12th World Telecommunication/ICT Indicators Symposium (WTIS-14)

Tbilisi, Georgia, 24-26 November 2014

Keynote address

SOURCE:	Statistician-General, South Africa
TITLE:	Keynote: The tetralemma of statistics, communications technology and power: Challenges of the Post 2015 Agenda

The tetralemma of statistics, communications technology and power: Challenges of the Post 2015 Agenda.

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The metaphor of Arsukides chisel-holding-right-hand at the Svetitskhoveli Basilica in Mtskheta reflects the tetralemma of showing or talking truth to power. At times they may not like it.

Throughout life not once has the tetralemma of statistics, communication technology and power threatens the foundations of society like they do in an information society.

I am greatly honoured to be invited to address you at the gathering of the International Telecommunication Union (ITU). This is especially so for me who is not a specialist on communications technology. My area of work is one of measurement; namely collecting the facts about phenomena and reporting on such observations through the lens of numbers. I feel the welcoming warmth of the City of Tbilisi as if the legendary King Vakhtang I Gorgasali has delegated his son King Dachi I Ujarmeli to receive me in this city drumming with history and influence since time immemorial. King Tamar stands as the symbol of how deep gender equality was understood in Georgia and gender activists owe a priceless debt to King George and his daughter King (Queen) Tamar as founders of gender equality. They are worth canonising for their farsighted leadership in driving the gender sensitised meritocracy agenda. One other monarch to recognise this is King Moshoeshoe, the founder of the Basotho nation. If he had his way his daughter Senate would have been king but his desires could not pass the patriarchal advisory council.   The path to social, economic and political justice is paved with many such obstructive advisory types of council.   Even the legacy of King George of gender equality could not be sustained. These obstructions frame my response to this report on Measuring the Information society 2014.   I have thus framed my response "The tetralemma of statistics, communications technology and power: Challenges of the Post-2015 Agenda."

It gives me even greater pleasure to address an organization that is almost 150 years, the ITU itself having been established in 1865. Its Siamese twin, the International Statistics Institute (ISI) to which I belong had a delayed birth. Born twenty years later in 1885 it has however proven to mature much faster with fifty nine World Congresses under its belt since its birth compared to 12 of WTIS. Very few associations have had the resilience to survive this long as they speak and communicate truth to power. My rendition is about the tetralemma of the triumvirate of statistics, communication technology and power. I have framed the tetralemma

through the metaphor of the sculpture of Arsukides chisel holding hand engraved at the Svetitskhoveli Basilica in Mtskheta.

Legend has it that Arsukides' scientific architectural designs at Svetitskhoveli Basilica in Mtskheta won him wrath at the highest level. It cost him his right hand. The sculpture of his chisel holding hand is a reminder of how his unprecedented artistic and scientific architectural design and construction is said to have challenged the power of his patron and teacher who influenced King George to have his right hand chopped. The external northern wall has an inscription that reads "the hand of Arsukidze, slave of God, may forgiveness be his." To the east another inscription reads "this holy church was built by the hand of Thy wretched servant, Arsukides. May your soul rest in peace, O master. Galileo Galilee in his grave knows the consequences of speaking truth to power. It cost him his life. The dynamic and consequences of results of scientific enquiry, the communication thereof to power, their appropriation and deployment by communities of practice reflect the struggle of society as it changes its production relations, the structure of its productive forces and how it gives rise to a new socio-economic and political form.

The tetralemma of statistics, communication technology and power is brought about by the irresistible affinity of living organisms to be prey to conflict of interest. Napoleon the Bonaparte was said to be a keen user of statistics as a management tool. Laplace, the prime mover of Bayesian theory lived in Napoleon's palace. But then Napoleon used statistics by and large as an exclusive weapon for leadership rather than a public good. The dilemma then was whether the plebiscite had a say in their own affairs or they relied and depended on benevolent dictatorship. Napoleon through the revolution introduced a more warrior like France and led to French demise spurred by the failed invasion of Russia. However on the positive side Napoleon managed to abolish serfdom and slavery and introduced the metric system that has made our measurement so efficient today.

The height of the crisis of the tetralemma of statistics, communication technology and power displays itself in the twentieth and twenty first century through the crash of the stock exchange and war. The two World Wars and the Cold War just marked the extent to which temporally and spatially: statistics, information technology, resource and power asymmetries are capable of plunging the world into a crisis. The dotcom bubble was just a feature of how communications technology generated an exaggerated view of itself, an aspect of the tetralemma. The more recent 2008 financial crisis that led the economy of the world to an abyss, just demonstrated how vulnerable the interconnected world can be and that the obfuscation of statistics driven by corporate greed largely in the United States and Europe collapsed the world. The lack of harmony in statistics, communication technology and power in the modern world is what undermines an information society. The so called Arab spring was characterised by a heightened disjuncture and tetralemma across the centrifugal forces of statistics, information technology and power.

The Measuring the Information Society Report by itself mirrors these social struggles and gives a spatial and temporal narrative of their theatrics. The report problematizes the characteristics of an information society by providing the schematic contours country by country and region by region. In its detail the report subtly frames the fundamental postulate of the emergent and yet metamorphosing political economy of an information society. It silently poses profound questions of why societies and communities differ in value creation and value appropriation of information technology. It presents vital statistics of who are going to be heirs to information technology as well as who are emerging as harmonious information societies, and by the same token reflects the flipside of who are representing a deformed strata of information society. It lays bare the facts about uneven development and podcasts these phenomena unambiguously to power and for power to know. It thus brings out the skeleton of this tetralemma of statistics, communications technology and power out of its comfortable place. The report causes society to engage in uncomfortable and disruptive discussions and questioning. This is so especially in the light of socially desirable *utopia* promise propounded by the Secretary General of the United Nations of living no one behind; putting sustainable development at the core; growing economies for jobs and creating just and accountable societies. These desirable states espoused by the Secretary General of the United Nations of the Post 2015 agenda drives the tetralemma of statistics, communications technology and power for which the report is the gunpowder. The report propels Data Revolution to take centre stage of an information society.

The report points to Denmark as a country that has appropriated the virtues of information and communication technology the most. In fact six Scandinavian countries feature in the top ten on IDI use. This prominent Scandinavian record however compares less favourably when we consider ICT Development Index (IDI) skills sub-index where only two of the Scandinavian countries feature in the top ten and Denmark coming in at position twelve. In this regard the report points to Greece in the first slot of skills sub-index. It is difficult to absorb this fact given the economy and social strife in Greece, but therein another PIGS country ranks high, Spain comes up ninth ahead of Iceland the second only Scandinavian country to Finland in this aspect of the measurement.

Another source of information complementing this report is the Human Development Index (HDI) of the United Nations Development Programme. Quoting Confucius the report says "In a country well governed, poverty is something to be ashamed of. In a country badly governed, wealth is something to be ashamed of."

This quotation provides the synthesis of these two reports. In the HDI, the Scandinavian countries are doing very well and the only feature letting them down is that their Gross National Income (GNI) per capita is moderate, except Norway probably spurred by oil incomes. The Republic of Korea featuring as second on the IDI also has a modest GNI per capita.

Taken as a group, the Scandinavian countries have displayed a long history of strong values of social democracy and human solidarity with sustained underlying statistics, technology and accountability based systems of power. Their common thread with Korea is one of a developmental state and Korea's variant arises out of a bitter struggle of just above half a century ago. The solidarity of Korea and its pride of defeating adversity in just half a century and advancing the notion of development partnership remains the most recent beacon of hope that an information society is possible as witnessed in the long established tradition by Scandinavian countries.

It is possible that the tetralemma of statistics, communication technology and power can be tamed and an information society where the need to and the ability of knowing remain an unmitigated default position delivering statistics through communication technology and power shared leadership. The tetralemma of statistics, communication technology and power can and should be solved. A society where human solidarity and sustained development is statistics based, communications technology driven and power sharing led is within our reach. It is a society where Arsukides should have been rewarded for building a magnificent Svetitskhoveli Basilica in Mtskheta instead of his hand being chopped off based on superstition, jealousy, lies and ignorance. Galileo Galilee would have been a laureate for his scientific discovery of the sun being the centre of the universe instead of being guillotined for blasphemy against God. King George and King Moshoeshoe would not have to be disturbed in their eternal sleep in the knowledge that they ushered to the world a meritorious society devoid of gender discrimination.

Measuring the Information Society Report 2014 provides the crucial jewels of knowledge and understanding of the fundamental principles that give birth and meaning to an information society. Where it works, how it works and why it works. It is for society to read the report and find out so that sustainable livelihoods can be successfully led and the promise of the post-2015 agenda of sustainable development delivered.

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