



CYFY 2019: THE CONFERENCE ON TECHNOLOGY, SECURITY AND SOCIETY

Greetings from ORF!

We are delighted to announce the ninth edition of CyFy, India's flagship conference on technology, security and society. CyFy 2019 will take place in New Delhi between October 14 - 16, 2019 at the Taj Man Singh Hotel.

The pillars for CyFy India, based on which the conference will be designed, are:

1) Policy by design

The notion that technology can eliminate biases or exclusionary tendencies prevalent in society has few takers today. Does the deterioration of public faith in digital platforms have to do with technology, or the way in which big companies have deployed them? The antidote to this crisis — developing "sound" technology policies — is itself a work in progress. Given that policies too are subject to capture by various constituencies, how can their design be improved? Most importantly, can policymaking ever be agile enough to keep up with new technologies, and regulate their launch at scale?

2) We, the Regulators

Techno-skepticism has led to an abundance of regulation, but rules to manage the digital economy — across political systems — have often been blunt and invasive. Users and consumers of new technologies have become trapped in a vicious cycle of regulation and de-regulation, with legislators and technology platforms speaking directly and exclusively to each other. How can individuals retain agency over "their" internet: social preferences, economic behaviour, creation of knowledge, and consumption of information? Can the user even aspire to take back control of digital platforms, in an age when Big Tech has become extraordinary powerful, and Big Government is seeking to make a comeback?

3) Deciding Life

The internet was founded on the basic premise of facilitating faster communication and freer exchange of ideas among researchers, and it has come a long way since its creation. But the internet of today resembles more a marketplace than the traditional Greek *agora*. Curiously, that marketplace does not resemble the ideal posited by the Washington Consensus, although the broad basing of digital technologies was a phenomenon that accompanied the end of the Cold War. The ever-accelerating adoption of digital platforms have not led to open societies or open markets, although they have certainly intensified social and economic activity. What explains this puzzling paradox, and what does it mean for human activity that the ideals of the real and the virtual worlds no longer converge?

4) Reactionary Regimes

Technology has always been mediated by the rough and tumble of geopolitics. But in an interdependent world, it is increasingly clear that conversations on technology will spill over to



domains that were once considered the remit of “traditional” rule-making: trade, human rights, and the environment. Not only would such a development complicate efforts by governments to craft a predictable suite of regulations to absorb and manage emerging technologies, but also draw in a raft of interlocutors beyond Silicon Valley CEOs, diplomats or civil society activists well-versed in their semiotics. What does the retro-fitting of technology into 20th century multilateral architecture mean for global governance as a whole?

5) **Managed Democracies**

The role digital platforms played in the 2016 US presidential elections lent the problem of their potential manipulation of democratic processes global attention. Three years hence, governments and societies are waking up to the reality that new technologies can have less apparent and more insidious effects on democracies that go beyond swinging electoral outcomes. The problem is compounded by difficulties in measuring, qualitatively or quantitatively, the effect of influence operations or disinformation campaigns on such processes, or more broadly, on public trust in them. What role will technology play in redefining that foundational social contract between citizen and state - one of representation, and the exercise or validation of political choice?

6) **The Digital Blue**

The personal is the political, but the personal has also become hyper-local. Digital platforms have unleashed a wave of creative content generation in local languages, cultures and contexts. It has heralded, among other things, the “golden age” of TV shows for a generation of viewers who will probably never own a television set, forever segregating the medium and the message. Even as big studios in Los Angeles and Mumbai debate the future of movie-making and movie-going, audiences across the world are beginning to re-wire their thinking about entertainment, what constitutes acceptable content, and what it means to consume it in intensely private settings. Can truly secular, global trends emerge from this moment, or will a million models of entertainment bloom?