

# Utopia or Dystopia: Perspectives & Choices in ICT

## Setting the scene

In 2023, six out of nine planetary boundaries have been breached. We are facing multiple ecological and environmental crises while we continuously ignore planetary boundaries. Digitalisation and the use of Information and Communication Technologies (ICTs) are proposed as ways to face these crises. But is this techno-solutionism, i.e. the hope that more technology can solve the problems of earlier technology, not just an utopia? ICT can provide some benefits, such as reducing the need for travel or improving energy management. However, their ubiquitous deployment and use, and their constant renewal cause severe socio-environmental damage and fall short of equity throughout their life cycle. We question the relevance of continuously introducing new digital systems, and the relevance of propositions solely focused on improving efficiency without addressing the socio-environmental damage these systems cause. As is, these systems and their optimizations are “band-aid” solutions that fall short of developing broader perspectives and focusing on systemic change – revising our current models and considering alternative systems.

## What we are going to explore

The Sustainable ICT (SICT) Summer School is a interdisciplinary event that emphasizes learning as much as doing, and involves a series of lectures as well as workshops. We will start the week by exploring the current sustainability challenges and opportunities within the ICT industry. In this context, we will also explore the evolving labour market dynamics influenced by advances in ICT and AI. The focus will be on the 'hidden' workers along the ICT supply chain as well as, the challenges faced by researchers working in this discourse in navigating issues of justice and sustainability. Recognising the urgency of the sustainability challenges in ICT, the Summer School will look at initiatives taken by both official bodies, such as policy makers, and unofficial entities, such as grass-root organisations and activists. At the end of the week, the Summer School aims to give participants a sense of agency by demonstrating that we not only have choices, but also by providing clear action steps. **By highlighting actions rather than just choices, the program aims to provide clear strategies for tackling these challenges head-on. SICT 2024 aims to empower participants with knowledge, facilitate critical discussions and inspire concrete actions towards a more sustainable and equitable ICT landscape.**

## How we will proceed

**The aim of SICT 2024** is to provide participants with a comprehensive insight into the multifaceted landscape of socio-economic harms along the supply chain and life-cycle of products, as well as the efforts being made to promote sustainability issues, and to foster a systemic understanding of the collective action required to shape a more sustainable future in the ICT sector. Throughout the week, voices from academia, politics, artists, activists and organisations will come together to discuss and analyse the sustainability challenges facing the ICT sector. The summer school will aim to move away from neo-colonialist and extractivist debates on how much pollution is acceptable for progress, to an approach that is making room for the most impacted to be heard.

We invite **people from diverse communities, academic fields, the industry and arts** to come together for a **five-day summer school** in early September 2024, in **Brussels, Belgium**. The event will be held in **English**. Places are available to master/PhD students, researchers, senior academics and people working in the industry and arts. We may have a limited number of scholarships available, details on this will be announced in the coming months.