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Guest Editorial: Thematic Section: Informatics for Development

Pillay, Kiru

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LINK Centre, University of the Witwatersrand (Wits)
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THEMATIC SECTION: GUEST EDITORIAL: INFORMATICS FOR DEVELOPMENT

Kiru Pillay
Senior Researcher, Council for Scientific and Industrial Research (CSIR) and Visiting Researcher, LINK Centre, University of the Witwatersrand, Johannesburg, South Africa

Informatics is a diverse field of study, with a focus on the transformation of information and, specifically, on how information is processed and communicated. The domain of informatics for development revolves mainly around the role of ICTs for "sustainable socio-economic development". It also analyses and reflects on the contribution of ICTs to public services and in the broader public sector.

The role of development informatics will become increasingly more strategic in light of the United Nations' recently released set of Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). These seventeen SDGs replace the UN's 2001 Millennium Development Goals (MDGs), which expire at the end of 2015. The SDGs are a reworked set of global targets, agreed upon by 193 UN member states. Each country will face specific challenges in pursuit of this sustainable development agenda and the SDGs will be used to frame each country's development policies over the next 15 years. Sustainable development goals for areas like health and education will require innovative, well-researched and bold policy interventions. Much of what may be achievable will need to be framed by a research agenda that supports these policy initiatives.

While there may be some dissenting voices around the SDGs, with some commentators arguing that the large number of goals will make it unwieldy and may diffuse effort, there is, however, no doubt concerning the vital role that ICTs will have to play if there is to be any meaningful attempt at achieving these goals. ICTs offer a set of enabling tools and services for development and are explicitly mentioned in the sustainable development agenda. ICTs are transformational technologies and enable the Schumpeterian view of "leapfrogging", thus allowing all countries to close many technology gaps. Closing technology and development gaps is vital if countries, especially developing countries, are to make any significant impact on their developmental targets.

Reflecting briefly on the articles included in this edition, it is evident that in line with the diverse research focus of the informatics for development research domain, the submissions received similarly spanned a wide range of topics, including the role of Twitter in predicting stock exchange movement, an analysis of ERP systems, Internet of Things and cyberbullying. A post-2015 research agenda will have an enormous impact on the success of any sustainable development agenda and the academic study of development informatics must pay close attention to this new developmental impetus. Good development research should be structured around a conceptual framework or model and it must ensure that it rigorously applies appropriate research methods.