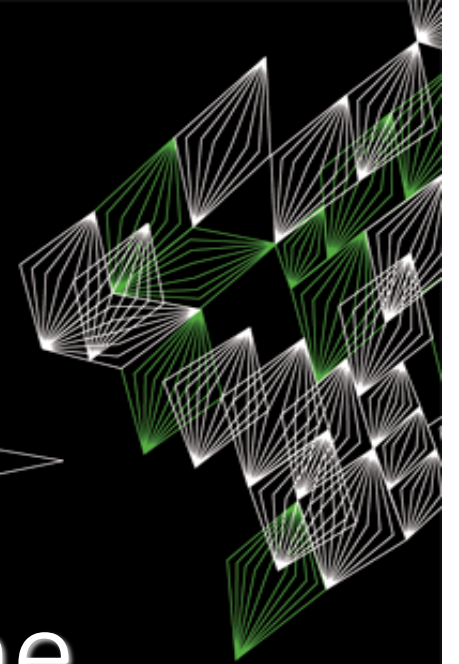


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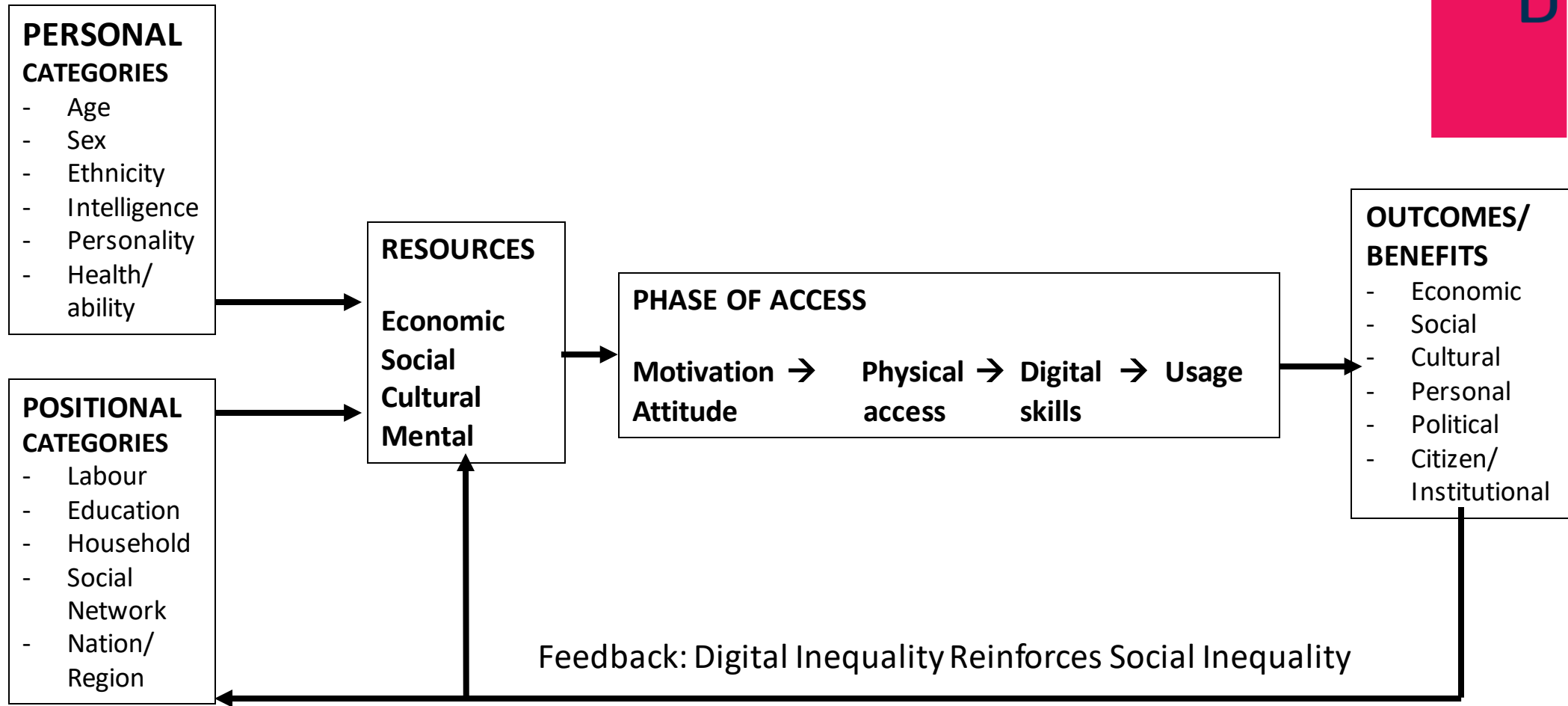


The Digital Divide and the Covid-19 Pandemic



Professor Jan van Dijk

The Digital Divide is a Complex Process

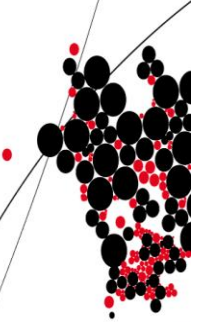




Motivation/ Attitude and Physical Access in wanting and having Digital Media

Motivation to want digital media/ Internet has grown since the 1990s

Attitudes are mixed: mostly positive about the Internet;
since 2015 some negative attitudes appear (causes: cybercrime,
disinformation, hate speech, excessive use)



Physical gaps in having digital media have grown since the 1990s
Related to Income, education, occupation and countries or regions

- In the next decades gaps will close partly, however some people will
- have all devices and connections and others only one (a smartphone)



Digital skills and Usage

- Gaps of digital skills widen: though usability is better, the complexity of things we do on the Internet grows and people with high education learn skills faster and better
- Especially information, communication, content-creating and strategic skills. The basis are operational skills
- Gaps of frequency and diversity of use are also growing. We use the Internet all-of-the day and for many things
- A particular *usage gap* appears: some people use the Internet primarily for education, work, careers and business, others for entertainment, simple messaging and e-commerce.



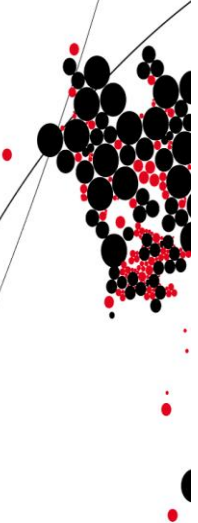
Outcomes

- Those at the ‘right side’ of the digital divide (at all phases) are benefitting much more from using the Internet in every domain than people with the ‘wrong side’ of the digital divide. They also are better in coping with the negative outcomes (cybercrime, disinformation, privacy loss, excessive use a.o.)
- In this way *digital* inequality reinforces existing *social* inequality



The Covid-19 Pandemic and the Digital Divide

- The Carona crisis reinforces **social** inequality for people with:
 - flexible and insecure jobs
 - jobs in crowded buildings, public transport, restaurants and cleaning
 - working on the street and the informal economy
 - living in packed housing and communities/ shanty towns
 - having no or bad health insurance, depending on poor equipped hospitals
- The crisis is also made worse by **digital** inequality:
 - those with no or bad access are searching and finding **less information** about the disease and how to handle it and less know and follow the measures of government and health authorities
 - those with no or bad access **communicate less** with others for dealing with the situation and getting social network support





Covid-19 and the Digital Divide Survey

The Netherlands, April 2020, n= 1733 (by Prof. van Deursen)

- People with positive Internet attitudes, good physical access and digital skills used more Internet Covid-19 information and communication and *benefitted most* about its useful information and communication outcomes
- Inequal *digital skills* and *traditional literacy* showed the highest effect. Covid-19 is a new, unknown and complicated disease often framed in difficult medical language.
- The elderly, the people with low education and jobs, with most risks in being effected and becoming sick, were the ones *less using and benefitting* Covid-19 information and communication on the Web.
- The Netherlands is a rich country with 98% Internet access: imagine what this means for poorer countries with less access!



Policy Recommendations

FOR REDUCING THE DIGITAL DIVIDE IN BOTH SOCIAL AND DIGITAL INEQUALITY

- Revitalizing social mobility everywhere
- Long-term digital/social programs for disadvantaged groups in their own communities
- Provide cheaper digital technology
- Design technology that is easier to use
- Better government and other public regulation for the Internet, especially Internet platforms improving trust

FOR APPROACHING THE COVID-19 CRISIS USING THE INTERNET

- Accessible, readable, reliable and up-to-date *information* of Covid-19 on both the Internet and traditional media
- Offer *communication* venues for communication support about the disease on the Internet for all
- Produce reliable Covid-19 information and reduce unreliable information about the disease in the *social media*
- Design and supply *mobile apps* for Covid-19 information and privacy-friendly tracing and warning systems