

Rethinking Inequalities

Social Sciences Winter School of Pondicherry 2022

November 28 – December 2, 2022

Pondicherry



CONCEPT OF THE SSWSP

The Social Sciences Winter School in Pondicherry (SSWSP) is an Indo-French cooperation that has been designed as a programme of intensive and multidisciplinary training workshops addressing theoretical and methodological issues in social sciences research. This event provides each and everyone with the opportunity of sharing experiences and research ideas.

This training workshop has four main objectives:

- To train doctoral (eventually postdoctoral) students on methodological and crosscutting approaches for research on complex issues;
- To build up research capacity-building, and provide each and every one with the opportunity of knowledge transfer, sharing experiences and research ideas;
- To strengthen Indo-French cooperation in research in India, through the creation of an academic network of researchers in India and France working on South Asia;
- To consolidate a community of young scholars in India.

Since 2014, the SSWSP has trained 263 students from all over India. It involved the participation of 94 scholars from India and France across key disciplines of social sciences (anthropology, economics, geography, political sciences, population studies and sociology). Over its five editions, the SSWSP has covered key issues for India and for research in social sciences, ranging from health, heritage, labour, mobility, sustainability and water resources.

As COVID-19 related restrictions are being lifted, the SSWSP is returning in 2022.

RETHINKING INEQUALITIES

Inequalities are at the heart of many research and public debates in India and at the global level. Goal 10 of the Sustainable Development Goals [\[1\]](#) focuses on “reducing inequality within and among countries”. By generating more incomes for the poorest and promoting the social, economic and political inclusion of marginalized and discriminated groups, every country should ensure equal opportunity and reduce inequalities of outcome for all by 2030. Such ambitious targets stem partly from the realization that the progress made through the Millennium Development Goals (2002-15) on several indicators have not led to a reduction in inequalities, on the contrary. Deeply entrenched intersecting inequalities undermined the overall progress of the MDGs in many countries [\[2\]](#). It is not simply that inequalities are bad for the people that are discriminated against and marginalized. High inequalities in a country tend to lead to a slower economic growth overall, and an exacerbation of environmental and health hazards for everyone. India is unfortunately a case in point. While average income and educational levels have improved over the past decades, upward mobility in India has remained limited [\[3\]](#). Intergenerational upward mobility across caste, space, and gender remains limited as well. While India’s per capita GDP increased five times between 2000 and 2019, the Gini coefficient that measures income inequality has increased to 35.7 per cent in 2011 and to 47.9 per cent in 2018 [\[4\]](#). Under-five mortality has decreased by 50% in India between 2000 and 2017 [\[5\]](#). Nevertheless geographic and economic inequalities of under-five mortality have increased across the country. Under-five mortality is now five times higher in Madhya Pradesh than in Kerala. In India, as in many other countries, the social, economic and

health burden of COVID-19 pandemic and lockdowns has been harder on sections of the population that were most exposed to inequalities. India's youth was adversely affected by the closing of schools, universities and the loss of jobs. There is also a strong recognition that rising inequalities and accelerating global environmental change are strongly interlinked through cross-scale feedback and the multidimensional nature of inequality [6].

Inequalities have been a central question in social sciences. What are the root causes of inequalities? How do inequalities impact people's opportunities in contemporary societies? How do we measure inequality factors (income, education, health, location, gender, language...) and outcomes and for what end? What are the policy options to provide social and economic inclusion in India? How have social mobilizations and collective actions challenged inequalities and led to new distributions of social, economic and political power? How do we account for micro and macro level processes of inequalities (re)production and resistance? How do we address the issue of inequalities in research design and methodology? How do we build interdisciplinary frameworks to analyse inequalities and their outcomes?

Returning to previous SSWSP programmes, inequalities have been a constant underlying theme for each edition, either by looking at their causes, their outcomes or ways to tackle them through public mobilization and policies. By positioning explicitly inequalities as the central theme of the SSWSP 2022, we wish to offer a time and a space for participants to reflect more deeply on the various dimensions of inequalities in their research, and on the way inequalities intersect and compound each others with far ranging implications for people, the environment and policies.

PROGRAMME

Workshop 1 – Spatial and Environmental Inequalities in Indian cities

This workshop will explore spatial and environmental inequalities in Indian cities. 15 years of programs (JJNNURM, AMRUT, PMAY-U, SBM-U, Smart City Mission) and investments for urban development have led to some changes for water supply, transports, sanitation and housing in many Indian cities. Nevertheless poor access to basic amenities and services and exposure to environmental hazards (air pollution, vector-borne diseases) remain, and urban segregation pushes poor urban dwellers on the fringes of the cities. The outcomes of many national programs for urban development have been barely assessed in terms of reduction of inequalities.

By returning to some research project cases (CHALLINEQ, GLOBALSMOG) and public domain data we will invite participants to question concepts of spatial and environmental justice in Indian cities. Who gets access to what in an Indian city? How do we measure inequalities in space? How are spatial inequalities compounding other inequalities? How do we collect information to characterize the exposure to environmental factors and the access to amenities? What are the methodological challenges we face while using spatial information to characterize the environment and amenities in cities?

While the focus will be on Indian cities, the workshop will be an opportunity for participants to reflect on the use of public domain data, Geographic Information System, crowdsourcing and crowdmapping methodologies in order to assess policies and programs outcomes in terms of equity.

Workshop 2 – Economic Inequalities and Sustainability

Economic inequality, in some quarters, continues to be justified for the incentives it generates for economic growth. Recent literature however questions this premise, pointing to the adverse consequences of high inequality for sustaining development. Further, the anticipation that economic inequality in developing regions will reduce after reaching a particular threshold level of income as suggested by Kuznets, has been belied by recent trends. Both within countries and

international inequalities have been widening since the second half of the 20th century. Such macro trends have micro and meso level implications. Who gains and who loses? Why and how are gains of economic growth unevenly spread? How do economic, social and political institutions mediate this process? Importantly, such inequalities also interact and constrain the pathways for ecological sustainability?

What are the pathways through which inequality undermines livelihoods and ecologies? On another register, if uneven development is an inherent feature of capitalist growth process, how does this unevenness intersect with other sources of vulnerability such as caste, gender and religion? Does the inequality-generative logic of new growth processes differ from earlier growth regimes? If yes, how? This workshop will address key aspects of these dimensions of inequality. In addition, the sessions will also focus on explaining measures of inequalities across social groups, space and gender in India. Emphasis will be placed on interpretations of such measures and the limitations of standard measures. Qualitative methods that focus on poverty producing processes and how they can complement quantitative metrics of poverty will also be discussed.

Workshop 3 – Interrogating and Narrating Inequalities - Youth Anxieties and Aspirations in India Today

Inequalities sit in many places. In this exploration, we will address intersectional inequalities experienced by Indian youth as they navigate their entry into adulthood. This workshop will make visible, and open for discussion, the structural hierarchies, and everyday acts of power that young women and men must face at home, at school and at work. The 'NEET' (*not in employment, education or training*) category captures the systemic exclusion of youth, and its vulnerability to popular politics in contemporary India. In the case of young women, home, school and work are spaces of inequity and of struggle for self-definition and autonomy. These spaces are saturated with repressive patriarchal ideologies that fix the woman's role in the family and act as 'inherited systems of inequality and oppressions'.

The workshop will examine specific discriminatory factors, such as caste, class and gender, but also the modalities through which these are mediated - one example being regional language practices and the ways in which educational policies take them into consideration. The criteria of inclusion and exclusion in higher education reveal to us how the manual and mental hierarchy with a bias towards English language training has worked since colonial times. We will explore the different ways in which it is being reproduced within curricula and pedagogies of a single dominant model of modern university. Access to quality education, the field of study or training undertaken, as well as an individual's social and linguistic capital all contribute to shaping the chances for youth to enter the labor market and their perspectives for professional advancement.

Participants will seek to identify the emergent spaces of conflict, negotiation, and resistance to map the enigmatic terrain of youth publics in India.

PARTICIPANTS

The Social Sciences Winter School in Pondicherry is open to Doctoral and Master Students of all fields in social sciences. Trainees will be selected on the basis of their qualifications, while taking into account the value of the training with regards to their research or professional projects.

The trainers will be from various disciplinary backgrounds and the teams will be international, composed of young and senior researchers originating from Indian universities and research centres of excellence, as well as from abroad.

VENUE

The plenary sessions and the workshops will take place at the [UMISARC](#) (Pondicherry University) from November 28 to December 2, 2022.

REGISTRATION

The deadline for submission of application is **September 16, 2022**.

Please fill in and submit the electronic application form via the following form:

<https://forms.gle/okYebtW1uGMe5xS2A>

The application should further include a full CV and the Postgraduate degree certificate to be sent at sswsp@protonmail.com

The Selection Committee will confirm your participation **by October 1, 2022**.

The registration fees of Rs.4,000 are payable on arrival (Rs.1,500 for students from the Pondicherry University).

Selected students will be offered accommodation and food in Pondicherry for the duration of the programme.

CONTACT

All correspondence should be addressed to the team of coordinators: sswsp@protonmail.com

More information and detailed programme will soon be available on the website of the Winter School: <http://winterspy.hypotheses.org>

ORGANIZING COMMITTEE

Bertrand Lefebvre (IFP), Barbara Curda (IFP), Senthil Babu (IFP), Delphine Thivet (IFP), Marine Al Dahdah (IFP), Cécile Hoorelbeke (IFP), Blandine Ripert (IFP), Ajit Menon (MIDS), M Vijayabaskar (MIDS), S. Anandhi (MIDS), Aarti Kawlra (IIAS), A Kalaiyaran (Brown University), A. Subramanyam Raju (UMISARC), Christophe Jalil Nordman (IRD), Anne Casile (IRD), Lorraine Kennedy (CEIAS)

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