



Digital-Environment System Coalition (DESC)

<https://ict4d.org.uk/desc/>
<http://desc.global>

Meeting 2 Notes

6th August 2021, 11.00-13.00 BST (GMT+1 hr) (in red)
and 18th August 2021, 14.00-16.00 BST (GMT+1 (in purple)
(Held in two sessions to maximise participation)

(Items in green for discussion; in blue mainly for information)

Present:

6th August

Andrew Benson Greene, Claudia Pagliari, Dayn Amade, Emanuele Giovannetti, Hari G. Harindranath, Irene Antonopoulos, Isabella Wagner, Karl Erik Skouby, Leon Gwaka, Max Hamilton, Paul Spiesberger, Tim Unwin,

18th August

Andrew Benson Greene, Carlos Álvarez Pereira, Claudia Pagliari, Dayn Amade, Emmanuel (Boying) Lallana, James Crabbe, Maja van der Velden, Michael Oghia, Onyema Nduka, Roger Harris, Serge Stinckwich

Apologies for meeting on 18th August (other than those who attended on 6th): Dawn Watling, Jill Marshall, Leandro Navarro, Nigel Jefferies, Ugo Vallauri

1. **Introduction** to main purpose of the meeting (TU) (5 mins)

- Approving working group papers
- Introduction to Youth DESC
- Logos
- Membership
- Partnerships
- Actions moving forward
- Requests of members

2. **Working Group Papers** (TU) (30mins)

- Internal Communications (attached DESC 2-2021-1)
 - Comments and suggestions
 - Approval **The strategy and implementation to date was approved**

- It was **agreed** that we need to identify someone with the appropriate skills to take forward work on the database of resources.
 - Now need to take forward development of external communications strategy
- **Approved**
- Governance (attached DESC 2-2021-2)
 - Comments and suggestions
 - An overview of the governance structure was presented
 - The need for flexibility was emphasised, recognising that the governance structure will evolve as the coalition develops
 - Clarity was requested with respect to distinction between Associate Members and Members
 - This is essentially a flexible matter of time commitment and level of engagement. Associate Membership was introduced for those who did not feel able to commit time, but wanted to be involved in some way
 - Approval. The proposed governance structure was **unanimously approved**
 - **Approved**
- Ethics (attached DESC 2-2021-3)
 - Comments and suggestions
 - The Working Group was thanked for their work, especially IW for graphics.
 - These are good starting points, but they only make sense if we live them and put them to life.
 - We could reiterate them at every main meeting of DESC as a reminder
 - They can be improved as we progress.
 - Should include something on conflicts of interest and transparency.
 - i. It was noted that these are in our partnership document – but not specifically for personal membership
 - ii. **The following should be added to Section 6 (or 5): “members should share details of any potential conflicts of interest with the Secretariat”.** Something could also be added to the Governance structure.
 - iii. For transparency details of all members and associate members are included on the list of members on our site
 - It was noted that there are bound to be different interests within DESC, and that we accept these. DESC is about bringing people together from different backgrounds to tackle challenging problems.
 - This may be an issue if many industry groups join, but it must be emphasised that DESC welcomes industry

- Importance of transparency - having details of employment on members list and conflicts of interest will be visible there.
- Approval The Ethical Guidance Framework was **unanimously approved** subject to addition of clause on conflicts of interest (this will be shared with partners).
- **Approval**
 - Suggestion that we could reiterate the graphics at beginning of meetings.
 - Thanks to IW
- Can now be published on our site
- We need actions not just nice words; creating a safe space embodying our intentions.

3. Introduction to YouthDESC (MH) (10mins)

MH introduced YouthDESC (e-mail: youth@desc.global) focusing on three main issues

- Rationale for YouthDESC: designed to engage youth (mainly aged 17-25 but within UN definition of ≤ 35) in DESC's activities both in providing input and ideas into our work, and also disseminating key messages. It will function in a bottom-up way as one of the Groups within DESC. An agile-log-frame approach has been adopted.
- Steering Group: A Steering Group of c. 8-10 people is in the process of being put together, with an emphasis on ensuring diversity, especially in terms of gender and regional context.
- Action: An Instagram presence (@youthDESC) has been established and will go live within 10 days. Other activities are planned.
- Comments:
 - How do we differentiate what goes on social media – so we use it appropriately? Response: the focus is using social media to communicate what YouthDESC is doing (alongside DESC's main ideas), and all social media will go through a filter (initially MH).
 - Representation from Africa? LG offered to reach out - MH and LG to follow up
 - We should spread information about YouthDESC to our students.
 - Interesting idea in trying to combine "Agile" principles with the log-frame approach
 - MH follow up with IW
 - Clarification was sought on criteria for membership:
 - MH – Steering Group – 8-10 members
 - And young people involved through social media but not as members
- TU summarised the above discussion from the previous session on behalf of MH.
- Comments from Members:
 - There were sensitivities at previous meeting, especially about need to be cautious about data issues – having someone level-headed and accurate overseeing is important.
 - Experience making TikTok videos with multicultural youth (MvdV) – workshops on how to repair and the youth then making TikTok

videos on how to repair digital things. YouthDESC could develop similar things in the future using Oslo experience as guidance.

- Could be a means of creating a global community of young people who could be consulted and through whom we could disseminate key messages. Young people are meant to be environmentally friendly, yet they are also voracious users of social media which could potentially create environmental catastrophe. We might encourage young people to rethink how they engage with the digital age – minimising their carbon footprint.
- Youth energy and perspectives are unique and vital. We should have a youth voice – and interactions that go on behind the scenes; interacting without finding themselves jumping in and making unhelpful comments. We should have youth discussions – a discussion board to act freely in (ABG to advise on appropriate apps). Across the board, there are youth sectors – this is not new – for us to move forward there need to be additional guidelines helping young people participate. Inspiring younger generation to be more aware of environmental impact of digital.
- Need to bring in a safe space – more people representing youth – especially from non-western parts of the world.
- It was emphasised that YouthDESC is an entity within DESC and so must follow overall DESC governance framework and ethical guidelines (no need to develop their own).
- Representation from Africa – SS is happy to disseminate to African students, especially in Cameroon.
- Most young people in Africa are using WhatsApp not Instagram – so we should think of how best to use that. WhatsApp is easier to access economically – could use WhatsApp for meetings – need to find resources for financing YouthDESC.
- Need to permit asynchronous interaction – offline platform where we can go to the communities – and eventually share it online.

4. Initial logos (TU) (5 mins)

- Requesting approval for the following provisional logos
 - **Unanimously approved as starting point** – these should be used for the moment.
 - **Approved**



- Suggestions for development of a permanent logo
 - External Communications WG will take this forward
 - Would be helpful to have environment and divgital

5. **Membership update** (TU) (2 mins)

- 24 Members
- 7 Associate Members
 - All are encouraged to invite appropriate membership (suggestion: 3 new members each by the end of 2021)
 - Noted

6. **Partnership update** (TU) (2 mins)

- One confirmed partner (ICT4D.at), one partnership discussion ongoing (Tablet Comunitário – Mozambique and South Africa)
 - New Partners include
 - Tablet Comunitario – AV interactive infrastructure for remote places (<https://tabletcomunitario.org/mz/>)
 - Wireless World Research Forum (WWRF <https://wwrf.ch/>)
 - Suggestions for other partners
 - JC: Islamic World Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization ICESCO – very good and impressive. Is concerned with education, science, culture and communication in Islamic countries in order to support and strengthen relations among Member States. The Organization's headquarters is located in Rabat, Morocco. and its Director General is Dr. Salim M. AlMalik.
 - SS – possibly UNU-Macau
 - ABG: Leveraging partnership – World Innovation Summit on Education Qatar (TU – also Dubai World Government Summit). National bodies could also be useful.

7. **Creation of Steering Group**

- Para 7.2 of proposed governance structure
 - The Steering Group consists of 8-12 Members and Partners, the latter of which should comprise no more than half of its membership.
 - Working Group Chairs (or Secretaries) are invited to be members of the Steering Group, and an election will be held should the number wishing to be part of the Steering Group exceed the number of places available.
- Proposal for nominations by 31 August 2021 to the Secretariat (elections if more than 6 nominations, to permit additional people to be added subsequently as new Working Groups are established)
 - Role of Steering Group is to lead DESC on behalf of its Members, Associate Members and Partners and take action on any key issues that arise between formal meetings
 - After discussion about alternative models for election, it was agreed that this should be by self-nomination by 31 August 2021, and if necessary that elections should be held.

- The Steering Group and Secretariat will develop the remit and procedures which will be revised after period of time – recognising that our processes are emergent
- In the first instance membership of Steering Group will be on an annual renewable basis.
- Diversity is very important in terms of governance – not driven by western European researchers and scientists – need more from developing world/south – concerns are very different from those in more developed countries,
- Youth facilitator should also be on overall SG.
- Eventually Working Group chairs could be on overall SG.
- **Approved** nomination by end of month; SG to meet by 15 October if possible.

8. Revised conceptual framework

- It is important that we have a basic conceptual framework to help explain what DESC is about, and to provide the context within which our research, practice and policy influence take place.
- Following DESC's first meeting, revisions were made to an earlier draft conceptual model, and a substantially revised version is presented here (attached DESC 2-2021-4). Approval is sought now to share this more widely through our site and more generally.
 - This was **provisionally approved**, subject to comments by 25th August with aim to publish and broadcast by end of month
 - **Approved with additional comments by 25th August.** Further conceptual comments (some raised in discussion under previous agenda item)
 - Who are the marginalised groups; indigenous peoples, remote isolated communities, they want the benefits before the negative impacts – does this sit within the general theme
 - Need to clarify what we mean by marginalised – and ensure we do this.
 - need to emphasise sustainability – not just environmental - YouthDESC need to understand coming up with balance between benefits of digital and negative impacts – how we optimise – e.g. circular economy.
 - Being aware of the environment, we need to look at quality of digital tech in developing countries. Experience from Schools work with Computer Aid - need to be aware of environmental impact. Also need to look at organisations working with environmental issues on the ground.
 - Should also be working with UN agencies such as ITU
 - Framework could refer to digital platforms as intermediaries – platformisation of everything is happening – could add as a subset under the digital heading.
 - Positive aspects: its systems perspective, and life cycles. But tension between language and perspectives of ICT4D. Governance document talks about different interests (not conflicting) – about focus. Yet, conceptual framework language is not development language. Need to add more

on interests and development perspectives, and ensure it is aligned with governance and ethical guidelines. Ensure we emphasise both the positives and the negatives

- We need to tackle the narrative that carbon off-setting is the answer. It isn't. It's just a strategic hack around the rules and an exercise in ethics washing – and is only available to those who can pay.
- Perhaps the key tension for 'development' has to do with perceived global fairness. If it appears that countries which are already prosperous are unfairly trying to hold less developed countries back, this will fail. Identifying where the mutual value lies will be crucial.
- Importance of being inclusive.
- Every symbol should mean something – what do arrows represent and what are different systems.
- **Approved** – but noting it is dynamic. It could take for ever and we would never agree – happy with how it is and some more nuances from above.

9. **Actions moving forward** (TU) (10 mins)

- The original agreed schedule of actions for DESC was
 - Phase 1 (2021-22) – crafting the coalition
 - Phase 2 (2022) – establishing working groups
 - **Suggested change of terminology: three types of Working Groups (WGs) - Thematic Groups (TGs, to cover such things as research and policy areas), and Administrative Groups (AGs, such as communications and governance)), with YouthDESC as a third distinct category.**
 - Each will be defining what exactly it will be working on within 2022; and a focus also on getting funding for research and other activities).
 - **Emphasis overall on being a membership drive and flexible coalition.**
 - Phase 3 (2023-25) – research and report writing
 - How do we track relevance of our work – how do we measure our work going forward? Importance of having a monitoring and evaluation Working Group (Admin or Policy) for our own work.
- These remain realistic, but the attached discussion paper (DESC 2-2021-5) provides a summary of suggested/possible actions for all Members
 - **Members present agreed the actions in DESC 2-2021-5 as being reasonable (see also further list at end of Minutes)**

Monthly

- Provide one “interesting story” – a URL link will suffice
- Provide one suggested contribution for YouthDESC's Instagram – a URL link will suffice

By 31st December 2021

- Provide material for one resource page on a topic of personal interest within the DESC framework

- Encourage two or three additional Members or Associate Members to join DESC

Periodically

- Use DESC discussion mailing list to explore specific research Working Groups on topics within our framework.
- Share details of potential research funding with Secretariat for wider dissemination within DESC
- Share relevant research publications or DESC-specific presentations for inclusion on DESC website

- **Approve** – but noting a flexible approach to the above
 - It was also emphasised that we should go beyond reports and database to advocate for tangible outcomes (TU emphasised that influencing policy is indeed very high on DESC's agenda)

10. Any other business (10 mins)

- Funding – how are we thinking of involving YouthDESC in research and funding – steering group to consider. MH – would depend on social media spread etc.
- How do we invite people to join the coalition – how do they contact us – suggested either using the UNESCO Chair in ICT4D contact form <https://ict4d.org.uk/contact/> or direct to tim(dot)unwin(at)rhul(dot)ac(dot)uk.

11. Dates of next meeting (to be confirmed subsequently through Doodle poll)

ACTIONS Agreed

- **Secretariat**
 - Circulate Minutes
 - Convene Working Group on external communications
 - Include reiteration of ethics at all main meetings of DESC
 - Add section to Ethical Guidelines on conflicts of interest
 - Ensure documentation is revised to include new terminology, such as WGs, TGs, AGs.
 - Develop an External Communications AG – provisionally to meet first in September
 - Share file for Members with logo on for video-conferencing background.
- **YouthDESC**
 - MH to proceed with Instagram postings
 - MH to develop and implement Steering Group
 - MH and LG to follow up on African membership
 - IW and MH to discuss “agile log-frame” approach
- **All Members**
 - Invite new Members to join DESC (**3 each by end of 2021**)

- Share information about YouthDESC with their networks, and especially (for those in universities) with their students.
- Consider self-nomination for Steering Group by **31 August 2021**
- Contribute to mailing list discussions desc-discussion@mylist.upc.edu
- Respond with any comments on DESC conceptual framework by **25 August 2021**)
- Contact Secretariat if interested in joining External Comms AG
- Contact Secretariat with suggestions for best bibliographical database to use for our site – preferably a WordPress plug-in – suggestions include ZotPress/Zotero or Mendeley.
- Reflect on whether we should start planning for a conference event in 2022 (with a one year lead in)
- Supporting DESC through the following:

Monthly

- Provide one “interesting story” – a URL link will suffice
- Provide one suggested contribution for YouthDESC’s Instagram – a URL link will suffice

By 31st December 2021

- Provide material for one resource page on a topic of personal interest within the DESC framework
- Encourage two or three additional Members or Associate Members to join DESC

Periodically

- Use DESC discussion mailing list to explore specific research Working Groups on topics within our framework.
- Share details of potential research funding with Secretariat for wider dissemination within DESC
- Share relevant research publications or DESC-specific presentations for inclusion on DESC website

These actions were endorsed by Members present.

- **Individual Members**

- ABG to suggest to MH appropriate apps that could be used for discussion boards.
- IW and MH to discuss “agile log-frame” approach
- JC introduce to ICESCO [TU also to follow up with [Raheel Qamar](#), Director Event-Science]
- LG to follow up with MH on YouthDESC
- MH to follow up re. TikTok (MvdV), apps for discussion board (ABG) and African student membership (SS)
- SS follow up re. UNU Macau partnership with TU, and African student networks with MH
- TU revise conceptual framework (after 25 August), check alignment with Governance structure and ethical guidance, and circulate meeting notes.

12. **Brief Tour de Table** (for those able to stay for introductions)

Colleagues shared information about their ongoing research and interests at the interface between digital technologies and the environment. This information is shared below so that Members are aware of each other's interests, and consider developing collaborative initiatives within the DESC umbrella. Contact details are available through the [members page](#) on our site or messages can be shared through our discussion mailing list desc-discussion@mylist.upc.edu.

Tour de Table (red 6/8/21; purple 18/8/21)

Andrew Benson Greene (Founder and CEO of the [B-Gifted Foundation](#) and [iEARN](#), Sierra Leone, [Fellow Jeanne Sauvé Foundation](#), and Master of Science in Law Candidate specializing in Intellectual Property Law, at the University of Maryland) – we need a clearer view of how we view digital footprints. Talking with colleagues and organizations in Sierra Leone – need for clean power, such as alternative energy and solar, being used for technologies [TU possibly act as field research location] – identifying resources to solve these problems. War was raging when finished undergraduate degree in Sierra Leone – radio was main way of communication. Began work helping youth affected by war – innovation centres in Sierra Leone with Compute Aid and other organisations. Use of ICTs for youth empowerment and sustainability – how tech can be used to bridge the digital divide. Now working on patent laws and tech, and using resources in environmentally friendly way to use tech for greater good.

[Claudia Pagliari](#) (Founder and Director of the MSc in Global eHealth and Co-founder/theme leader of the NHS Digital Academy, [Deanery of Molecular, Genetic and Population Health Sciences](#), [University of Edinburgh](#), Scotland). Interests in digital health and national digital initiative, deliberatively democracy, and views about ethical tensions in digital space. Within this, is looking at environmental impact of digital. These issues need further research and policy research. There is a lack of awareness of this. But there is public enthusiasm about how digital can supposedly support sustainability – but this is also burning up carbon. We need better quantifying of impacts and working out new ways of affecting strategic and policy change. Government and companies don't want to face this. [TU – could be interesting links with Irene]

Dayn Amade ([Tablet Comuntário](#), Mozambique and South Africa). Focus on digital capacity building and promotion of digital environmental risk assessment for all in remote areas; the digitally excluded, especially with respect to health, education, and the environment; empowering the digitally disconnected through a realistic scenario methodology. Working together within DESC we can make a difference. Could do things together to resolve digital gap in Africa.

Emanuele Giovannetti (Professor of Economics, [School of Economics, Finance and Law, Anglia Ruskin University](#), UK). Interested in how we can extend connectivity – especially where networks are not profitable, and then how do you make sure it is not monopolistic. Also focused on market power in digital networks

and entry [TU – could be of interest to Hari). Enormous implications for environment as well. Two specific projects: trade-offs of ecosystem services; digital skills projects.

Isabella Wagner (Österreichischen Plattform für Forschungs- und Technologiepolitikevaluierung and ict4d.at). Focus on science policy – research and tech policy evaluation, especially in the Austrian context. Reflecting on the DESC framework which currently has human context as overarching, but what happens if we put the human context as one part of the biosphere? We could rethink the whole framework within the biosphere circle, not as the overarching logic managing the rest.

Knud Erik Skouby (Professor, Communication, Media and Information Technologies/ES, Electronic Systems, Aalborg University-Copenhagen, Denmark. Representing Wireless World Research Forum which has decided to be a partner [TU to follow up]. Would welcome input on privacy cybersecurity etc. in volume they are currently putting together.

Leon Gwaka (Postdoctoral Fellow, Center for Technology, Innovation and Competition, University of Pennsylvania, USA – originally from Zimbabwe). Getting people connected and development of community networks – especially in developing countries. Studying emergency changes to make connectivity available during COVID – and whether these will extend beyond COVID. Finding ways of using digital tech in challenging environments such as Beitbridge.

Emmanuel C. Lallana (known as Boying) Chief Executive, Ideacorp (Philippines). His interest in the role of ICT in development started when he was teaching political science at the University of the Philippines. He pursued this interest when he served with the training and research arm of the Foreign Office and when he was at the apex ICT policy-making body of the Philippines. Subsequently set up own organisation – mainly still working on policy development and capacity building for governments in ESCAP countries. Interests in digital politics (e-governance, digital government and surveillance/privacy), data and platforms, ICT in education. Has been wanting to move into sustainability and tech intersection, focusing on sustainable and community-based tourism. [TU to introduce to Lorenzo Cantoni]

Maja van der Velden (Professor, Regenerative Technologies, Sustainability Lab, Department of Informatics, University of Oslo, Norway). Her research group aims to contribute to redirecting human modes of planetary habitation towards sustainment. They do that through a focus on the role of design in the sustainability of digital artefacts and the practices that they shape. Maja's research focuses on the social, ethical, and ecological aspects of digitalisation, such as repair and recycling of electronics, the social sustainability of AI, cognitive justice, and just transitions to more sustainable futures

James Crabbe. Emeritus Prof of Biochemistry, Supernumerary Fellow at Wolfson College Oxford, research with colleagues - especially in China (Shanxi University, Changchun University and Wuhan Business School) – on how organisms evolve and adapt to extreme environments. Interested in data science and information. In past wrote programmes on molecular modelling – awards in arts and sciences – across disciplines – a lot in music as well. Focus on marine and maritime environment –

ocean world; but also in Tibet. Mainly on biological, but also done work in capacity building in Asia (Indonesia) and Belize.

Roger Harris Early work was in systems analysis – mainly on information systems for corporations and public bodies. Then worked with UNIMAS bringing tech to isolated remote communities in Borneo. Now retired, but still working with these communities – supervising research and funding for indigenous communities on making best uses of digital tech. Concerned that indigenous people are almost invisible in SDG agendas. How can tech best be used to protect biodiversity? Working with indigenous communities to find best ways of using digital tech to maintain elements of their traditional lives and environments they value. Interested in joint funding of initiatives that further this cause.

Serge Stinckwich (Head of Research at UNU Institute in Macau) Has a computer science background – AI programming language – now more applied at UNU-Macau. Worked for French IRD in Vietnam and Cameroon. Works on complex systems – very interesting for DESC – incorporating different views in order to create a holistic framework – main tool to do this is using agent-based modelling. Especially useful in addressing the gap between science and policy – decision makers can understand the relationships and interdependence between different parts of the system.

Those **who** had **to** leave **the** meetings **early** are **encouraged** to **share** brief **summaries** of **their** interest **through** the **DESC** discussion **list**.
