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# Introduction to *Digital Policy Studies*

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Bhaso Ndzendze 

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All over the world, governments, intergovernmental organisations, citizens and businesses are simultaneously driving, coping with and grasping the reality of digitalisation. They have promulgated new legislation, published plans, and put out strategies to pursue their brand of accelerated or perpetual development with the aid of electronic equipment and software for communications and cyber-physical execution. These entities have also used technologies to regulate, circumvent and/or contest one another. In the wake of these realities, new concepts have been introduced in the literature and the practitioner's manuals and the citizen's everyday lexicon. From agriculture to banking, culture, diplomacy, electric grids, finance, governance, human rights, international trade, and journalism, technologies are pushing the frontier of what was previously possible. With new capabilities and the proliferation of technologies such as artificial intelligence, big data, blockchain, and quantum computing, the process is receiving a significant jolt. Importantly, however, the benefits (convenient and efficient access to goods, services, information and ideas) are not even or universal. Neither are the side effects (climate change, exclusion, and e-waste, among others). Geographical, economic, and other realities reinforce old divides and give rise to new ones. But there are also instances of the gap being closed.

In recognition of this, several conversations with leading scholars and leaders in business and government throughout 2021 made it increasingly evident that a specialist journal was necessary. Its role would be simple: to house the latest research and thought leadership on the intersection of digital technologies and the world of politics and policymaking. The principal aim of this journal – *Digital Policy Studies (DPS)* – is to be a platform for thoroughgoing, empirical and groundbreaking research that tells the stories of how technologies come about, are accessed, experienced and disposed of. Within and between these stages are layers of complexity, bringing together notions of ideas, power, and consumption. These are simultaneously the currency of the educationalist, the engineer, the environmentalist, the legal scholar, the political economist and scientist, the sociologist, and many others from the various domains of inquiry.

Moreover, the activity patterns can be understood with a litany of methods. Thus, this journal's policy is to be multidisciplinary (as shown so clearly by the eclecticism of the papers in the current issue) and openly accessible. Herein lies the niche of this journal, then, as it seeks to be the companion of the academic, the policymaker, and the student, and to be the propagator of a consolidated new field of study and specialisation: Digital Policy Studies.

This volume is indebted to the incredible generosity of various persons who have been very giving of their ideas, time and resources. I wish to thank them here in turn. For their support and direction in the formulation of the new journal when it was still only an idea, I am grateful to Professor Tshilidzi Marwala, Professor Siphamandla Zondi, Dr Andile Ngcaba, Professor Sarah Chiumbu, Juanita Clark, Dr Olumide Abimbola, Faten Aggad, Professor Timothy

Shaw, Professor David Hornsby, Professor Messay Mulugeta, Dr Bob Wekesa, and Professor Annie Chikwanha. For their incredible energy and thoroughness in putting together the first issue, I wish to thank Dr Tinuade Ojo, our managing editor, Riaan de Villiers, copyeditor, and Dr Emmanuel Matambo, our book reviews editor and our editorial assistants, Zimkhitha Manyana, Johannes Mancha Sekgololo and Gift Sonkqayi. I am immensely grateful to the incredible team at the UJ Press, especially for the wonderful guidance of Wikus van Zyl, Alrina de Bruyn, and Reneka Panday. The articles went through numerous stages of peer review, and the efforts of the reviewers and the team at the 4IR and Digital Policy Research Unit (4DPRU) at the University of Johannesburg were indispensable in that process.

I want to especially thank and recognise the contributors to this inaugural issue of this inaugural volume. We are excited to be already working with scores of talented scholars on subsequent special issues which will come out under the next volume. Thank you all for entrusting us with your ideas and findings.