A capabilities framework for developing digital platform policy

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אוניברסיטת בן-גוריון בנגב
جامعة بن غوريون في النقب
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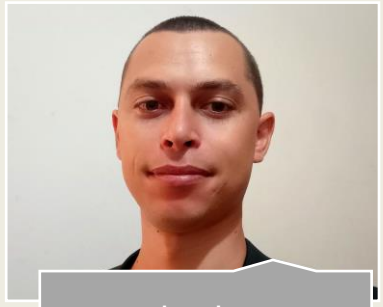
studying diversity calls for a diverse team

Amit Schejter


Baruch Shomron

Muhammad Abu Jaffar

Ghalia Abu Kaf

Amneh al Sharha

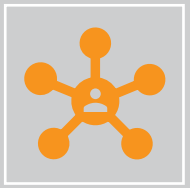
Jonathan Mendels

Shula Mola

Malka Shacham

Noam Tirosh

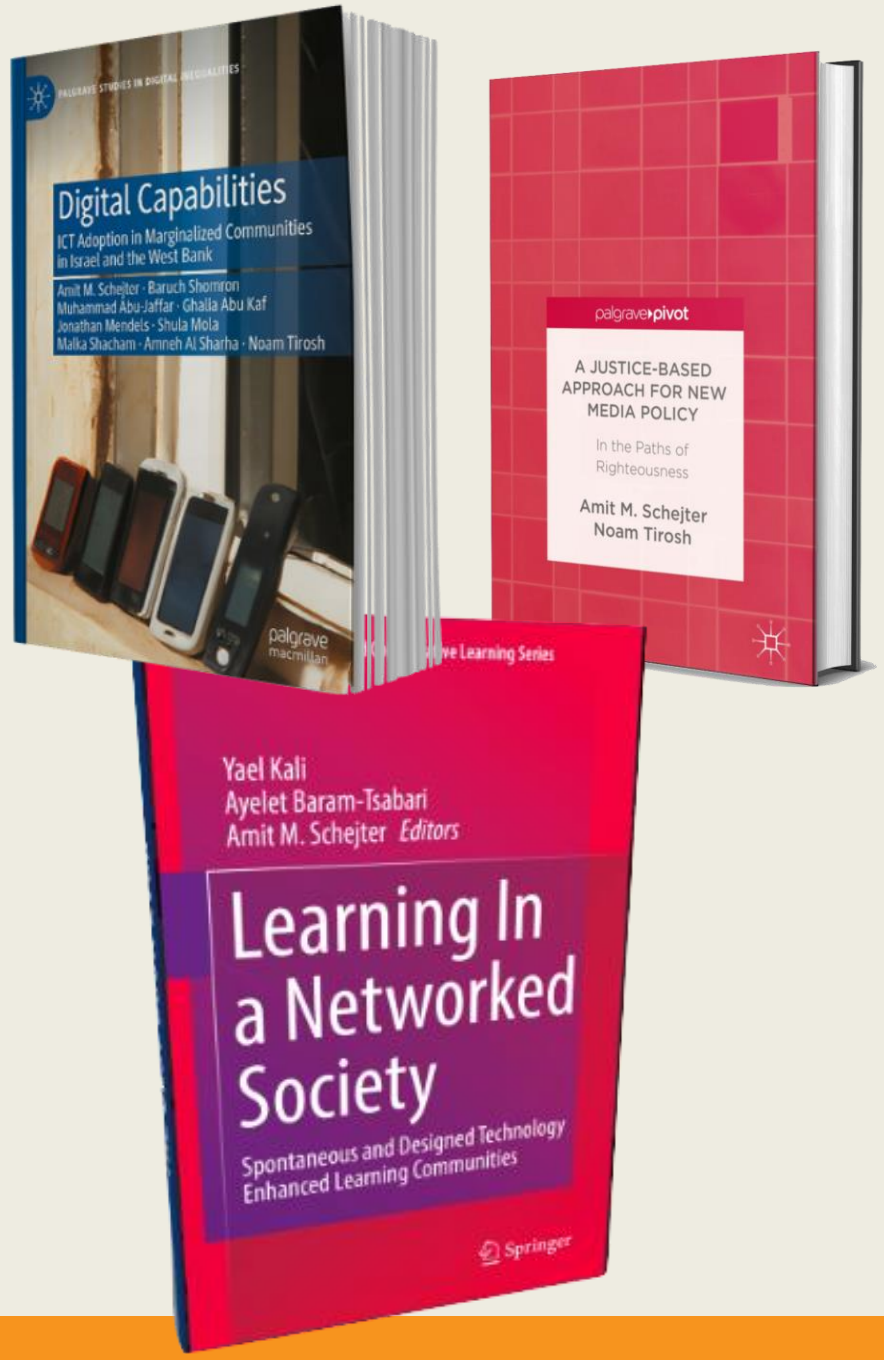
the argument



communicating is a basic human capacity and a fundamental human right.

the change in the means of communicating only emphasizes how important communications are for each individual’s well-being.

intellectual background and development



the theoretical framework: the capabilities approach and social justice

digital divide studies

from an accessibility and user literacy binary to a diverse multidimensional matrix

digital diversity

first assumption

- diversity of connectivity levels
- diversity of skills
- diversity of outcomes
- diversity of needs and their definitions
- diversity of combinations of divide dimensions

digital diversity

- Socio-economic differences do not explain the entire broadband adoption gap. For example, after accounting for socio-economic and geographic factors, Black and Hispanic households still lag White households in broadband adoption by 11 percentage points, though the gap between Asian and White households disappears.
- After accounting for socio-economic and demographic factors, rural households still lag urban households in broadband adoption by five percentage points.[L SEP]
    - (“exploring the digital nation” 2011)

information and communication technologies (ICTs)

from one-way message sending to multimedial interactive mobile communications

“new” media

second assumption

what’s new about new media

mobility

abundance

multi-mediality

interactivity

three theories of justice

utilitarianism

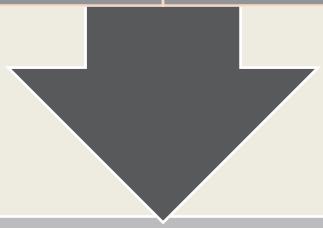
distributive justice

capabilities

a few words about capabilities

The capabilities approach proposes the measurement of opportunities rather than that of primary goods, *by focusing on what a person is able to do or be rather than on what a person has*.

Characteristics, are the properties of goods;	*functionings*, tell us what people want to do;	*capabilities* describe what a person *can* do;	*conversion factors*, are elements that enable the transition of potential rights to practiced rights.



The relation between a good and the functionings to achieve certain beings and doings is influenced by personal, social, environmental, economic, educational, and technological conversion factors.

capabilities – basic, internal and combined

“basic capabilities refer to the real opportunity to avoid poverty”

Robeyns, 2005, p. 101

the term basic capabilities as originally used was “intended to separate out the ability to satisfy certain elementary and crucially important functionings up to certain levels.”

“The term can, of course, be plausibly used in other ways as well, given the ambiguity of the concept of basicness”

Sen, 1992, p. 45

the role of public policy

basic capabilities: **the innate equipment of individuals that is the necessary basis for developing the more advanced capability.**

internal capabilities: **states of the person herself that are, so far as the person herself is concerned, sufficient conditions for the exercise of the requisite functions**

combined capabilities: **internal capabilities *combined with* suitable external conditions for the exercise of the function.**

"The aim of public policy is the production of combined capabilities”

(Nussbaum, 1997, p. 289-90)

Theoretical dilemma

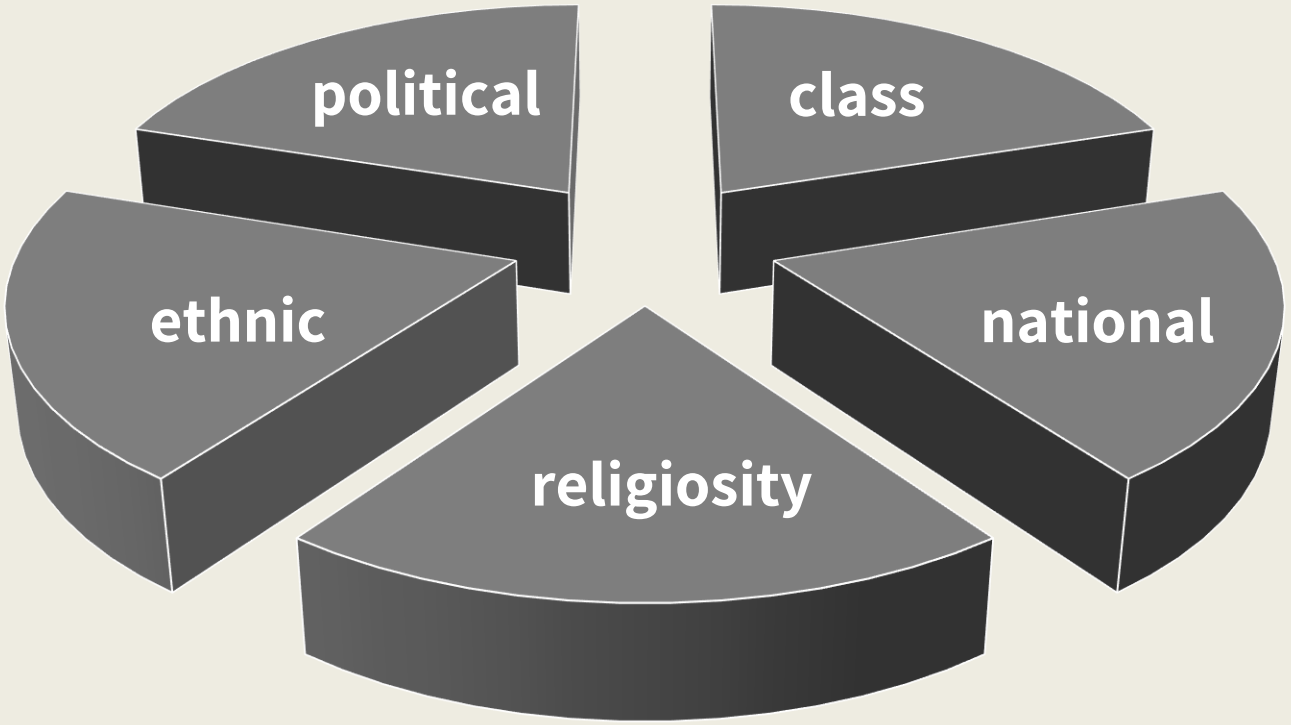
Can the question of inequality and overcoming it be limited to inequality in a predetermined list put together by policymakers or philosophers?

What serve as constraints and what as enablers?

What are the conversion factors?

“equality in freedom”

the context: marginalized communities in Israel and the West Bank



a society of cleavages

Arab-Israelis:
Media consumers
Teachers
Social networking

West Bank
Palestinian Activists

Bedouin:
Villagers
Journalists

Ultra-Orthodox
Haredi Women

Zera Beta Israel
Immigrant Activists
in Absorption
Centers

The *Bnei Menashe*
Immigrant
Community

Asylum Seekers and
Refugees

Capabilities clusters

Communities/ clusters	Arab-Israelis	Unrecognized villagers	Bedouin journalists	Zera Beta Israel activists	West Bank activists	Arab-Israeli teachers	Haredi women	Bnei Menashe	Asylum seekers
To voice	✓		✓	✓	✓	✓			
To be informed	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓		✓	✓	✓
To identify and belong	✓	✓	✓				✓	✓	
To imitate	✓		✓						
To be secure	✓	✓	✓		✓		✓		
To participate in social change	✓		✓	✓	✓	✓			
To enjoy	✓					✓		✓	

insights and conclusions

the communities through which we traveled want “more” of the freedom to communicate; however, “more” is subjective.

developing policies based on the capabilities approach dictates that policies should be focused on the actual opportunities made available to individuals

Policymaking aimed at closing the adoption gap should address

1. internal capabilities (traits, skills, and qualities such as language fluency, digital literacy, and cultural beliefs)

2. conversion factors (such as access to electricity, employment circumstances, and living conditions) that characterize each of the unique marginalized communities in society.

thank you

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