The right to development, SDGs, and inclusive datasets

The case of Diversity Atlas, humanity's first Cultural Anthrodata data set

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Περίληψη

In a world dominated by fourth-generation technology services and tools, individual attempt to put these developments at their service to achieve socio-economic upliftment. United Nations resolution on the Right to Development mandates this principle, which also becomes clearer when met under the Resolution on Achieving the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). The problem lies in the fact that governments lack comprehensive and inclusive data sets through which they could design and implement relevant policies. This article uses the world's first inclusive database, Diversity Atlas, as an example for designing social innovation policies that leave no one behind.

The year 2026 will mark the 40th anniversary since Member States of the United Nations proclaimed the 'Declaration on the Right to Development,' which states that everyone is 'entitled to participate in, contribute to, and enjoy economic, social, cultural and political development, in which all human rights and fundamental freedoms can be fully realized.' (article 1)

Although, the adoption of the Sustainable Development Goals and the Paris Agreement on climate change, offers the chance for a consensual understanding, with over 90% of SDG targets overlapping with human rights obligations, populations are suffering the unwillingness of governments to introduce inclusive policies that would benefit the many.
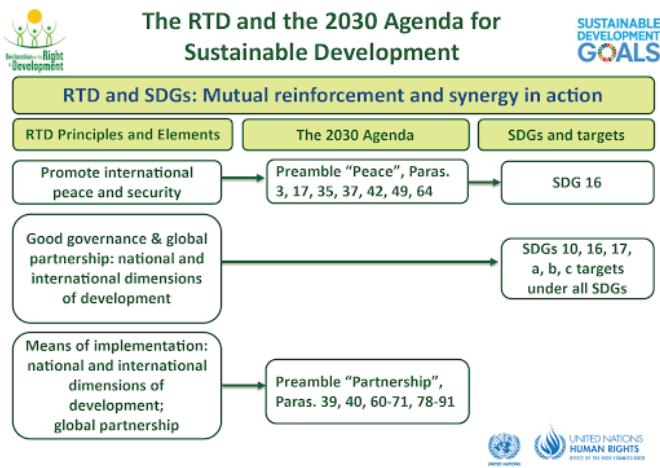
The Office of UN's Commissioner for Human Rights presentation

One could argue on multiple reasons about why this happens. This article is introducing the argument that one of these reasons lies with the lack of developing inclusive datasets reflecting the socioeconomic and cultural reality of populations, which is not even mentioned by the UN's Commissioner for Human Rights, as you may see in the photo taken from a presentation his office did, few years ago. And the same applies for EU, as realized when visiting the related landing page (Sustainable Development Goals - European Commission (europa.eu).
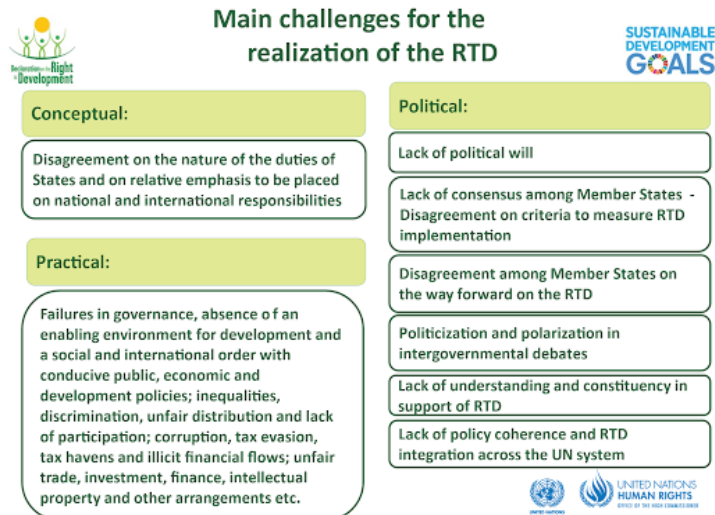
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Inclusive Data gathering and management.

With an enormous evolution taking place in the technological sector, data acquirement and evaluation has become more important than ever, especially in conjunction with the adoption and integration of AI systems. Public and private bodies, of any given industry, are looking into AI to offer them solutions, where humanity couldn't, e.g. Meta Introducing a More Inclusive Dataset to Measure Fairness | Meta (fb.com). But, even in such cases, what AI lacks as input are datasets that can reflect on humanity's various attributes, especially when it comes down to the line of allowing people to self-id. The problem has been around for years, especially in the statistics science, where surveys were developed depending on each research's desired content, rather than to capture diversity in general. To this extend various example are speaking for themselves:

• 'Data world' (https://data.world/datasets/diversity): offers 36 different kinds of surveys to evaluate diversity both in the public

and private sectors.
• 'Meta' offers a data maturity evaluation (Data Maturity Assessment - data.org), yet again it doesn't identify what an inclusive dataset should look like, or what should be its key functions.
• In 'Borealis' example (Equality, Diversity, and Inclusion Review Datasets - UVic Research Data Collection (borealisdata.ca)), various sources have been evaluated to identify common diversity metrics in place, but again each source has partially used what referred according to their needs.
• In the 'World Benchmarking Alliance' example of the 2023 Digital Inclusion Benchmark dataset, released in March 2023 (https://www.worldbenchmarkingalliance.org/research/2023-digital-inclusion-benchmark-data-set/) four categories of digital maturity have been identified (access, use, skills, innovation), but these are in no way related to cultural aspects of the individuals questioned.

In the case of the 'Inclusive Data Taskforce recommendations report: Leaving no one behind – How can we be more inclusive in our data?' by UK's Statistics Authority, published in December 2022 (https://uksa.statisticsauthority.gov.uk/publication/inclusive-data-taskforce-recommendations-report-leaving-no-one-behind-how-can-we-be-more-inclusive-in-our-data/pages/7/) point 2 highlights the need for collaboration to develop inclusive datasets, and point 3 underscores the fact that UK needs to '*Ensure that all groups are robustly captured across key areas of life in UK data and review practices regularly.*'

How to build inclusive datasets, the case of Diversity Atlas

When we are discussing Diversity, we are discussing a person's capacity to identify themselves in a way that allows them to maintain their psychological resilience (the capacity of an individual to bounce back from an extended period of crisis and reactivate in the socioeconomic living). Likewise, when we are trying to identify the bottom line of Diversity, we are discussing cultural traits being applied in day-to-day living.

Thus, even to begin with, we need to realize that what is important to one might not be equally important to another. And this differentiation is based on the individuals self-id, using a combination of thousands of cultural traits (e.g., one might have been influenced by the culture of a country they only recently moved in, in comparison with another who may think their religion as the most important aspect of culture that helps them self-id).

The case of Diversity Atlas

A Best Practice adopted in the EU (June 2022, Brainstorming Report '(Re)-Engaging Digital Audiences – Improving Audience Data' - Voices of Culture) concerns the usage of Diversity Atlas as the most inclusive and comprehensive platform on Cultural Diversity, which at the moment is the only one concentrating numerous cultural touchpoints, and the biggest ever dataset on seven axes developed as seen in the following picture. Can you imagine 11.200 languages and dialects spoken in the world gathered in a single list, accessible to anyone taking the Diversity Atlas survey.
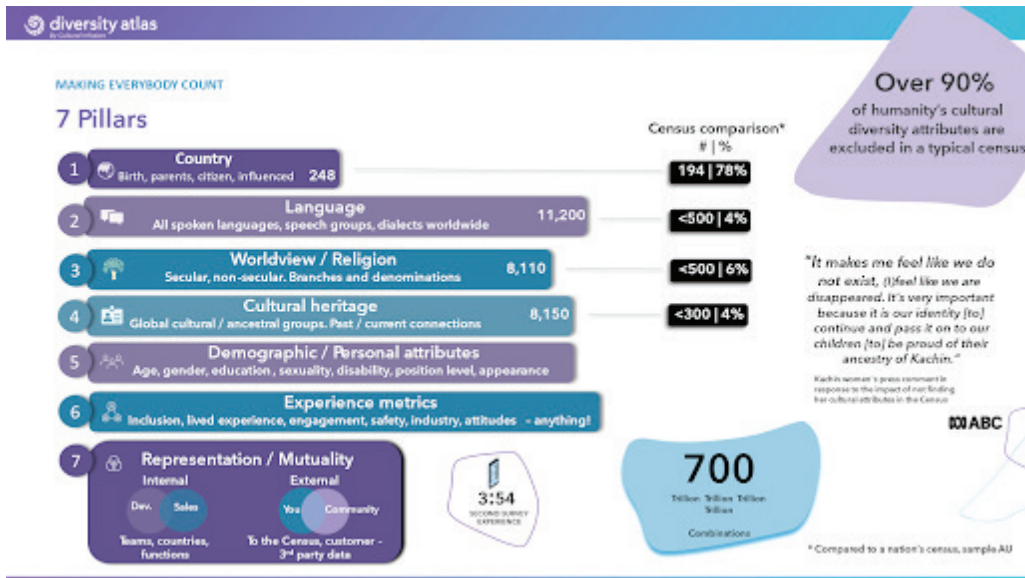
Image provided by Cultural Infusion©, all rights reserved by Diversity Atlas©. The image displays the database built after seven years of R&D and its infinite datasets, divided on seven major axes.

Conclusion

Diversity Atlas is the only Software as a Service (SaaS) in the global market, which have inspired both public and private bodies to take a step back and evaluate how inclusive their organizations are. Just to name the most recent example, in November 2023, Amazon Web Services released their Inclusion Playbook with the following statement by its Director and Global Head of Inclusion, Diversity and Equity, LaDavia S. Drane, after using Diversity Atlas as their first step into developing Inclusion, Diversity & Equity (IDE) strategies, where no one is left behind. Image provided by Cultural Infusion©, all rights reserved by Diversity Atlas© and AWS©.

With six years left for the globe to adjust and fulfil the SDGs, countries and the EU at large don't need to re-invent the wheel, but rather use SDG No17 about collaborating to reach the goals and lean into partnering with organisations that have the know-how and are thought leaders in DEI data management, to better develop their strategies. Furthermore, once an inclusive dataset is acquired by the EU, policies such as the Diversity Chapters, The European Diversity Capital initiative, and related policies, can be re-evaluated based on inclusivity without exemptions. Under the same mentality private bodies of any given sector need to evaluate their datasets inclusivity rankings and continue developing them or use Diversity Atlas as their first step towards developing a more inclusive, equitable and diversified task forces, achieving mutuality between their task force and the communities they are serving with their products and services.

Diversity Atlas's CEO and founder, Peter Mousaferiadis, being interviewed by LaDavia S. Drane, AWS Director and Global Head of Inclusion, Diversity and Equity at AWS's 2023 event in Las Vegas, about the importance of using inclusive datasets.

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