



UNIVERSITÀ
DEGLI STUDI
DI MILANO



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LAKE COMO SCHOOL OF ADVANCED STUDIES

CALL FOR PARTICIPATION

Lake Como School in Advanced Studies -School in Social Sciences Life-chances in the Digitalized Society: structural transformations and socio-cultural adjustments

Villa del Grumello, Como, June 17 -21, 2024

<https://hris.lakecomoschool.org/>

The planetary diffusion of digital telecommunication over the last two decades has become an integral component of global markets, nation states, corporations, and the individual lives of billions of people. It consists of three layers, each of which are unevenly distributed between East and West, North and South (Ali, 2021; Duarte, 2017; Randell-Moon and Hynes, 2022). First is the infrastructural layer consisting of submarine fiber optics, low-orbit satellites, and data centers that sustains the production, circulation and valorization of data. Second is the layer of interfaces such as mobile devices, smartphones, drones, automated cars, robots, and computers, upon which a third layer of software applications and digital platforms plays a key intermediating role in work, leisure and social cooperation, functioning as an automated system for the extraction, accumulation and elaboration of personal information.

These three socio-technical layers make up the “digital society” and are having a profound impact on social dynamics in politics, law, healthcare, welfare, culture, religion, and education. But their socio-political effects are uneven, reflecting extant power relationships. This is particularly so concerning generative artificial intelligence (AI) and algorithms, evident in cases like “The Gospel”, an AI platform used by the Israeli Defense Force to bomb the Gaza Strip, and the European Union’s pledge to develop the world’s first AI legislation that could exclude migrants from legal protection of experimental surveillance, data extraction, etc.

The winners and losers of the digital revolution are an important topic of discussion. The social sciences can offer crucial insights into understanding how the “digital society” intersects with power, authority, and human rights beyond moral assumptions or technological determinism. The focus of this school is on life chances in the context of an advanced digitalized capitalism. Are we witnessing structural transformations that affect social inequalities and impact social mobility? What kind of socio-cultural adjustments counteract or balance these major issues? When addressing these questions, it is important to keep in mind three caveats. Firstly, healthcare, science, justice, war, or education – all these areas of human life were always been mediated by technology (Hui, 2021) long before the first internet network. Secondly, it is useful to be aware that since the political and cultural debate is being increasingly driven by technological and digital solutionism, one of the challenges for the social sciences is to avoid the trap of “digital exceptionalism”. And thirdly, while tech giants try to hide their political responsibility and economic exploitation by pushing public opinion to moral and deterministic assumptions over AI and automated technology, the social sciences must go beyond the commercialization of socio-technical imaginaries based on the digital and technological sublime (Mosco, 2014; Kim & Jasanoff, 2015), enabling urgent investigations on the genealogy and geography of unnoticed new powers, injustices, forms of exploitation, and social responsibilities.



The School

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Through the contribution of renowned experts in the social sciences, the field will be examined by relevant theoretical approaches and significant case-based empirical material. Participants are asked to actively contribute to dedicated sessions, in which they will present their research project to the class and discuss it with the teaching staff. Contributions alongside the argument will be appreciated in the capacity to trace genealogies, ruptures, and points of continuity between analysis of the past, the present, and the future. The LCSSS is looking for doctoral students and young researchers who study and work on the following topics:

- Digitalization and its impact on life-chances
- Democracy, citizenship, and activism facing the “digital”
- The digitalization of labor between new opportunities and new forms of exploitation
- AI and its impact on life chances and life conducts
- The genealogy and the geography of digital infrastructures
- Big data, algorithmic governmentality, and self-tracking

The registration fee is 250 euro (VAT 22% included), inclusive of lectures, course materials, coffee breaks, lunches, the excursion, the social dinner and wi-fi connection; travel costs and accommodation are not included.

If interested, please apply (including an updated CV, a letter of intent including a description of research project, and a 500-word bio) by filling the form at

<https://hris.lakecomoschool.org/application/>

Application deadline: April 21, 2024

Notification of Acceptance: May 3, 2024

Registration and payment: May 24, 2024

For inquiries about the school and the application process, please contact Cesare Silla (cesare.silla@uniurb.it); for inquiries about the venue of the school, travel, and accommodation, please contact Alessandra Cazzaniga (alessandra.cazzaniga@fondazionealessandrovolta.it).

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