World Social Science Forum

Call for Panels and Papers

The International Social Science Council's 2nd World Social Science Forum (WSSF) will take place on 13-15 October, 2013 in Montréal, Canada.

The theme and focus for the 2013 Forum is "**Social Transformations and the Digital Age**"

The Forum will include plenary presentation/discussion sessions, and parallel panel presentations/discussion sessions. The conference organizers welcome suggestions for alternative or hybrid forms of presentation that take advantage of the features of digital technologies.

Call for Panels

Groups of scholars are invited to submit an abstract for a panel to the WSSF 2013 website http://wssf2013.org/propose-panel

Panel sessions will be about 2 hours in duration, should include 3-6 panelists, and allow ample time for discussion (see "Conditions for Acceptance of Proposals" below). The submission should include an overall title, a short abstract, the name of the coordinator, the names of participants and their institution, and the title of each individual presentation. Please follow the instructions and format indicated on the panel proposal link http://wssf2013.org/propose-panel

Call for Papers

Individual scholars are invited to submit abstracts for papers to the WSSF. Submissions should include a title, a short abstract, name and affiliation of the author/s.

Papers accepted for presentation will be consolidated according to sub-theme by the Forum Scientific Programme Committee into coherent panels.

Click here to propose a paper: http://wssf2013.org/propose-paper

Call for other forms of presentation

Scholars are invited to consider making use of digital technologies (subject to availability of facilities at the conference venue) in presenting their work. Send a short description of the idea, plus name and affiliation to info@wssf2013.org

Deadlines

1. The proposal deadline is 15 January 2013.
2. Applicants will be notified of decisions by April 2013.
3. Successful applicants are expected to provide an extended abstract (2,000 words) to the ISSC no later than **9 September 2013**

Conditions for Acceptance of Proposals

- Funding for full participation at the WSSF is normally each individual's or panel organisation's responsibility.   Accepted participants may also apply in special circumstances for ISSC travel grants and scholarships.   Please refer to the WSSF website for information on application deadlines and other details.
- Proposals must satisfy the WSSF Scientific Programme Committee on the basis of relevance, original content, innovation and/or topicality. Preference will be given to panels that are comparative and cross-regional, interdisciplinary (between social sciences) or trans-disciplinary (between social sciences and natural sciences, humanities, etc.).

Queries on procedures and processes should be sent to: info@wssf2013.org

WORLD SOCIAL SCIENCE FORUM
Montréal, Canada
13-15 October 2013

Social Transformations and the Digital Age

The role of digital technologies in nearly all aspects of life – most notably in the form of "social media" --has been a constant news focus in recent years, and it has also become a major focus of social research.
As far as "social media" are concerned, popular and scholarly accounts about their participatory and transformative potential are usually enthusiastic. Twitter, Facebook, Wikipedia and Wikileaks are lauded for their capacity to harness people's creativity and knowledge, and for their potential to challenge traditional hierarchies in politics, science, and the media. It is claimed these web-based applications have facilitated political uprisings, the solution of scientific problems, and the emergence of hitherto undiscovered talents in music and the arts. Some more critical voices question the validity of such claims, pointing to the dangers of hoax, misinformation, dependency, narcissism, and the loss of privacy.
Yet digital technologies reach far beyond the current "social media" proliferation: in the form of computers and the networks enabling them to communicate with one another they have been in use for decades, and have affected nearly all areas of society, politics, and the economy. They have changed how people think about themselves, how work is organized, how knowledge is produced, and how access to information is regulated. Education, healthcare, shopping, agriculture, finance, security, leisure have all been deeply affected by information and communication technologies.
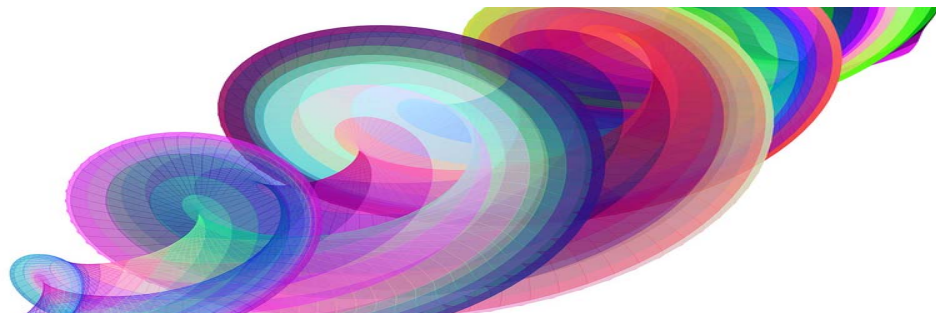
During the **2013 World Social Science Forum in Montréal**, scholars from across the disciplines and across the world will come together to address the ways in which digital technologies are being developed and used, and

- **(First major focus area) how they are transforming different spheres of social life and**

- **(Second major focus area) how they are transforming the social sciences**.

Contributions will address these two overarching themes (see examples of possible foci below). Insights from all disciplines are required to understand these complex changes, and contributions from across the social sciences, from the humanities, and from natural and medical sciences (e.g. the science, technology, engineering and medicine disciplines) are encouraged.

The WSSF will address positive uses of digital technologies, but will also pay attention to the negative and potentially dangerous uses and consequences, and to the unintended and ambivalent outcomes.

Four assumptions underpin the conference ambitions:

Technology matters. How does the design of technology affect possibilities for engagement and participation by different groups within society? Digital technologies are not magic boxes – they have been designed (though not always deliberately) to facilitate some forms of interaction and to make others more difficult.

History matters. What can we learn from previous socio-technical transformations? Digital technologies have been accompanied by promises that they would eliminate repetitive, boring and tedious work, and would improve access to information and entertainment, as well as the quality of social justice and democracy. Many of these same hopes and fears were expressed in relation to the printing press, telegraph and television.

Methods and theories matter. How do digital technologies affect the ways in which researchers define categories, record data, and conduct their analyses? What does this mean for the research questions that can be asked as well as the answers that can be given. Digital technologies open up new possibilities for interdisciplinary and international collaboration, and for new forms of engagement with stakeholders.

Individuals and communities matter. The means by which individuals and communities think about themselves and construct their identities and activities are being reconfigured in the digital age. Is this this assumption valid? Are individuals and communities also influencing digital developments? What kinds of technologies can be developed to support the needs of people today and in the future?

First major focus area:

1. Digital technologies ↔ Social life

What kinds of social transformations are being brought about by the widespread diffusion of digital technologies? The first theme explores the many ways in which digital technologies are affecting how people work, live, and play. It also raises the question of how digital technologies shape what we perceive as being social challenges and imperatives. Digital technologies, and their uses by individuals, organizations and governments, are of enormous interest to scholars across the social sciences as objects of research. The time spent in front of a screen or peering intently at a smaller, handheld device affects not only how people interact with machines and with one another but also influences the development of one's own identity. Concerns are expressed about declining attention spans, and changes to the wiring of the brain. On the other hand, children and adults have access to an enormous range of educational material that was unimaginable a generation ago. What do these changes mean for our lives as social beings? Do online interactions facilitate the emergence of multiple identities where authenticity is elusive, or does the possibility to track oneself and others across multiple domains result in a more integrated self, from which one may never be able to escape? How have digital technologies been taken up in the organization of economic life, facilitating new forms of work, new divisions of labour, new forms of financing? Was the Arab Spring really the Facebook and Twitter revolution? Can digital technologies contribute to the creation of a sustainable environment, or is our pursuit of ever-newer devices part of the problem? Digital technologies raise profound challenges to what we consider to be public and private. Who has the right to see our online material? Who can profit from it? Legal, ethical and regulatory questions abound, for governments and for corporations.

Possible sub-themes to be addressed include the following:

- The digital and the human: cyborgs, post-humans, human enhancement
- The power of Global Markets: nano-second transactions and social governance
- Digital identities: digital natives, digital immigrants, digital outcasts
- Cultural diversity within a globalized media environment
- Family, community and social movements
- E-Knowledge as global commons?
- E-commerce: new forms of work, free labour, pro-sumption
- Creativity in industry and the arts
- Time, work and leisure
- Education, literacy and skills
- Environment & sustainability
- Cyberpolitics: democracy, empowerment and engagement
- Sexual politics, pornography and human slavery
- Media convergence: regulation and control
- War, terrorism and conflict
- Imagining a cyber-dystopia
- Health and well-being
- Poverty and inequality: digital and other divides
- Surveillance, privacy and security

- Representations of digital technologies in film & fiction
- Code: Human-computer interaction/design of hardware and software
- Hacking and gaming
- Other

Second major focus area:

2. Digital technologies ↔ social science (and other disciplines)

How do digital technologies affect the production of knowledge in the social sciences, and in other knowledge domains? The second theme addresses the ways in which the availability of large-scale data, immense computational power, and collaborative tools all affect the ways in which scientists and scholars relate to each other, to their data and sources, to publishers and libraries, and to funders, and to the wider public. Social media are both generative and challenging of different forms of knowledge production and the authority it commands. Digital technologies allow new fields and research practices to emerge, they offer fascinating new ways to represent data and outputs, resulting in new forms of peer review, enhanced publications, and new ways of communicating with stakeholders. In order to take advantage of the many opportunities offered, social scientists are increasingly working across the disciplines, with computer scientists and information specialists in particular, but also with others. Digital technologies also offer new ways for researchers themselves to be evaluated and monitored. Information and knowledge have become important markers of the late 20th century transition to what many see as a new economic mode or regime. Digital technologies have become essential not only to the ways in which people live their daily lives, but also to the ways in which information and knowledge are collected, stored, analysed and distributed in different domains. The production of data is not only important for the production of formalized, codified knowledge, such as in science and medicine, but also for the smooth running of economic and political systems. Sometimes the provision of information and the generation and sharing of knowledge are the result of conscious choices, as when people engage in political debate online or provide details of migratory birds; and sometimes it is a by-product of other activities, as when people buy products online, leaving traces of their search and purchasing activities. Is this data open to researchers, under what conditions? Is Big Data changing how we define and understand expertise and knowledge? When aggregated, such data can become formalized, codified, and commodified; and in the process become of great interest to researchers in the public and private sectors.

Possible sub-themes to be addressed include the following:

- Citizen science: engagement and expertise
- Big data: end of theory?
- Computational (social) science: ways of knowing
- Visualization of data and results
- Libraries and archives
- Collaboration across disciplines and across distance
- Impact, evaluation & accountability
- Ethics of e-research
- Scholarly publishing: does it have a future?
- Open access/open source/open peer review
- Science and research policy
- Commodifying data and research
- Changing research practices
- Other