

## Chapter 5

# Cultural and Social Context

### ABSTRACT

*Chapter 5 examines the cultural and social contexts identified in past models and how they are incorporated into the new. These contexts and their influencing factors feature strongly in the literature on women in technology and are often blamed for deterring women from choosing IT education or careers. However, it is concluded that in freer societies, their influence is much less than often claimed, and ameliorating interventions are correspondingly ineffective.*

*I warmly welcome Decade Of Women and all initiatives to promote SDG5 and full gender equality. Closing the gender gap is critical for women's opportunities, but also for development, prosperity and peace in a broader perspective. Closing the gender gap in the technology sector will be crucial in assuring the highest speed possible in technology development and in assuring that it is used to its full advantage. Liv Tørres - Executive Director, Nobel Peace Center*

Cultural and Social contexts feature strongly throughout the literature on women in technology. Given that the majority of research on this topic is in the social science field, it is not surprising that the key factors identified as influencing female participation in computing, often deterring them from choosing future technology education or careers in IT, have tended to have social science roots.

This chapter explores both the cultural and social factors raised in the past research, with each context represented sequentially. But first, to spotlight

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how cultural and social contexts may be changing themselves at a speed far outpacing the ability of researchers and policy makers to react, let alone direct, it opens with ‘Global Digital Communities’. This focuses on the Decade *Of Women*, #weunitewe movement launched in 2018.

## **Global Digital Communities**

More than 30% of the global population now uses social media platforms to connect, learn, and share information (Schwab, 2016). Now Blockchain is enabling an even more powerful form of digital collaboration. Co-innovation will come from emerging Community Token Economies. Burke (2017) published a seminal whitepaper thought piece on how value can be captured and delivered through these economies, predicting how digital communities will connect and form networks or cooperatives through them.

Users can have direct access to token capital, investment and a real interest in the system. They can be rewarded or paid with tokens. The more the user uses or promotes the product, the stronger the product and underlying blockchain become. The user is no longer a passive consumer of a service; they are a stakeholder. In a Community Token Economy, individuals rather than companies or sectors become the agents of innovation in a distributed model of collaboration whose roots in blockchain provide both an incorruptible public ledger and new sophisticated incentive systems.

Global collaboration is the key. Beyond the different projects, there are groups forming which aim to connect the blockchain community or connect on key social issues. These include the Global Blockchain Academy for Girls, Consenys blockchain for social good, Fintech4good, People of Blockchain, Women in Blockchain, the Digital Commerce Associations and Global Blockchain Forum. There is some connectivity among these groups but there is potential to build more and create a global, decentralised network collaborating to build a better world.

As Burke (2017) points out, most ICOs don’t acknowledge the fact that creating a token is creating a new digital economy. Few have given much thought to how they want that new economy to behave and be sustained. We predict that many of these communities will change over time, from speculative communities to agents for real change. They may be about climate change, saving the oceans, banking the unbanked, bringing women into the economy, or predicting the next epidemic – time will tell. “Community Token

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