

Abstract

Radical changes for sustainable and equitable ICT in times of compounding crises

Time is running out on limiting the extent of human-made destruction on our planetary foundations, as we are overshooting at least five out of the nine planetary limits. Our way of life in the Global North is one of the primary drivers for this worsening situation and requires fundamental change for a transition to sustainable societies. Despite having powerful and efficient technologies at our disposal, we have thus far failed to bring the anthropogenic pressure on our planet into balance with its boundaries. Among all tools, information and communication technologies (ICT) have grown enormously in production, deployment, and reach over the past decades, spreading to almost all aspects of our daily lives at the individual and industrial level. They have undoubtedly brought benefits to society (e.g., near-instant communication, access to knowledge, medical technology), but continue to cause severe socio-environmental damages and fall short from being equitable throughout their life cycle. Instead of just trying to improve our ICT in the traditional sense, our hypothesis relies on questioning our relationship with ICT and re-evaluating how we can act towards a sustainable and equitable future.

The goal of the Doctoral Summer School on Sustainable ICT (SICT) 2023 is to break away from the dominant social, economic, and political paradigm that is currently fostering the infinite infinities of ICT (e.g., infinite growth, scalability, resources, data). We aim to explore radical changes that challenge the assumptions or completely rethink the current dominant capitalist economic model, traditionally focusing on growth – perhaps a more holistic and systemic approach is required? Beyond extractivism and profit-oriented business models, we question the coherence and trends of current industrial road-maps in ICT and their effects on planetary boundaries. Alternative paradigms have emerged in this mindset, such as the low-tech movement, the post-colonial and post-growth movements, and the initiatives around design justice. We don't have to start from scratch, but we can rebuild whilst making the most of what we have.

During the week, we will hear from and connect with scientists, professionals, and change-makers working towards sustainable and equitable ICTs. Through their inputs, we aim to co-develop new imaginaries for radical changes in ICT. SICT 2023 builds on top of three previous editions in which we saw (i) the difficulty to determine whether the impacts of ICT are net-positive or net-negative, (ii) the complex interactions between our growth-based socio-economic systems and digital technologies, and (iii) the important lack of inter- and transdisciplinarity in the current research and innovation processes which biases digital technologies. **In this context, the interdisciplinary doctoral summer school SICT aims at gathering researchers with diverse backgrounds from ICT and beyond. Inviting those working or interested in sustainability to collaborate, experiment with interdisciplinary research, and rethink the road ahead for ICT as well as the way we develop digital technologies for a tomorrow within planetary boundaries.** SICT is a bottom-up project driven by an international team of PhD students, post-docs, and professors aiming to create a space for alternative imaginaries to be presented, discussed, and experienced through workshops, talks, and debates.

We invite PhD students from diverse academic fields to come together for a five-day workshop from July 03 to July 07, 2023, in the area of Grenoble, France. The event will be held in English. To learn more about and register for SICT 2023, please visit <https://www.sictdoctoralschool.com> (Early Bird until June 01). A few places are available to master students. We have a limited number of scholarships available, apply via info@sictdoctoralschool.com.