

By:

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The fourth industrial revolution (4IR) is marked by an intensive digitalisation process. Within this process, digital data (physical information converted into digital) and digital technologies restructure how things are done and values created. Among various initiatives intended to galvanise such processes is the E-Commerce Protocol of the African Continental Free Trade Area (AfCFTA), which is still under discussion. Digital economy and e-commerce survive and thrive through a web of complex contractual and noncontractual relationships between actors, including consumers, businesses and governments. Weak and fragmented regulation in areas such as consumer, data and privacy protection on the one hand risks enabling those in control of capital and political power, the corporations and governments, to configure the digitalization process to

their interest (i.e., profit and power maximization). On the other hand, weak regulation in such areas means leaving users with weak or no protection and hence, erode consumers' trust to make use of and benefit from the digital transformation. In addition, leverage over the operation and outcome of such connectivity is impacted by existing and emergent constraints such as: digital divide, infrastructural challenges, misfit between Intellectual Property (IP) system and emerging data driven technologies, and taxes, tariffs and non-tariff barriers. Most importantly, transformation and connectivity outcomes are shaped also by historical and existing institutional, regulatory and societal cultures and embedded power relationships.

This Call for Papers and workshop, hosted by the Competence Center for African Research (CCAR), University of St.Gallen jointly with the Afronomicslaw.org, seeks to examine the ongoing effort towards digital transformation, and particularly E-Commerce. We welcome contributons from both established and emerging scholars from the Global South and beyond with scholarly focus on the topic. Potential focus areas could include but are not limited to:

1. Normative accounts on the meaning of "digital transformation" and its distributional consequences in Africa. Brief case studies are also welcome.
2. Decolonial perspectives on digital sovereignty and data sovereignty in Africa.
3. The Role and limits of the e-commerce protocol including in promoting local businesses.
4. Regulatory innovations in data governance including but not limited to data cooperatives, and their data trusts and their feasibility within an African context.
5. Data protection, data privacy and digital rights related laws, policies and practices in African countries.
6. Emerging norms on data protection, data privacy and digital rights from the jurisprudence of African courts and African regulatory institutional practices.

Deadlines and Requirements:

The workshop will be bilingual, English and French. The conference presentations and outputs will also be accepted in either language (2, 000-word blog post as part of a special symposium on Afronomicslaw.org).

Overview of tentative deadlines:

- Deadline for abstract submission: 25 April 2022
- Draft papers due: 1 June 2022
- Digital conference: 1st or 2nd week of July
- Final contribution to blog symposium on AfronomicsLaw: TBD

Please submit abstracts in English or French (250 words) to kebene.wodajo@unisg.ch by 23:59 CET on **25 April 2022**.

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