

IISER Bhopal

Department of Humanities and Social Sciences



DIGITAL GEOGRAPHIES: NEW MODE OF SPACE-MAKING AND SPACE RELATIONS

Date



14 February 2025

Time



3.00 PM

Venue



L2

Prof. Abdul Shaban

Abstract

Digital technologies have transformative and/or disruptive impacts on geographies. They are not only mediating but also changing the relations between society and space, self and space, self and spatial identities, capital and space, labour and space, culture and space, and citizen and state relations. This disruption is generating new geographies infused with many possibilities. Digitalisation has disrupted the usual spatial imaginations of social and cultural communities to make them trans-local, creating digital societies and digital neighbourhoods. The digitalisation is transforming usual social and economic relations shaped by geographies. The distanced and virtual relations are shaping our everyday social lives. Invisibly networked, Digital capitalism has given birth to a new mode of expansionary capitalism to reap the surplus values and profits from peripheries and drain the same to the core. Digitalisation has made it possible for enterprises to operate from a virtual space with strong spatial networks. Amazon, Google, Facebook (now Meta), Twitter (X), Flipkart, and OTT platforms like Netflix, are some examples of the same and together control a trillion-dollar economy. Several of these digital corporations have established their monopolies and control and command the informational flows at the global level. It has massive consequences for the digital labour and welfare of consumers diffused in space. India has also seen a rapid rise of digital capitalism, which has significantly impacted the labour market, shaping the distribution of wealth in a new form. The emerging monopolies of some companies are also eliminating several state-owned and other companies. The hybridisation of virtual and real spaces is producing new sanitised or disruptive imaginaries of geographies, creating new loyalties and belongings. The virtual spaces, created by GIS, photoshopping, games, etc., have become an area of interest for many as they produce spatial imaginaries having social, political and individual consequences. States are taking pride in the digitalisation of their services (DIGISERV) to the citizens with massive consequences on the welfare of those facing digital divides and consequences of invisible algorithms, now driven by AI. The state is moving into virtual spaces putting citizens at the margin to connect and negotiate with it. In sum, Digital technologies have transformative and/or disruptive impacts on geographies. This lecture will attempt to unravel the theoretical and empirical aspects of these possibilities on society, economy, democracy, and governance.

About the Speaker

Abdul Shaban is Professor and Chairperson of the Centre for Public Policy, Habitat, and Human Development, School of Development Studies, Tata Institute of Social Sciences (TISS), Mumbai. He was Deputy Director of TISS Tuljapur Campus from 2014 to 2019 and has been a member of various committees and commissions constituted by the Government of India and State Governments. He has been a visiting professor at several universities outside India, which include the London School of Economics, Muenster University, Germany, Erasmus University, the Netherlands, and the University of Paris City. Some of his key contributions are: Shaban, A, Vermeulen, F., Handke, C. (eds.) (2022/2023). Creative Industries in India. New York: Routledge; Datta, A. and Shaban, A. (eds). (2017). Mega-urbanization in the Global South: Fast cities and new urban utopias of the postcolonial state. London: Routledge; Shaban, A (ed). (2012/2018). Lives of Muslims in India: Politics, Exclusion and Violence. London: Routledge; Shaban, A (2010). Mumbai: Political Economy of Crime and Space. Hyderabad: Orient Blackswan.