FUTURE LAW

TECHNOLOGY, INNOVATION AND ACCESS TO JUSTICE

DIALOGUES ON THE FUTURE OF LAW

Edited by
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Technology, Innovation and Access to Justice

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Introduction
Making Access to Justice Count: Debating the Future of Law

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A. Introduction

Over 5 billion people do not have meaningful access to the justice delivery system, according to a recent report produced by a network of international development organisations (Pathfinders 2019). The magnitude of the gap is further understood where over 253 million people live in conditions of extreme injustice such as slavery, conflict and statelessness; 1.5 billion have justice problems they cannot solve, and over 4.5 billion people are excluded from protections of the law that provide for socio-economic and political security (Pathfinders 2019). Addressing this justice gap is of critical importance and is central to the imagination of the Sustainable Development Goals, which aspire to build inclusive societies and protect vulnerable populations (United Nations Sustainable Development Goals 2015).

While the justice gap continues to grow, we are also living in an age where the scale of technological innovation has resulted in developments such as document automation, e-discovery, predictive analytics and online dispute resolution increasingly being adopted in the delivery of legal services. The influx of new services that are engineered around improving efficiency, productivity and quality review are influencing changes in the ways of working in the legal sector. These factors are also leading to the development of alternative business models for law firms, new models of legal education, and new expectations and demands from public services.

These new technologies are beginning to deeply impact the ordinary functioning of law and the everyday life of its users. In an age of digital change, it is crucial to understand what these changes mean for the resolution of common legal problems that result in social, economic and cultural

challenges for citizens. How do we place people first, and understand their challenges and difficulties and ensure they find a solution for their justice problems?

Debating about the future of law and of the justice sector requires a mapping of the changes to different actors and institutions in the legal sector whether lawyers, judges, firms and most of all, ordinary citizens. While there is much work emerging in terms of trends around 'legal tech', 'artificial intelligence and law' in the commercial law space, there is less scholarly and policy attention on the use of such technologies in terms of its implications for ensuring access to justice and addressing the needs of the ordinary citizen. This book seeks to mainstream discussions on access to justice into discussions on the future of law. In doing so, it seeks to examine what changes in technology mean for the end user, whether an ordinary citizen, a client or a student. In this way, it looks at the everyday practice of law through a sector-wide analysis of law firms, universities, start-ups and civil society organisations. It argues that a lack of access to justice is not a concern limited to civil society organisations alone but requires collaboration and synergies between different actors and institutions in the legal sector.

We propose a three-step approach towards investigating how to build a strategic roadmap for meeting the challenges of the justice gap in the context of dynamic innovation and technological changes. The first is to provide broad insights and trends into what technology changes have been introduced in the private sector, public sector, civil society and in legal education by conducting a mapping exercise to survey the field. The second is to locate what these changes mean for the concerns of a digital divide, for legal empowerment and for access to justice. For example, do these technologies enable individuals to understand procedures better? Does it render justice more cost-effective? Or does it result in less transparency and accountability because technological solutions are more opaque? And the third is to plug the gap by examining how to address sector-specific access to justice questions and learn as we go forward.

By analysing the technological changes taking place in the legal sector, this book seeks to explore where the developments have taken place, the types of actors and institutions driving these developments, and the impact and lessons they have had for the future of law.

In the next section of this chapter, we examine the significance of the scale of change, taking place, how this has been forecasted, and why we are living in particularly dynamic times. Thereafter, we look at the importance of emphasising these changes on debates around access to justice, and the value of a sector-wide approach. Finally, we examine the key lessons in order to make justice count and provide an outline of the volume.

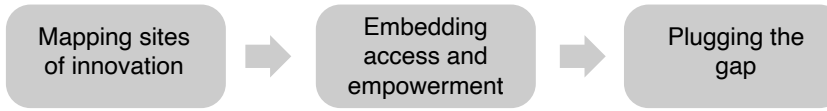

Figure 1.1 Scheme of chapter

B. Mapping Sites of Innovation: Examining Trends and Identifying Points of Change

The debate on 'The future of the law' has been around for some time with Richard Susskind, a reference point in almost all related publications, publishing a book under this title as early as 1996 (Susskind 1996). A good ten years later his seminal 2008 publication 'The end of lawyers?' then sparked a euphoric legal tech debate and made a very self-confident profession wonder if it, too, could one day be replaced by intelligent machines (Susskind 2008).

Apart from this, other factors regularly cited for the emergence of 'legal tech' in the past decade include the 2008 global economic downturn that forced legal service providers to become more cost-efficient and the technological development such as the take-up of cloud computing (Goodman 2018: 70). Furthermore, market liberalisation, such as through the UK Legal Services Act 2007 allowed for new business models in the field and fuelled entrepreneurship (Goodman 2018: 67). The Covid-19 pandemic has also seen a accelerated push towards digital transformation with more multidisciplinary perspectives needed to be able to respond to rapidly changing market and client needs (Cohen 2020).

A good decade after the Susskind prophecies, the ever-accelerating development of technology has opened the door to new exciting possibilities. While the legal services industry had been somewhat of a latecomer in adopting new means of technology, the rise of artificial intelligence and machine learning have now given us an idea of what the future of the law might look like. Predictive analytics, today, allows forecasting the outcome of US Supreme Court decisions with over 70 per cent accuracy – far better than expert legal analysts (Katz, Bommarito, Blackman 2017). Furthermore, it plays an increasing role in predictive policing, tax evasion and tax outcomes, recurrence rates of criminal defendants and even lawsuit financing (Vogl 2018: 57). Intelligent machines can even forecast the enactment of legislation, as demonstrated by Skopos Labs in 2017 (Hutson 2017).

This new technology is increasingly included in the everyday practice of the law. While initially this was with respect to making the job of a (human) lawyer easier through faster and more effective file and knowledge management, billing or other administrative tasks, it has now started to impact the very heart of

rendering legal advice (de Souza 2017). Examples include automated contract analysis tools such as eBrevia, Kira, Luminance or Leverton. E-discovery tools such as Relativity, legal expert systems like Neota Logic or prognostic tools like Ravel, LexPredict or IBM Watson (Wenzler 2018: 78). McKinsey has predicted that 35 per cent of a law clerk's job will be rendered redundant while 22 per cent of a lawyers job will be replaced by these technologies (Winick 2017).

With their access to large financial resources, it is the big law firms that are the early adopters of these new technologies (Goodman 2018: 70). Additionally, with the rise of AI-powered programs, the development and training of these intelligent machines becomes more and more important, and many law firms find themselves in a race to also succeed as legal tech investors and developers (Goodman 2018: 72). This competition has now intensified considerably with the big accountancy firms, who have a head start in adopting technology, muscling their way in on the market wherever possible (Derbyshire 2018).

Apart from the big firms, a vibrant legal tech start-up scene has emerged in the past few years, particularly in places that saw market liberalisation such as the UK. In part, this was also fuelled by the fact that many of the big firms are investing in start-ups rather than applying the technology to their own business (Dipsham and Strom 2018; Goodman 2018: 72). In 2015, leading law firm Dentons created Next Law Labs, a wholly-owned business accelerator that aims to support and invest in legal tech ventures while Allen & Overy in 2017 launched a legal and regulatory tech incubator called Fuse to support tech companies who are innovating in the work that they do (Dipsham and Strom 2018). 2018 also marked a breakthrough year with a record-setting $1.6 billion of total investments in the legal tech sector, which constituted a 713 per cent growth over the previous year (Dolm 2019). Today, Stanford's CodeX Techindex lists over 1,300 legal tech start-ups, currently across nine categories of 'Marketplace', 'Document Automation', 'Practice Management', 'Legal Research', 'Legal Education', 'Online Dispute Resolution', 'E-Discovery', 'Analytics' and 'Compliance' (Stanford Law School n.d.). While initially offering niche services, these technologies are increasingly influencing the legal services industry as a whole. Alternative legal service providers, such as Axiom, are growing rapidly and have a considerable impact on the market as they contribute to the unbundling of legal services and give more options and hence bargaining power to clients (Vogl 2018: 64).

Apart from the purely commercial interests, social motives of legal aid and legal assistance improvement played an important role early on in legal tech, as Roger Smith describes in Chapter 5 of this volume. Small claims and class action, from the beginning, were interesting fields for innovation and soon start-ups like DoNotPay in the UK or MyRight and FlightRight in

Germany helped clients to fight their parking tickets, receive damages for delayed flights or bring a class action against Volkswagen in the context of the "Clean Diesel" scandal (Gnirke 2019). Entrepreneurs have also been driven by the idea that technology could improve access to justice around the world. Since 2007, online platforms in the Netherlands, Canada and the UK have helped to solve marriage, landlord-tenant and other disputes through projects like Rechtwijzer by HiiL, MyLawBC or Relate (Smith, R. 2017; Smith, R. 2017a). Innovators like Joshua Browder of DoNotPay soon turned to more social ventures by supporting homeless people in finding accommodation (Cresci 2016). Through platforms such as Haqdarshak in India, legal tech is also helping people claim benefits by assisting community-level advisers to assess individuals' eligibility for benefits and then supporting those individuals to apply (Walker and Verhaert 2019: 62). Common good lawsuits can today be financed through platforms like Crowd Justice that was recognised as the 2018 Financial Times top innovative lawyer (Boulton 2018). Since 2016 the mobile app PLP 2.0 (Promotoras Legais Populares) from Brazil that won the 2014 Google Social Impact Award helps women in situations of domestic, sexual or family violence translating twenty years of legal empowerment experiences into the digital age (Walker and Verhaert 2019: 32). Legal Geek, one of the world's most influential legal tech conferences in October 2019, held its first own Law for Good conference in London (Law For Good n.d.).

The Public sector has followed more slowly and is only beginning to embrace the new means of technology. While digitisation holds the great promise to make the entire state administration more effective, accessible and transparent, recent years have demonstrated that making this a reality is a far greater challenge than imagined. Digitising our chronically overburdened courts, for example, is a far more complex endeavour than many expected as Dory Reiling insightfully illustrates in Part II of this volume. Often, limited public resources are one of the challenges. However, a certain exclusivity of lawyers running our justice systems, which tend to be more reluctant to innovate than others are, seems to be part of the problem (HiiL 2019: 7). Nevertheless, governments are increasingly trying to tap into the potential of legal tech beyond the digitisation of the administration. An example of this development is the growing number of initiatives of online dispute resolution mechanisms that are being integrated into court or tribunal processes. These include initiatives in Canada (British Columbia), and pilots in the US (Utah, Ohio, California), Australia (Victoria), and England and Wales (Walker and Verhaert 2019: 18). These mechanisms, like the British Columbia Civil Resolution Tribunal, help individuals diagnose a problem, provide them with legal information and lead them through a guided online dispute resolution process, followed by links to a formal tribunal process (Walker and Verhaert

2019: 18). In India, the government has also introduced a number of technology-based platforms, which aim at improving the technological aspects of courts, creating better access to lawyers for clients and improving the delivery of pro bono services. However, much remains to be done to recognise and improve the scale and impact of these services (de Souza and Aithala 2018).

These technological developments will change the legal profession. Ultimately, the demand on the labour market will follow, which will not allow for legal education to remain the same. However, as multiple authors in this book find, the legal profession is rather conservative when it comes to adopting change. Legal education is no exemption here as Aviva Rotenberg illustrates in Chapter 15, describing a reluctant profession that needs to be engaged in its own future. Canada, as demonstrated by Ryerson Law School, offers interesting examples of innovation in legal education. It attempts to train the lawyers of the future, taking into account that graduates today make their way into practice in an ever-widening range of ways (Holloway 2019). Just in April 2019, the Law Society of Ontario unanimously approved Ryerson's application to have its JD programme designated as an Integrated Practice Curriculum (IPC). A broad overview of innovation in legal services and particularly in legal education is offered by the Law School Innovation Index (Legal Services Innovation Index n.d.). Responding to growing criticism over the past years that law schools failed to update their curricula, this prototype index collects and lists schools that drive innovation. Some examples of law schools embracing the future also come from Michigan State University College of Law or the Massachusetts Institute of Technology (MIT) which collaborates with Georgetown Law School. Addressing these examples, Ana Paula Camelo and Cláudio Lucena, in Part IV, describe what a roadmap for legal education, on its path to the future, could look like.

In addition to the law firms setting up accelerators, there are also innovation clusters emerging around the world. Singapore, with its Future Law Innovation Programme by the Singapore Academy of Law, is seeking to create a space for legal innovation and collaboration to create solutions for the changing legal services market. The Innovating Justice Accelerator by The Hague Institute for Innovation of Law (HiiL), on the other hand, has been a pioneering programme that supports entrepreneurs particularly from the Global South. Projects span a wide range including family law, criminal law, legal aid and technical project support.

C. Embedding Access and Empowerment in Technology and Innovation

What we see from this mapping exercise is that the legal sector is at a crucial moment in its history. It seems clear that with technology and innovation,

legal institutions are changing. Whether it be law firms who are looking at alternative ways of working by investing and transforming into technology enterprises, legal tech firms boosted by an influx of capital to scale their services or others who are strategically merging; courts, and public institutions like the police who are increasingly using technology for predictive analytics or creating more IT-based infrastructures; civil society organisations that are helping people diagnose problems and also using technology for spreading legal literacy; and education where law schools are innovating and offering new courses to meet the demands of the market. These institutional changes are at differing levels of speed, scale and with different levels of success. While the previous section has included examples to present a picture of the changes taking place, this section focuses more on asking what it means to the different sectors to embed questions of access to justice and empowerment in their work.

Access to justice is understood as the ability for people to address their everyday legal problems, either through recourse to law, courts or other forums (Cappelletti and Garth 1981; UNDP 2004). The challenges of access to justice can emerge in multiple ways, such as where courts and legal institutions are out of reach of litigants because of costs, distance, or even a lack of knowledge of rights and entitlements. It can also be because many judicial institutions are under-funded and as a result there is poor judicial infrastructure, inadequate staff, and limited resources to meet the needs and demands of litigants who require such services. In many instances, the text of the law itself is riddled with complexities, and that makes it difficult for ordinary litigants to understand and use it effectively.

As legal needs surveys have shown over the years, some of the major challenges that confront legal systems concern everyday justice problems from matters concerning property rights, securing ownership or paying rent, to family matters including on matters related to inheritance, divorce or domestic violence and abuse and even matters of employment or joblessness (Pleasance and Balmer 2018; Barendrecht, Kamminga and Verdonschot 2008). What is apparent from these different surveys within these different data sources is that major challenges within the law are emerging from the most routinised matters.

For this, what becomes important is to find a way to empower people to use the law and increase their agency in the use and delivery of legal services. Golub has described legal empowerment as the agency people have to make choices and take control over their lives (Golub 2003). This concept is echoed by the Commission for Legal Empowerment of the Poor which in 2008, argued that ensuring the recognition of identity and also ensuring that people have a voice were central to thinking of empowerment.

Each of these three concepts of access to justice, legal needs and legal

empowerment overlap and interact in different ways because they are related to understanding the challenges of justice sector reform from a demand perspective. This entails asking how providers of justice, such as courts or law firms, can adapt based on what the user needs. It inverts the approach from one which has traditionally revolved around deciding from the top-down regarding what innovations and changes are needed to make the law work inclusively, efficiently and productively for everyone.

This emphasis on people-centred approaches to justice requires making sense of how justice is realised, based on the needs and desires of people (Gramatikov, Barendrecht and Verdonschot 2011; de Souza 2019). A recent report by OECD on inclusive growth and access to justice examined people centricity of justice by focusing on understanding legal needs by examining what the needs are, when and where they are experienced, who experiences them and what works to meet these needs and how must they be assessed (OECD 2019). What we find relevant in exploring these different concepts is that they place emphasis on building the agency of people.

By placing importance on the agency of people and examining the ways in which justice is realised, there is a renewed focus on outcomes. As a recent HiiL report argues, it aims at ensuring that a solution is achieved, a dispute is resolved, or harm is prevented (HiiL 2019), and in doing so, we are able to understand the material implication of how technology can be adapted and used to meet the needs of people.

The Engine Room in their report on Tech for Legal Empowerment provided useful insights on implementing projects in an access to justice context (Walker and Verhaert 2019). Among the key findings of the report was that technology was a supplement and not a substitute for support in-person, so it is essential to have a clear idea of the problem that needs to be solved. In developing a solution, it was also important to continuously test with user feedback and iterate if necessary. Further, ensure that you open dialogue with other comparable projects across jurisdictions to learn from their experiences and finally measure the impact of the intervention.

Mainstreaming aspects of empowerment and access into debates on technology, we argue, provides a vocabulary to ask (1) whether the technological product is increasing the agency of a justice user, whether this is a client, a student, a judge or someone else, (2) whether the product resulted in improving the outcomes for the user and resulted in solutions for their dispute, and (3) whether the product is responsive and reflexive such that it is able to adapt and iterate to the needs of users.

D. Plugging the Gap

While thinking in terms of empowerment and access providing an important lens to investigate the potential of technology, in this section, we explore some of the factors that can create an environment that will enhance innovation while also meeting the needs of the justice gap.

As we have demonstrated through the first section of mapping different sites of innovation – what is clear is that the scale and funding of innovation has resulted in the development of particular clusters around the world. While the US is still a pioneer in terms of scale and reach, Singapore and Hong Kong are also emerging as legal tech hubs with active involvement from the State and law societies (Pickup 2018). HiiL in the Netherlands through their work with a Justice Accelerator has focused on innovation from Africa. In particular, they have funded projects that work on matters related to criminal law, employment, legal advice and land-related problems. Each of these clusters has its own particularities and priorities and comparatively examining their frameworks offers an opportunity to understand the diversity in the contexts within which innovation is taking place. Equally, it is important to recognise the different kinds of expertise that are required in order to foster innovation. While each of these clusters has lawyers who can provide domain expertise, they also require business consultants to examine questions of funding and strategy, they require technologists to build products, and they require communicators who can market and build a user base for these technologies. In this book, we have also brought together a variety of voices to show how it is important to have a diversity of perspectives in order to tackle the complex challenges of access to justice.

Coupled with bringing expertise from across the board is the idea of introducing collaboration. As we will demonstrate in the overview of the different sectors addressed in the book, innovation cannot take place in silos but rather where there is more interaction and exchange between different sectors. HiiL in a recent report argues for how the public sector must use their convening power and create an enabling environment for innovation, the private sector which has the capacity to be agile and innovative in their ways of working must look at ways to scale their impact, civil society can provide perspectives of people's needs and wants, while academia can provide the knowledge on how to connect these different strands (HiiL 2019). Collaboration offers the opportunity to pool resources, but more importantly it is the advancement of a mindset that recognises that the challenges of a justice gap can only be resolved through cross-sectoral partnerships. Technology-based solutions can only work if they are able to get buy-in from different stakeholders (de Souza

and Aithala 2018). Thus an outcome of a collaborative approach is one where there is fundamental change in the mindsets (Zent 2018).

Another aspect of plugging the gap is to address how to scale innovation. In this regard, the challenges can emerge from issues with respect to economic infrastructure that does not provide the apparatus or climate to grow. It can also arise from regulation that makes it difficult to experiment and take risks which in turn is also influenced by more conservative mindsets and finally the question of financing that is required for implementing different kinds of innovations. Scaling innovation also builds on the other aspects mentioned previously because in order to scale you need to have diversity of expertise and experience that can provide the contextual knowledge that helps address multifaceted challenges of access to justice. Additionally, scaling also requires more collaborative enterprise because it involves creating an atmosphere and mindset driving collective ownership and clear outcomes, it requires the distribution of responsibility, as well as the authority and regulation to implement solutions (O'Reilly 2018).

E. Finding Relations Between Sectors: Ideas from the Book

Innovation is impacted by several factors from capital, which allows for experimentation, to regulation and regulatory institutions that create climates for a culture of change, to different kinds of mindsets that allow for risk taking (Cohen 2017; Cohen 2018). As a trans-disciplinary project, this volume brings together leading authors from different parts of the legal sector such as judges, academics, practitioners, policy makers and entrepreneurs from all parts of the world, including countries like Brazil, Nigeria, United Arab Emirates, Germany, Netherlands, Belgium, Italy, India, Canada, United Kingdom, South Africa, and Australia.

By doing so, it seeks to widen the conversation by introducing comparative experiences to understand the manner and implications in which changes are taking place. Adopting a sector-wide approach provides insights into where and how innovation is taking place, who is driving it, and how it is developing. Further by seeking to look at change across different regions and geographies, this book also pluralises the conversation by introducing contextual understandings of innovation.

The design and choices of the sectors also reflect on the impact of technology in the law. For reasons of capital, capacity and competencies, innovation has had a larger impact in the private sector first. With a growing availability of capital and market liberalisation, a vibrant start-up scene is evolving, too. At the same time, though traditionally a bit slower, the public sector follows. It is driven by the promise that technology holds the key to build cost-effective administrations such as, for example, that it will solve the

problem of chronically overburdened courts with technology-driven solutions. As described above, legal aid and the improvement of access to justice is an objective for many law innovators, which makes civil society an important sector to look at. Ultimately, legal education has to adopt technology and to produce tomorrow's lawyers they might have to include multi-disciplinary skills in their curricula.

However, the discussion on the future of the law is still highly fragmented along country borders, jurisdictions and legal systems, just as the law itself. Hence, internationalisation of the debate is highly expedient. The authors in this volume from around the world engage with the different protagonists and stakeholders and attempt to find reasons and meanings for the latest developments. They offer evidence that the drivers of technological change are emerging from beyond the private sector, and it is important to understand how conversations among different stakeholders can help think about questions of access to justice in the age of the future of law.

Accordingly, this volume looks at the private sector first. Leading innovators, entrepreneurs and experts from law firms, legal tech start-ups and the legal aid sector share their view on current changes in the industry, its challenges and opportunities.

Özgür Kahale starts us off, giving an insight to innovation at one of the world's biggest law firms, focusing particularly on the role of pro bono work and how it is evolving with technology. From this, it becomes clear that the sector is at a defining moment and will face considerable change and disruption in the near future. A growing number of indicators foreshadow this development already today, but we are barely scratching the surface of future change, as Suzanna Kalendzhian points out. She further maps out the most relevant technologies that are currently changing the law.

Odunoluwa Longe argues that the abundance of newly evolving possibilities will only allow those lawyers that are innovative and open to change to keep up. Roger Smith, too, takes a closer analytical look and describes how differently innovation drives the for-profit and not-for-profit sector forward. Apart from identifying the key challenges and opportunities, he is convinced that, since technology is transnational, there are lessons learnt from international comparison, comparative research and global benchmarking.

The second part turns to the public sector with leading academics and practitioners assessing the potential but also the risks and challenges of digitising the law in the public sphere. Automating governmental decision-making, however promising it is, has turned out not to be without risks where applied, as comprehensively illustrated by Monika Zalnieriute, Lyria Bennett Moses and George Williams. A lack of transparency, consistency and predictability of such automated decisions or human bias that translates

into such programs, they find, could have a severe impact on the rule of law. All of these factors have to be taken into account if technology is to develop its full potential in this sector. In light of the complexities of the technological revolution of the public sector of the law, Christian Djeffal proposes a sustainable AI development framework to think about the impacts of the use of AI systems at a social, technical and governance level. From practice, Dory Reiling then shares her professional experiences in bringing a court into the digital age, a goal worth pursuing but not easy to achieve. Lastly, Cedric Vanleenhove analyses the potential role of social media in legal proceedings, a technology that might help solve some typical problems of the analog world.

In the third part of the book, we learn about some of the multiple ways that technology influences the law in civil society. Gianluca Sgueo explores the potential of gamification as a tool for digital advocacy. Siddharth Peter de Souza then shows us that we can re-shape legal communication taking into account inter-disciplinary influences of design and visualisation. However, the promise of technology fixing the global access to justice crisis will not come true all too easily. Alistair Alexander and Mira Suleimenova demonstrate how privacy issues play a key role in all levels of the legal tech revolution. They present practical solutions and an artistic approach to engage stakeholders and raise their awareness. Lastly, Astrid Wiik illustrates how potential solutions always need to be based on a firm understanding of how law and technology operate in the specific socio-cultural context of the target community. Hence, she argues, development cooperation needs to directly engage with communities for interventions to be effective and meaningful.

In the final part of the book, we look at legal education. Since fundamental change and disruption in one sector of the law is unlikely to leave the others untouched, we ask the question if the education sector is changing too. One thing seems clear: Law schools and universities have to start producing tomorrow's lawyers today if they want to satisfy future demand on the labour market. As Maeve Lavelle describes, legal education, together with the whole profession seems to be caught up in an identity crisis. Similarly, Aviva Rotenberg observes a reluctance of the profession to engage in its own future and offers concrete strategies of promoting change. Cláudio Lucena and Ana Paula Camelo offer concrete solutions by presenting a roadmap for the future of legal education. They further engage, among many others, in the key question of how much coding skills future lawyers will need. In some cases, however, progress is made with no plan or strategy at all as we learn from Angelo Dube. He tells the story about how technology helped keep up legal education despite university

shutdowns in the context of the 2015–2016 FeesMustFall protests in South Africa.

F. Conclusion

By drawing on both scholars and practitioners reflecting on debates around the future of law and the changes that are taking place due to technological innovation, this book seeks to embed and mainstream discussions on access to justice into discussions on the future of law. It begins by mapping innovations taking place around the world and identifying the different locations for innovation, next it examines what embedding access and empowerment can mean for a technological innovation and lastly it examines ways to plug the gap through focusing on aspects of diversity, users and scale. In order to do this, it provides an analysis of how questions of access to justice can be addressed in different parts of the legal industry; second, it draws from conversations in both the Global North and Global South, to showcase the diversity in experiences and expertise in addressing technological innovation in the legal sector; and third, offers a dialogue between theory and practice that allows for both practical and reflective essays on the nature of changes in the legal sector.

There is now further impetus among legal tech entrepreneurs to apply legal technologies for the common good, which is evident through the first Law for Good conference in London in October 2019 as a spin-off from Legal Geek. The time is now ripe to fuel and structure the debate on legal tech for access to justice. As innovation is driven by the big law firms and technology is developed and applied by them first – could pro bono work be a space for translating some of the technology into access to justice solutions? Can the public sector and regulators incentivise different players to contribute to the field by encouraging and developing innovation policies? Can legal education which, is gearing up to address the need for new skill sets, also spearhead a responsibility revolution among new lawyers? Or must such change be driven by civic tech enterprises who can act as effective power brokers? We have seen that while technology can help address social challenges, it is important to ensure that to actually achieve something, there is an infrastructure that supports such innovation. This is to ensure that we are not just left with techno-fixes, which do not have a long-term impact. Technology can address barriers to access to justice – however, it needs a concerted and systematic effort to amplify, structure and translate its impacts to be relevant in different contexts.

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