

expanding digital opportunity in Canada?...

theme IV findings & policy implications

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the backdrop?

Post-industrial economic advantage in knowledge-intensive sectors requires the capacity to develop and apply digital technologies, and tends to concentrate in large, economically secure urban regions with abundant employment opportunities.

As the 'digitization of everything' accelerates, we know much less about how the implications for those less well positioned to benefit. Digital innovation could deepen, perpetuate, and entrench existing socio-economic, socio-technical, and socio-spatial divides.

Creating digital opportunity also necessitates **expanding** digital opportunity to people and places – and to people *in* places - on the 'wrong side of the digital divide'

theme IV: common questions

- 1. How can we best describe Canada's digital divide(s)?**
- 2. What challenges & opportunities emerge in your research?**
- 3. What policy & program areas have the potential to expand digital opportunity to more people & places?**

5 projects

Project	Researchers	Upshot?
“Digital Underdogs: Economic Opportunity and the ‘Ordinary’ City	Allison Bramwell	‘Ordinary’ cities have weak local policy capacity for digital economy transformation; in danger of hollowing out
“Ride-Hailing: Economic Geography & Canada’s Opportunity”	Shauna Brail	Rise of ride-hailing coincides with decline of auto manufacturing in southern Ontario & advantages Toronto, Waterloo, Montreal
“Creating Digital Opportunity: Digital Ride-Hailing in Canada”	Betsy Donald	Municipalities not capable of regulating ride-hailing; Canada’s losing opportunity from data
“Rural & Remote Regions on the Wrong Side of the Dig Divide?”	Ken Coates	Lack of local capacity & weak infrastructure make digital disruptions acute in these places
“Smart Cities”	Nicole Goodman & Zac Spicer	Disconnect between local governments & citizens in ‘smart city’ strategies and service delivery; need to connect the under-connected

“This could well be the unwelcome hallmark of the digital revolution.”

- **Is there a digital divide in Canada?** The answer is clearly **yes**.
- **How are the benefits and opportunities shared?** At present, the sharing is decidedly **uneven**.
- **Is there a Canadian model for digitally-enabled communities, of all sizes?** The answer, at present, is **no**.
- **Can CDO play a significant role in educating Canadians about the national benefits of technological change?** At present, the high-tech sector is seen as an urban phenomenon, largely tied to a **few cities** (Toronto, Vancouver and Montreal).
- **Is more to be learned from comparative research?** **Canada lags well behind** competitive nations in East Asia and Europe in many regards.

cross-cutting question = local capacity

The negative implications of technological innovation are highly localized so...what can **plausibly be done at the urban scale to filter, mitigate, and adapt to digital economy pressures in the places we are studying?**

key takeaways?

“Much digital opportunity is powerfully shaped by factors beyond local control such as city size, industrial specialization, and geographic location.”

“Weak local capacity intersects with public policy gaps to compromise the expansion of socio-technical and socio-spatial digital opportunity in Canadian cities.”

key policy areas that could promote digital inclusion?

- education & workforce development
- national standards for digital infrastructure
- investment in digital infrastructure for rural & remote communities
- context-sensitive policies that build capacity for people & place on the 'wrong side of the digital divide'



BUT HOW?

deja-vu all over again?

- “How should governments support local conditions necessary for digital success?” *for people & places on the wrong side of the digital divide*
- “How to mobilize local actors to create the necessary conditions?” *to survive as the digital tsunami accelerates...*

- Tara Vinodrai & Tijs Creutzberg (Theme II)

