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 students on methodological and crosscutting approaches for research on complex issues;
- To build up research capacity, and provide knowledge transfer, sharing experiences and research ideas;
- To strengthen international cooperation, through the creation of an academic network of researchers;
- To consolidate a community of young scholars in India.

Since 2014, the SSWSP has trained 300 students from all over India. It involved the participation of 100 scholars from India and France across key disciplines of social sciences (anthropology, economics, geography, political sciences, population studies and sociology). Over its six editions, the SSWSP has covered key issues for India and for research in social sciences, ranging from health, heritage, labour, mobility, inequalities, sustainability and water resources.

2023 EDITION : Digital & Society

With multiple lockdowns and social distancing, the boom in teleworking, e-learning and e-commerce has fuelled demand for intensive connectivity and laid bare digital divides around the globe. Technologies, such as computers, smartphones and the internet, are too often seen as tools that neutrally contribute to digitisation: the technical process of converting information to a digital format. Social scientists critically investigate these technologies as “devices”, in the broadest sense, that structure the social world and through which people actively transform societies. Social sciences have explored how digital technology is changing our institutions, and our lives. Digital worldmaking is driven by social, political and economic choices. Understanding these choices, and the interplay between the various actors, individuals, public authorities and private operators who make them, is a core focus of the social sciences. Digital social research looks at how digital technology, as perceived through its instruments (the internet, social networks, mobile applications, databases), is reshaping our institutions, and our ways of working, exchanging and being together. It also documents what individuals do to digital, through uses, mobilisations, repurposings and acts of rejection. While the notions of “network society” or “wireless world” provide a relatively uncritical approach to the current expansion of digital technology, work on internet policies and algorithms and on the logics of uberisation of our societies describe both the considerable extension of the “power” of digital technology and the way it structures social practices and commitments while creating market value. All these scholars analyse how being-in-the-world increasingly involves relations between humans and digital devices that are generative, contributing to the making of social, cultural, economic and political worlds.

However, just as globalisation has often been used as a synonym for Americanisation, the digitalisation of the world is assumed to be dominated by the corporatist America of Big Tech: the GAFAM five. Indeed, the West also attracts and concentrates the majority of social science production on digitalisation. Yet the new champions of digital are also yesterday’s developing countries, in Asia and in Africa, with China and India
leading the way. Their huge markets have five times more internet users than the United States, and their factories and digital back offices supply the entire planet. Very recently, China has been studied as a counterpoint to an American-led digitalisation of the world. And digital social science analysis seems to be moving more and more towards a new bipolarity, with China and the US seen as the countries competing for the global IT challenge, and for our data, influencing the rest of the world.\textsuperscript{2} Such a bipolar analysis, however, overlooks the role played by other regional powers and alternative models, particularly from so-called developing countries. How, indeed, does digitalisation unfold in non-Western settings, within fragile democracies, or flimsy economies?

This Winterschool edition will give voice to distinct digital practices and epistemologies emerging in the myriad of non-Western countries, their specific challenges, and the associated demand for alternative models. But it also plays with the many geographical denominations still inhabiting digital scholarship, disaggregating familiar oppositions and prevailing dichotomies such as North/South, Western/non-Western, or developed/underdeveloped. The digital technology deployed in India, Kenya or Senegal reveals singular forms of experimentation. For example, the low level of bank account ownership has helped spark a flurry of innovative virtual payment processes offered by players in the digital economy. Studies of mobile money usage in Kenya or biometrics in South Africa and India show that the massive digitisation experiments taking place there are spilling over into the rest of the world. A central instrument of North-South development policies, digital is also a factor in reconfigurations between the Souths and is reviving old questions about the unequal transmission of technical knowledge, and about relations of hegemony and dependence. This Winterschool will also question the way in which so-called “peripheral” or “less developed” countries are appropriating and creating innovative digital systems and thus offering alternative models of digital worlding. It proposes to bring the analysis of digitalisation beyond the Atlantic and towards a still unexplored area of investigation, thus providing a new perspective on global socio-technical dynamics.

**Interdisciplinarity, methods and tools**

Digitalisation is an ongoing and highly dynamic process resulting from particular choices, policies, coalitions and economic constellations. It raises transnational issues – its financing, technical implementation and infrastructures are all managed by different actors located around the globe – but it also has local features and specificities that depend on its context of deployment. The Winterschool will combine online and offline methods to explore the digital & Society through its cultural, economic, political, environmental and infrastructural dimensions. If we are to gauge the impact of digitalisation on the environment, on local inhabitants, on a country’s economy, then it is crucial to mix approaches from different disciplines and to investigate different countries and settings around the world. In order to do this, the Winterschool will mobilise interdisciplinary skills and qualifications coming from the different social science disciplines. Since the phenomenon concerns the whole world, a multi-sited approach will be adopted, comparing the situation of different countries while at the same time gathering knowledge at a supranational scale.

Social researchers are increasingly encouraged to innovate in their methodological practices, in ways that have led to both the invention of new tools for research and new ways of thinking about the kinds of knowledge that social research can be expected to produce. Digital technologies have extended the kinds of research tools used by social scientists and perceptions of the social are being remade by these new methods. Working on and with digital technology, this 2023 edition of the Winterschool seeks to contribute to a reflection on methodological innovation in social sciences, and especially to the links between the classical qualitative ethnographic and biographic approach and a web-based computer-driven quantitative analysis of the social in the pursuit of answers to questions about the nature of society, culture, politics and economics in the digital era.

\textsuperscript{1} “USA and China account for 75 per cent of all patents related to blockchain technologies, 50 per cent of global spending on internet-of-things, at least 75 per cent of the cloud computing market, and 90 per cent of the market capitalization value of the world’s 70 largest digital platform companies. Seven “super platforms” – Microsoft, Apple, Amazon, Google, Facebook, Tencent and Alibaba – account for two thirds of the total market value. Thus, in many digital technological developments, the rest of the world [is] trailing considerably far behind the United States and China” (UNCTAD 2020).
PROGRAM

DAY 1 – MONDAY, 13th of NOVEMBER
Welcoming and Registration of participants
Introduction to the event: Blandine Ripert (for IFP), Marine Al Dahdah (for GDRI DI3AA), Lorraine Kennedy (for EHESS), University of Pondichéry.
Plenary Talk 1 (connected to Workshop 1 on STS/Infrastructural approaches):
Janaki Srinivasan (IIIT-Bangalore) on The Political Lives of Information
Plenary Talk 2 (connected to Workshop 2 on qualitative methods to study the digital)
Solomon Benjamin (IIIT-Chennai) on the ethnography of everyday practices
Plenary Talk 3 (connected to Workshop 3 on quantitative methods to study the digital)
Aasim Khan (IIIT-Delhi) on digital traces and networks

DAY 2 to 4- TUESDAY till THURSDAY 14th till 16th of NOVEMBER
Workshop 1 - Infrastructures/STS approaches
Bidisha Chaudhuri (IIIT-B)/Laurene Le Cozanne (EHESS)/ Janaki Srinivasan (IIIT-B)/ Vidya Subramanian (Jindal).
Workshop 2 - Qualitative methods & Writing
Vincent Duclos (UQAM)/ Christine Ithuride (CNRS-Passage)/ Loraine Kennedy (CNRS-CESA)
Workshop 3 - Computational/Quantitative/Mixed methods
Anupam Das (IIIM-Kozhikode) / Mathieu Ferry (INED)/ Aasim Khan (IIIT-Delhi)

Day 5- FRIDAY 17th of NOVEMBER
Plenary Talk 4: Renaud Colson (Université de Nantes) on Law and the Digital.
Plenary Round table around digital humanities: Bidisha Chauduri (IIIT-B), Senthil Babu Dhandapani, Balasubramanian Dhandapani & Ganesh Gopal (IFP).

WORKSHOPS' PRESENTATION

Workshop 1: Infrastructures/STS approaches
Digital public infrastructures and digital public goods are the new buzzword in international development and policy circles. While infrastructures have been a widely studied concept and also a methodological approach in STS, digital public infrastructures reinvigorate new debates around the same. Infrastructure that typically exists in the background as invisible and is frequently taken for granted (Star & Ruhleder, 1994) has sprung to the forefront of all public discussions, political speeches and policy debates. Meanwhile, the proliferation of digital technologies is fostering the emergence of infrastructures that tend to challenge the boundaries between what is termed “public” and “private”.

In this workshop, we will draw on the classic approaches of STS to analyse digitalisation as an infrastructural process, in different contexts and through the circulations to which it gives rise. We will explore the benefits of historical work on projects often framed as “disruptive”, in India and other countries. What are the material, technical and social organisations on which digital projects are based? How do they affect the allocation of power and resources within the societies concerned? What attempts are made to regulate these projects? How do these projects inspire or enable others?
Teaching Team

Bidisha Chaudhuri is an Associate Professor in the domain of IT and Society and the academic coordinator of the M.Sc. (Digital Society) programme at IIIT Bangalore. She received her PhD from South Asia Institute at Heidelberg University, Germany. She teaches graduate and undergraduate courses on Science and Technology Studies, Digital Sociology and Technology Ethics. Her research interests include, technology and governance, technology and work and technology and ethics.

Laurène Le Cozanel is Max Weber Fellow at the European University Institute. Her research focuses on government uses of digital technology and their regulation. She has worked on the history of personal data protection, combining STS, socio-history and sociology of law, and is also interested in interoperability policies. She is the co-winner of the 2022 Eicher Prize organised by the Institute for Research on Education, for her political science thesis on the “vocationalisation” of university programs, and has held postdoctoral positions at EHESS and CNAM (France).

Janaki Srinivasan is an Associate Professor in the domain of IT and Society at IIIT Bangalore. Her research examines the political economy of information technology-based development initiatives. She uses ethnographic research to examine how gender, caste and class shape the use of such technologies. Her work has explored these interests in the context of Indian digital inclusion initiatives focussed on community computer centres, mobile phones, identity systems and open information systems. Currently, she is exploring privacy, algorithmic control and the role of intermediaries in digital transactions, with an emphasis on the domains of financial inclusion and work automation. Janaki has a PhD in Information Management and Systems from UC Berkeley and Masters degrees in Physics and in Information Technology from IIT Delhi and IIIT Bangalore.

Vidya Subramanian is an Associate Professor and Associate Dean (Planning and Strategy) at Jindal Global Law School. Her research is loosely framed by two large issues: the first is the colonisation of the everyday so-called real world by the digital; and the second is how power permeates and is implicated in such technologies. Her work has straddled several academic fields such as Science, Technology, and Society (STS), Sociology, Media Studies, and Sports Studies. Prior to joining Jindal Global Law School, she has held postdoctoral positions at Harvard University and IIT Bombay, after having completed her PhD from the Jawaharlal Nehru University (JNU) New Delhi.

Learning Objectives

- To become familiar with the main concepts and approaches of STS - in particular infrastructure studies - likely to shed light on the contemporary development of digital technologies;
- To learn how to translate these approaches into an empirical research protocol capable of addressing all the dimensions required, in particular the political issues surrounding digital infrastructures;
- To use these approaches to develop comparisons between national contexts, between different uses of digital technology, etc.
- To explore emblematic case studies in depth, particularly from a historical perspective.

Syllabus

Session 1: Introduction to Infrastructure studies: A conceptual vocabulary
Session 2: Politics of Infrastructure: Who, what and where is the public in digital public infrastructure?
Session 3: Policy and Regulation of Digital Infrastructures
Workshop 2 – Qualitative Methods & Writing

Digital technologies have transformed the tools used by social scientists and these new methods are reshaping perceptions of social phenomena. This workshop on qualitative methods seeks to contribute to the reflection on the links between classical ethnographic approaches and emerging forms of digital-centered analysis. How to study digital giants or small IT entrepreneurs? How to build and deploy fieldwork on invisible infrastructures? How to grasp power relations enmeshed in technical devices and in digitalization processes? How to analyze day-to-day digital usages and practices in contrasted socio-economic contexts? How to write about digital objects in social sciences? How is ethnographic writing transformed (or not) by digitalization?

The workshop will present a diversity of case studies questioning the nature of society, culture, politics and economics in the digital area. The trainers will engage with a selection of key articles on qualitative methods of the digital and will propose fieldwork exercises based on the different research projects of the participants. Using a set of tools and participatory methods, they will also help the trainees to articulate both their qualitative fieldwork and analysis. The workshop will be particularly attentive to the complexity of writing about digital objects and will help the trainees to draw up their results and compose their future scientific production.

Teaching team

Vincent Duclos is Assistant Professor in the Departement of Social and Public Communication at the University of Quebec in Montreal (UQAM). Trained as an anthropologist, his research examines the social and political implications of the growing entanglement of digital technology and medicine, including in digital health and disease surveillance. He has conducted research in India and West Africa. His research is conducted at the intersection of cultural anthropology and Science and Technology Studies (STS). His work was published in many scholarly journals which include Cultural Anthropology, BioSocieties, Medical Anthropology Quarterly, and The Lancet. He is currently completing a monograph titled Life at a Distance: Medicine, Nation, and Speculation in India’s Pan-African e-Network.

Christine Ithuribide is a research fellow at the French National Centre for Scientific Research (CNRS) at Laboratory Passages UMR 5319, Bordeaux. Her research focuses on the social and spatial reconfigurations of cultural industries in India in the context of globalization and digital transition. After a PhD on the geography of contemporary art in Mumbai (ENS Editions, 2022), she has studied the deployment of global technology players and their consequences in the local dynamics of music, audiovisual and craft sectors in India. She is the coordinator of the International Research Network « SOUTH-STREAM » (2023–2027). Her recent publications include articles in Global Media and Communication and SAMAJ.

Lorraine Kennedy is a research director at the French National Centre for Scientific Research (CNRS) at the Center for Himalayan and South Asian Studies (CESAH) at the EHESS in Paris. Her research, at the crossroads of political economy and political geography, focuses on contemporary India and engages with state spatial rescaling, the politics of urban development and metropolitan governance. Her current research investigates the deployment in urban space of economic development strategies conceived at various state scales and analyzes their social, spatial and environmental implications. Recent publications include an article in Regional Studies and a co-edited book, India’s Greenfield Urban Future.
Learning Objectives

- To generate a deeper understanding of qualitative methods of the digital.
- To contribute to students’ awareness about the different tools and approaches to elaborate their research project and fieldwork;
- To help students interpret their qualitative empirical material and formulate their results;
- To provide students with writing tools that will help them to prepare their future scientific contribution and communication.

Workshop 3 – Computational and mixed methods

Concepts are at the center of social science research and the starting point of any research project, particularly those seeking to test theories through empirical analysis. In this workshop, we will begin by considering the key conceptual change which has driven the adoption of new methods and computational models in the study of social life.

In particular, the course will explore two major approaches.

First, ‘network’ approaches have become central to researchers in contemporary political and social theory. Drawing on historical and empirical studies of social movements, the course will introduce key conceptual innovations and theories including those relating to ‘strength of weak ties’ and ‘small world’ arguments which explain ongoing social phenomenon. In an intensive reading of the core text alongside dataset development from online sources, students will then consider how far can digital trace data provide the empirical base for the analysis of social movements and more broadly trends in political life. Once they have the dataset, students will then begin to ‘code’ using very basic computational methods, and elementary techniques to plot ‘network graphs’ and alongside develop their skill to interpret and make sense of the emerging patterns.

Second, ‘text mining’ and ‘lexical analysis’ have also expanded, making it possible to turn large amounts of words into numbers and produce statistical analyses. We will explore these methods, focusing on the classic question of social homogamy, the union between people from the same social group. While classical social science methods enable us to work on unions that have already been ‘achieved’ (married couples), matrimonial sites track unions that are ‘in the making,’ and thus allow us to better understand individual and collective preferences in the search for a life partner. We will discuss in depth how digital methods provide a new site to understand the formation of unions between partners, compared with other ethnographic, interview or statistical survey methods. We will see that computational methods are yet another tool in the social scientist’s toolbox. In doing so, we will introduce simple tools for visualizing lexical analysis methods.

Through this practical introduction, students will come to understand how digital trace data including from APIs of social networking sites such as Twitter or matrimonial websites can be useful to make sense of contemporary social change. In doing so, students will then be able to reformulate their research questions or develop new ones, and explore how network related concepts and lexicographic tools can help them understand their subject of study from an entirely new perspective.
Teaching team

**Anupam Das** is an Associate Professor in Humanities & Liberal Arts in Management at the Indian Institute of Management Kozhikode. He teaches courses on Business Communication, Application of Linguistics, Rhetorical Analyses, and Digital Social Research Methods and Analyses. His primary research interests include Computer-Mediated Communication, Pragmatics of Human Communication, Discourse Analysis, and Pedagogy of Business Communication. He has published in various reputed international journals which include Information, Communication & Society, Language & Communication, and International Journal of Designs for Learning. He earned his Ph.D. in Linguistics with a minor in Information Science from Indiana University Bloomington, USA.

**Mathieu Ferry** is a sociologist, and currently a Postdoctoral Research Fellow at the French Institute for Demographic Studies (Ined, France). His research interests are in the study of social stratification, class and educational mobility, and lifestyle segmentation. His projects combine exploratory statistical tools, statistical modelling, and in-depth interviewing. In this regard, he has developed a critical interest in the use of web harvested data for social sciences.

**Aasim Khan** has a PhD in Politics and Public Policy (Contemporary India) and is currently Assistant Professor, Department of Social Sciences and Humanities, IIIT- Delhi. As a social scientist he has cross-disciplinary interests in theories of social networks, Big Data and more broadly, the impact of technology on the economy and society. In political theory he has a keen interest in concepts of governance, mediation and leadership, and he’s published extensively on these themes, interrogating their meaning in the context of digitalization, particularly in the context of South Asia. Aasim was educated in Delhi (St. Stephen’s College and Jamia Millia Islamia) and London (SOAS and King’s College London) and in 2022-2023 he was a Fulbright Nehru scholar at the Watson Institute for Public and International Affairs, Brown University, USA.

Learning Objectives

- To generate a deeper understanding of quantitative methods used to study the digital;
- To contribute to student’s awareness about network and lexical analysis;
- To help students interpret digitally-mined datasets;
- To provide students with technical tools using innovative survey methods and data in a practical way;
- To incite critical engagement with the various quantitative and qualitative methods used to examine digital traces;

PARTICIPANTS

The Social Sciences Winter School in Pondicherry is open to Doctoral and Postdoctoral scholars 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 event will take place at the French Institute from November 13th to 17th, 2023.
REGISTRATION

The deadline for submission of application is **September 10th, 2023**. Please fill in and submit the electronic application form via the following form: [https://forms.gle/LS4ZYQAPa6s85DNv6](https://forms.gle/LS4ZYQAPa6s85DNv6)

The application should further include a full CV and the Postgraduate degree certificate to be sent at winterschool@ifpindia.org

The Selection Committee will confirm your participation by **September 30th, 2023**.

Selected students will be offered accommodation and food in Pondicherry for the duration of the programme. No registration fees are asked but **students have to cover their transportation costs and to send their confirmed tickets to the organising committee before 15th of October**, otherwise their seat will be reallocated according to the waiting list.

CONTACT of COORDINATORS

All correspondence should be addressed to the coordinators **Marine Al Dahdah & Aurosree Paul** through this unique email ID: winterschool@ifpindia.org. More information and detailed programme will be available on the website of the Winter School: [http://winterspy.hypotheses.org](http://winterspy.hypotheses.org)

ORGANISING COMMITTEE

Marine Al Dahdah (IFP), Aurosree Paul (IFP), Loraine Kennedy (CESAH), Senthil Babu (IFP), Delphine Thivet (IFP), Bertrand Lefebvre (IFP), Cécile Hoorelbeke (IFP), Blandine Ripert (IFP/CESAH), Janaki Srinivasan (IIIT-B).

PARTNERS

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