
Governance and Civic Participation

Moderator: Anastasia Kalinina, Co-Founder and Chief Executive Office, reState Foundation

Civic participation enhances the effectiveness of governance and serves as a core foundation to building people-centered regulations and data management. It enhances the prospects of building consensus on key policies, leading to more effective policy implementation and strengthening the relationship between citizens and government. Participation fosters accountability of policy makers, leading to better governance and thus better policies responding to people's needs and demands. The panel session featured practitioners from multilateral banks, regional organizations, cooperatives, and civic organizations. They discussed ways in which citizen participation can help shape regional tech governance and people-centered digital regulations.

The initial event on this topic took place as part of the event of the UN Science Summit Sessions on “Key Challenges and Objectives for Digital Cooperation, Governance and Regulation” ([Link to recording](#)). The 9th edition of the Science Summit around the 78th United Nations General Assembly (SSUNGA78) took place from 12-29 September 2023. The People Centered Internet (PCI) organized nine sessions in conjunction with the International Science Council from Sept 20-22 to discuss the future of digital in achieving the SDGs. The sessions took a people centered approach; this means to discuss how scientific and digital collaboration can only be advanced through human feedback loops. The People Centered Internet sessions explored the parameters of this approach focusing on specific use cases where this is needed to achieve the SDGs and discussing the recommended enabling policy, regulatory, and financial environments, that are required to support genuinely global scientific collaborations across continents, nations, and themes. Speakers from each panel summarized the most important results in a stocktaking ([Link](#)).

Speakers

- Liz Barry, Chief Operating Officer, The Computational Democracy Project
- Alexandr Holt, Head of Emerging Opportunities, Digital Directorate – Scottish Government
- Astrid Scholz, Managing Partner, Armillaria, Co-Founder, Zebras Unite
- Elaine Wang, Co-founder and Chief Executive Officer, Metropolis Global

Summary of Governance and Civic Participation

Prepared by Anastasia Kalinina, Co-Founder and Chief Executive Office, reState Foundation

reState Foundation Highlights Key Takeaways from UN General Assembly Science Summit Panel on Governance and Civic Participation

The 9th edition of the Science Summit around the 78th United Nations General Assembly (UNGA78) took place from 12-29 September 2023. In collaboration with the People Centered Internet, reState Foundation has organized three sessions in conjunction with the International Science Council from Sept 20-22 to discuss the future of digital in achieving the SDGs. The sessions took a people centered approach; the discussions revolved around how scientific and digital collaboration can only be advanced through human feedback loops. The People Centered Internet sessions in collaboration with reState Foundation explored the parameters of this approach focusing on specific use cases where this is needed to achieve the SDGs and discussing the recommended enabling policy, regulatory, and financial environments that are required to support genuinely global scientific collaborations across continents, nations, and themes.

During a panel titled "Governance and Civic Participation", participants discussed participation as an essential pillar of modern governance, underpinning effective policy formulation and implementation. It strengthens the bond between citizens and their governments, fosters accountability among policymakers, and ultimately leads to the development of policies that are more responsive to the needs and aspirations of the people. This panel brought together experts from diverse fields to discuss the pivotal role of citizen participation in shaping people-centered digital regulations and governance.

Moderated by Anastasia Kalinina, Co-Founder and CEO of reState, the panel featured an esteemed lineup of speakers:

- **Liz Barry**, Chief Operating Officer of The Computational Democracy Project, emphasized that technology can empower citizens to set agendas independently, reducing dependence on politicians or lobbyists. Open-source technology emerged as a crucial enabler of transparent governance. She noted, "Open source enables meaningful oversight and ensures that every investment makes the system better for everyone in perpetuity."
- **Alexander Holt**, Head of Emerging Opportunities at the Digital Directorate - Scottish Government, showcased how Scotland's compact size provides an ideal testing ground for pioneering governance approaches. Scotland's commitment to citizen-centric policymaking was a standout feature. He stated, "Scotland's approach is about being digitally-minded, with users at the heart of what we do."
- **Astrid Scholz**, Managing Partner at Armillaria & co-Founder of Zebras Unite Co-op, highlighted the need for technology rooted in civic principles. She questioned the prevailing financing models that prioritize unicorn startups over cooperative ones. Her call for "different financing mechanisms that enable a much broader base of technological innovation" addresses the challenges of resource allocation.
- **Elaine Wang**, Co-founder and CEO of Metropolis Global, shared the groundbreaking digital residency program in Palau. Despite its small size, Palau leverages its sovereignty to engage a global digital resident community through a digital ID program while ensuring an opt-out option

for those who prefer not to participate. By doing so Palau showcases an example for global nations that “the government has to stay competitive to keep their residents engaged.”

The panel discussion revealed that civic participation is the cornerstone of robust governance. Open-source technology, digital residency initiatives, and cooperative models are among the tools reshaping the landscape of governance to be more inclusive, transparent, and responsive to citizen needs.

Key Takeaways:

- Civic participation stands as the bedrock of robust governance, as highlighted by Liz Barry's insights, underscoring the power of direct citizen involvement in decision-making.
- The ascent of open-source technology signifies a formidable asset for transparency and accountability within governance.
- The innovative technology Pol.is emerges as a game-changer, facilitating coherent deliberation at scale, enabling citizens to express their perspectives, and fostering respectful discourse among diverse viewpoints. Several nations have harnessed Pol.is to navigate intricate issues and propose alternative decisions to their elected representatives.
- The significance of financing models that champion civic-minded technology ventures cannot be overstated.
- Palau's digital residency program serves as a compelling illustration of how diminutive nations can leverage technology to engage with global communities, exemplifying governance's adaptability in the digital era.

The "Governance and Civic Participation" panel illuminated a path toward governance and digital regulations that genuinely prioritize the interests of the people. As we navigate the intricate terrain of contemporary governance, it is imperative to recognize that the power to shape our future belongs to every citizen. By nurturing a culture of active participation and harnessing the potential of technology, we can envision a world where governance aligns seamlessly with the diverse aspirations of humanity.