SUSTAINABLE DIGITAL
INFRASTRUCTURE ALLIANCE

What should we be doing to ensure digital equity for all?

Critical Insights, November 29th 2023

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Sustainability = A balance of environmental, societal and economic needs.

Even more important: The sustainable development of our society & economy.

"Sustainable development is development that meets the needs of the present without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs."

United Nations Brundtland Commission, 1987

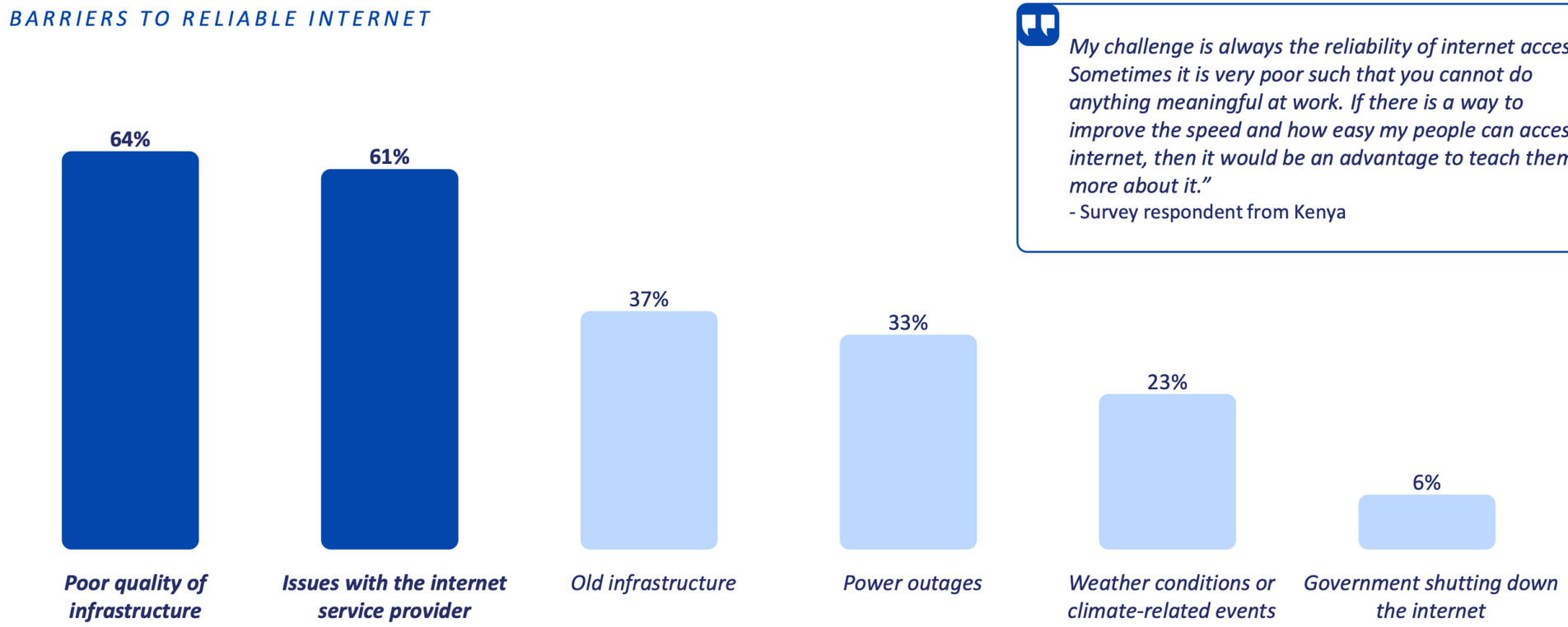
What’s digital equity?

"Digital equity refers to the condition where individuals and communities have equal access to ICT, including the necessary tools, skills, and resources to effectively participate and compete in the digital age."

Internet Access

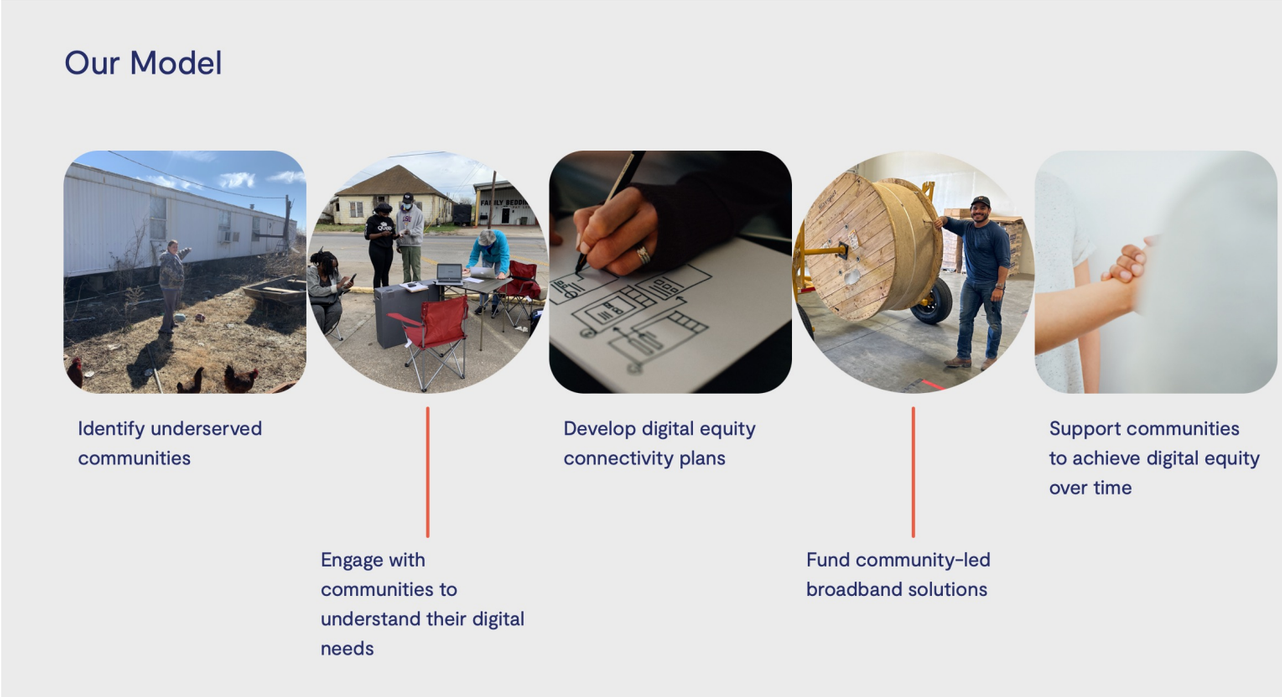
About 2.6 billion people have no access to the internet.

The lack of quality infrastructure for internet access – an opportunity?



> *My challenge is always the reliability of internet access. Sometimes it is very poor such that you cannot do anything meaningful at work. If there is a way to improve the speed and how easy my people can access internet, then it would be an advantage to teach them more about it."*
> - Survey respondent from Kenya

Example: Community-owned networks to close digital inequity gap



Connect Humanity

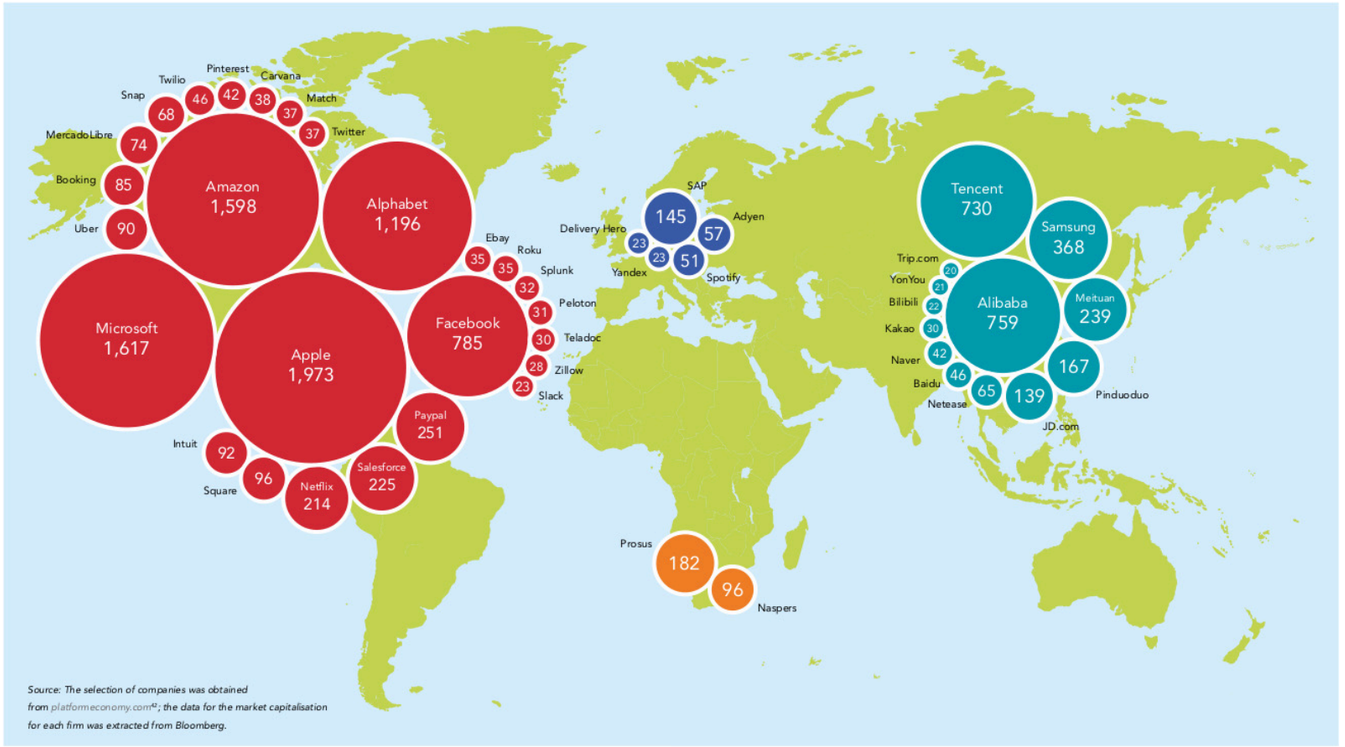
Investing in community-owned networks with blended finance tools

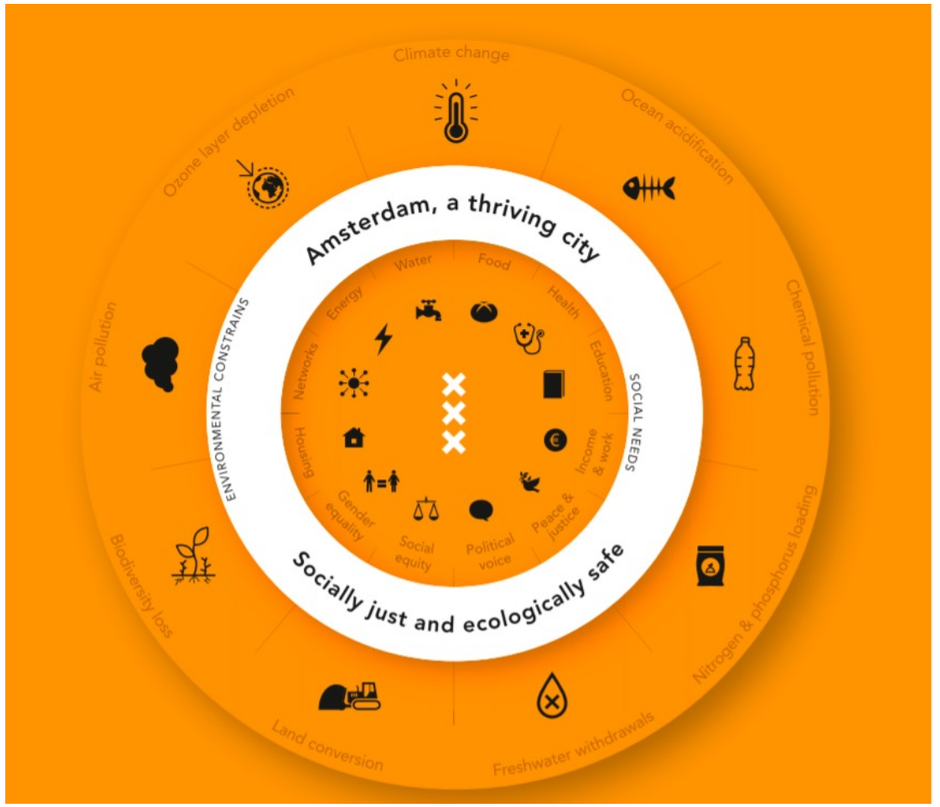
Regional Digital Economies

Enabling the economic growth from digitalization and digital products & services for regional communities

Each region, each community needs to be able to benefit from the digital economy = enabling them to compete

Map 2.1 Big Tech market capitalisation (above US$ 20 billion) in December 2020





42 Schmidt, H, Hosseini, H. (2020) Top 100 Plattformen der Welt (Oct. 2020). Available at: https://www.platformeconomy.com/ (accessed 2 December 2020). © Copyright Dr. Holger Schmidt | Hamidreza Hosseini | netzoekonom.de | TU Darmstadt | Ecoynamics.io | Platform-fund.com

To enable regional digital economies, we must invest in 3 key pillars along with infrastructure:

Digital Skills

Through education we need to give equal ability to design business models, to build digital products and services – without dependence on foreign platforms

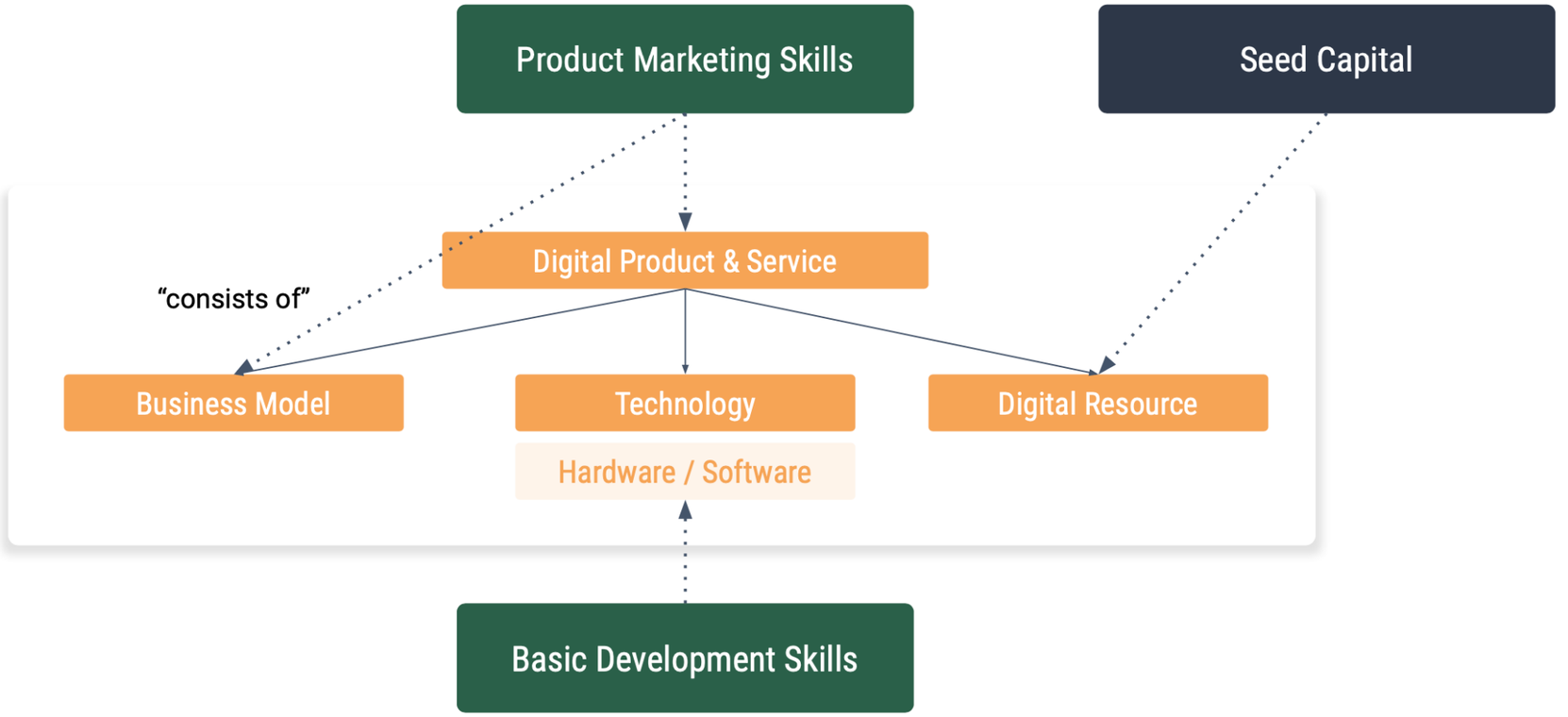
Competitive Market

The regional digital economy needs to be supported by public procurement and strong regulation that ensures regional companies have an advantage over the multi-national behemoths.

Access to internet

No internet access means no market access. Without connectivity, there is neither a local market for digital services nor access to foreign markets.

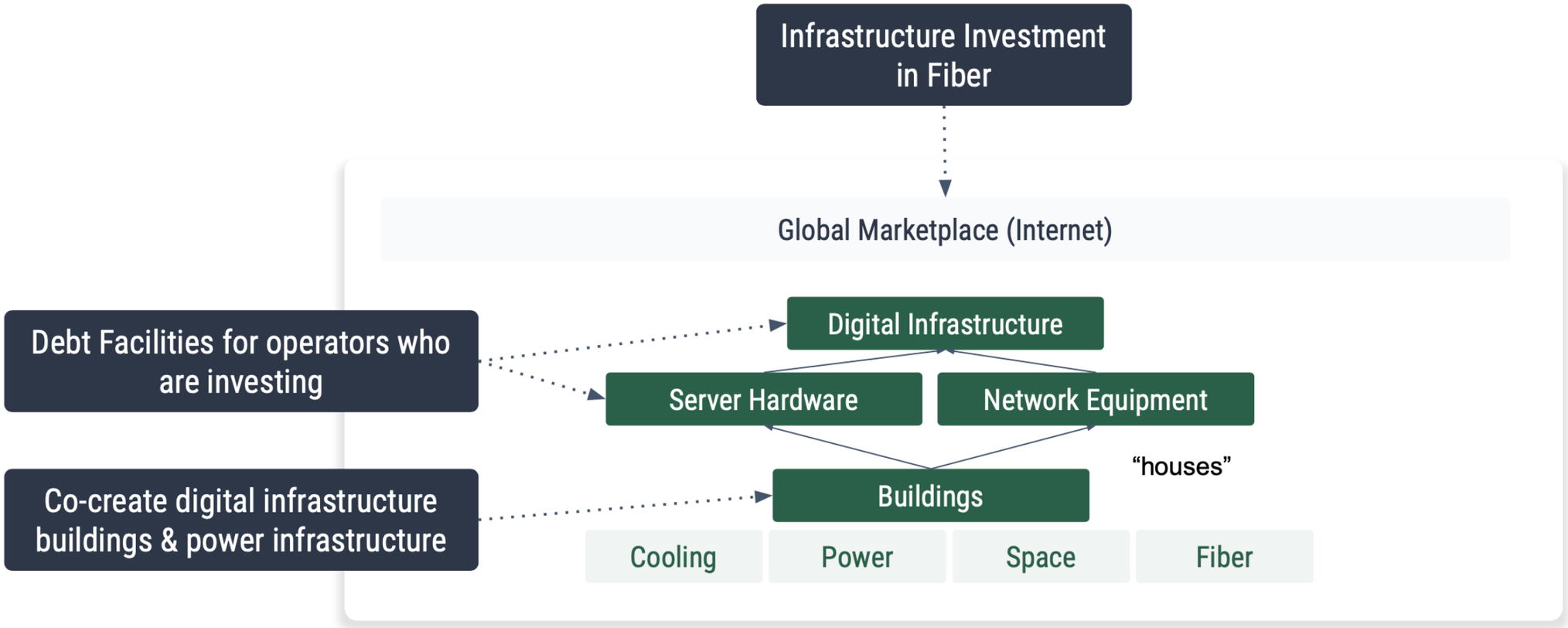
The majority of technologies in the digital economy are free – thus the emphasis should be on skill development & seed capital



Regional Digital Infrastructure

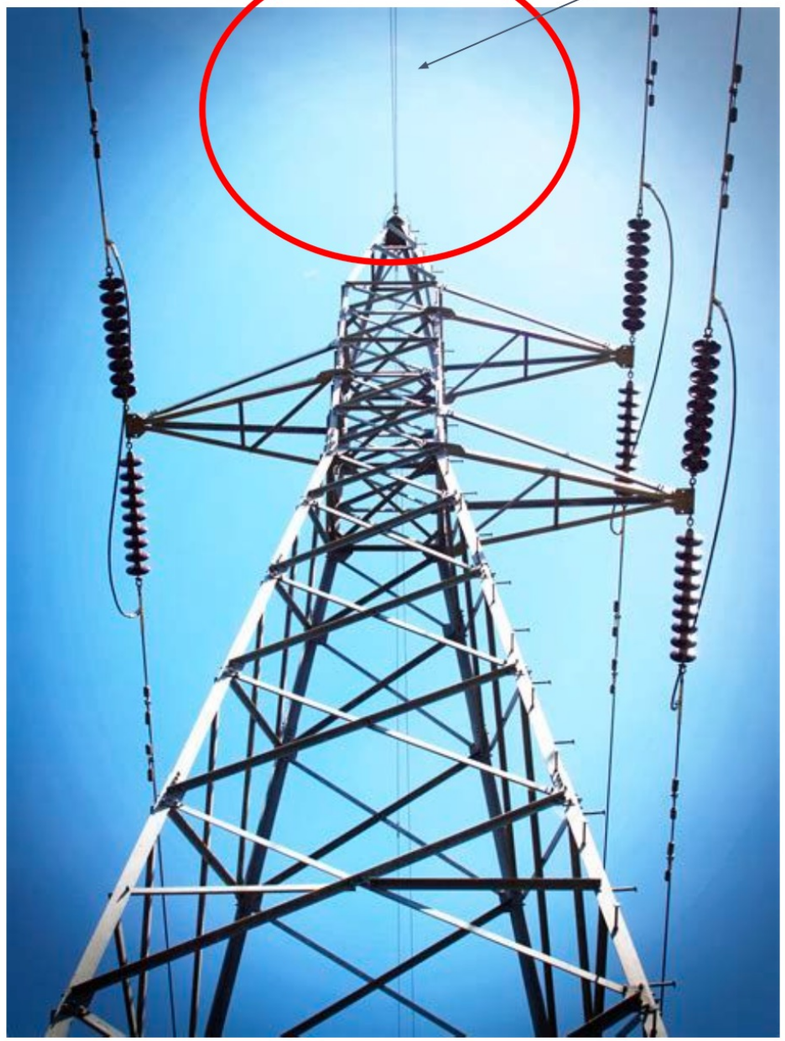
To ensure competitiveness of local digital businesses, there needs to be regional infrastructure that can be subsidized and used to capture all the generated value of the digital economy.

With infrastructure, there is an opportunity to co-create energy & digital infrastructure.



EXAMPLES

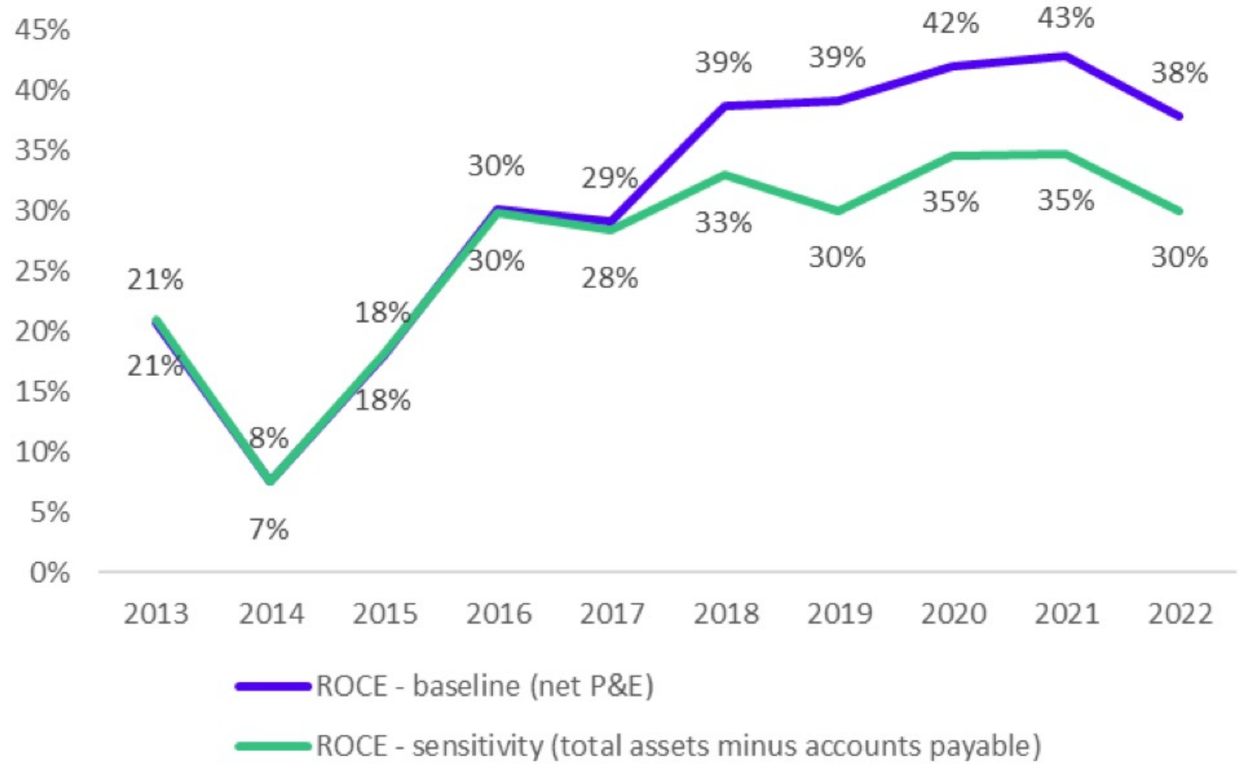
Fiber



Power Plant or Data Center?

Building regional infrastructure is key, to avoid having foreign entities extract economic value ('hyperscale tax')

Figure A2.9: AWS ROCE estimates (baseline approach and first sensitivity), 2013-22



Source: Ofcom analysis based on public information from Amazon 10-K reports and Ofcom assumptions.

Helpful tool: A maturity model

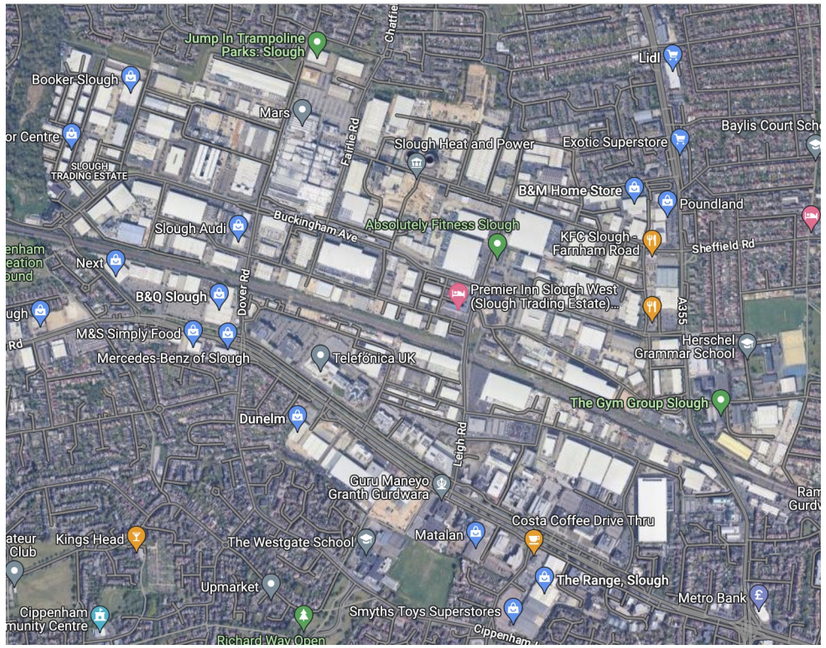
To assess the state of ‘enabling forces’ for digital equity in a region, one can use a maturity model assessment.

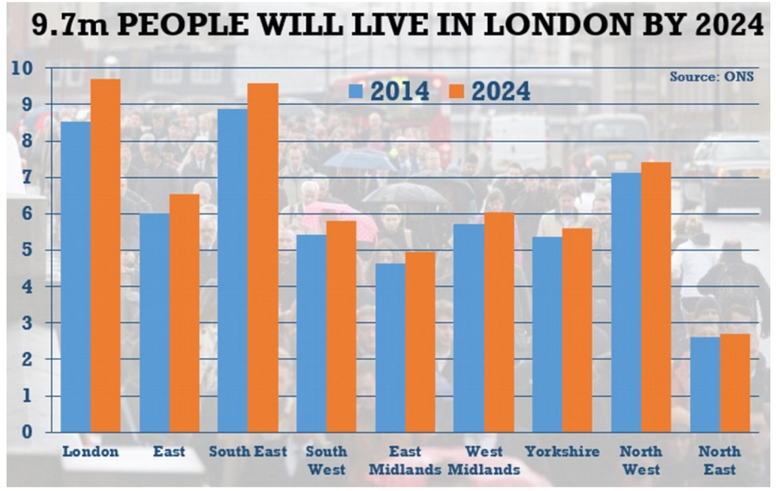
TAXONOMY

Example London

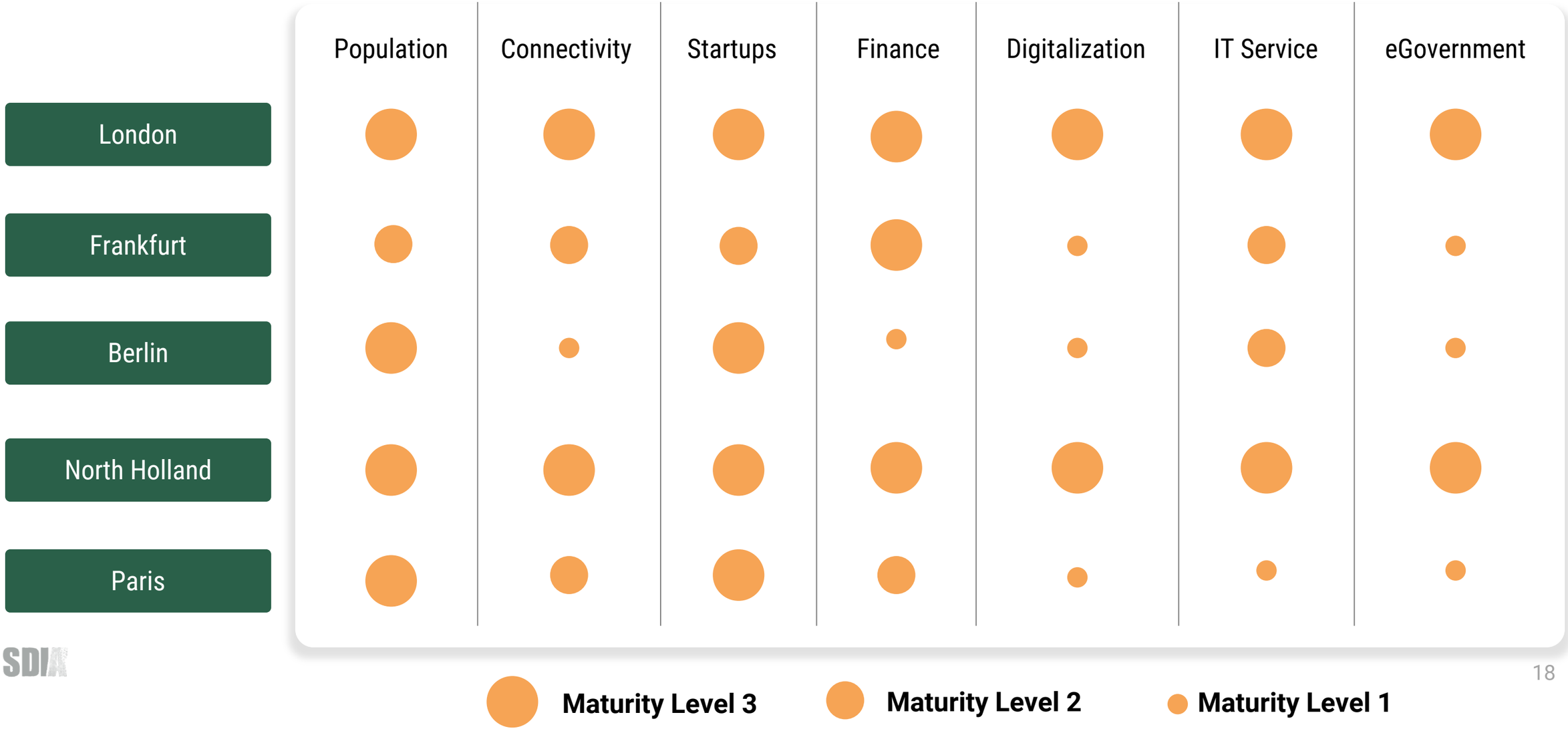
London

Population	Connectivity	Startups	Finance	Digitalization	IT Service	eGovernment
●	●	●	●	●	●	●





Region-by-region: Examples on determining maturity level



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Thank you.