

Information Session on MA in Technology and Change Program at Srishti Manipal Institute of Art, Design, and Technology, MAHE, Bangalore, India

This is a transcript of the information session and slide presentation that the panelists recorded via Zoom video communication on Friday, May 13, 2022.

Panelists:

Kush Patel (Head of Studies)

Naveen Bagalkot (Associate Dean)

Nithya Kirti M (Year 01 Student)

Sai Vidyasri Giridharan (Year 02 Student)

Slide 1:

Hello and welcome to this introductory session on the MA in Technology and Change program at Srishti Manipal Institute of Art, Design, and Technology in Bangalore, India. This program is among the newest additions to the postgraduate arts offerings at Srishti Manipal — and with my co-participants, Naveen Bagalkot, Nithya Kirthi M, and Sai Vidyasri Giridharan, I thank you for viewing this recording, in which we will cover core aspects of the program; introduce ourselves and our work in relationship to the program; and conclude with important dates and information on admissions and next steps.

Slide 2:

The MA in Technology and Change is a two-year program for students in the arts, humanities, design, as well as the sciences to build a critical and cultural studies approach to examining the relationship between technology and society. Through a range of research-based pedagogical offerings in the format of studios, seminars, workshops, ateliers, transdisciplinary research labs and centers, as well as independent studies and capstone works, students are encouraged to develop and sharpen lines of inquiry that center and illuminate the conditions of our technological selves and worlds, including, but not limited to, the digital.

These lines of inquiry not only connect to and draw from participating faculty members' research, but also a range of concurrent learning infrastructures and scholarly spaces at the institution such as media labs, art and activism collectives, design education initiatives, and publicly engaged curatorial practices.

At the heart of this program, we ask: what are the histories and theories of technoscapes of community storytelling, archival production, systems design, social media organizing, critical pedagogy, and computational tool design that define the human and non-human conditions of living and learning in India, but also conditions of knowledge production and knowledge circulation across comparable contexts and infrastructures within and between the Global South and the Global North.

Slide 3:

Hello, my name is Kush Patel and my pronouns are they/he. I'm a queer feminist educator, writer, and public scholar, working at the intersections of architecture and the digital public humanities. I teach at the Srishti Manipal Institute of Art, Design, and Technology, where I also head the Postgraduate Arts Program in Technology and Change. My research and teaching remain oriented to the theme of "survival" as both a form and method of historical and theoretical investigations into making just environments across a range of digital and community sites. What you see on this slide are a few selected works, pedagogical projects, and writings that have appeared in peer-reviewed locations such as *Digital Studies / Le champ numérique*, *Knowledge Justice: Disrupting Library and Information Science through Critical Race Theory*, *Public: A Journal of Imagining America*, and more. I'm also the co-founder of "Pedagogy of the Digitally Oppressed," a digital humanities collective that is committed to fostering queer, feminist, and anti-colonial approaches to digital humanities teaching.

Slide 4:

Hello, my name is Naveen Bagalkot. I am an educator, facilitator and researcher, broadly working with Human Computer Interaction, Information and Communication Technology for Development, Participatory design, and Community Health and wellbeing. I have an educational background in Architecture, Industrial Design and Interaction Design.

At Srishti Manipal Institute of Art, Design, and Technology, I oversee and manage six courses across undergraduate and postgraduate programs, including the MA in Technology and Change. As an educator, I work towards creating an environment of learning that expands the horizon of emerging design practice through a critical and situated engagement with technological ideas and real-world complexities. I am part of the Design Beku Collective where I focus on facilitating collaborative design and critical making for and with grass-roots community organizations such as MAYA Health, IT for Change, and Jatan Sansthan. Since 2016, I have been working with MAYA health on 'Infrastructuring for Community care' continuing with the participatory design activities with the community health workers with a focus on building local data infrastructures for community health, along with international and local collaborators.

Slide 5:

The MA in Technology and Change follows the inquiry-based learning pedagogy, which is the base of all postgraduate programs at Srishti Manipal. The pedagogy is structured around three core aspects: Learning Hub, Transdisciplinary Research and the Culminating Project. The learning hub allows for a choice-based navigation of studios, workshops and studio-seminar units of learning that align with the core of Technology & Change. Transdisciplinary Research unit allows for developing strands of independent inquiry over the three semesters in alignment and mentoring from one of the many Research Centers and Labs at Srishti Manipal. As the

inquiry fosters over the three semesters, it culminates into a capstone project, thereby giving a substantial engagement with a critical and creative exploration.

The Program is of a minimum of 2 years duration up to 4 years maximum, with 4 to 8 semesters allowing for Drop-Blank and Make-up time if needed. It is an MA by Coursework, though almost half of the learning is through engaging in creative and critical inquiry in the space of transdisciplinary research units.

Slide 6:

An understanding of technologically defined and mediated histories and futures in the plural and as visions that are also structurally accessible and socially just in the present is at the core of the MA in Technology and Change program. As a postgraduate program in the arts, we emphasize the importance of disrupting the conventional separation of theory and practice in design and scholarship, and thinking with the writings of bell hooks, the program centers the analysis of lived experience as one of the fundamental ways in which to begin to build agency in the world. Following hooks, “When our lived experience of theorizing is fundamentally linked to processes of self-recovery, of collective liberation, no gap exists between theory and practice. Indeed, what such experience makes more evident is the bond between the two—that ultimately reciprocal process wherein one enables the other. Theory is not inherently healing, liberatory, or revolutionary. It fulfills this function only when we ask that it do so and direct our theorizing towards this end.”

As a program committed to the ideas and practices of social justice, it is imperative that we move past any simplistic use of decolonization in scholarship and practice prevalent today, and pay attention to both historical, structural, and community-centered ways in which this project remains incomplete. To quote Azar Causevic and Anasuya Sengupta, for example, “The decolonization of digital practices calls for an urgent (re)imagination and (re)design of technological spaces, with the leadership of marginalized communities, through a process free from exploitation. This needs a deeply feminist, human, and humane politics and practice – the commitment to address deep inequities, and affirm, acknowledge, share, and redistribute knowledge without extraction and exploitation.” The MA in Technology and Change is structured around these conversations.

Slide 7:

One of the core approaches to building and supporting students’ inquiry formations in this program is through intentional and collaborative engagements with parallel centers, labs, and research initiatives on campus where students get to elect, participate in, and expand their ongoing curricular work, but also have a chance to inflect inquiries based on these projects. We will be talking about the Just Futures Co-lab momentarily as one of the labs that is built into the curriculum of the MA program. Others in conversation with us include spaces that focus on gender justice such as Blank Noise; on tinkering with materials and technology such as Art Science BLR, Frugal Design Lab, and a host of prototyping workshops; and on community

histories, learning, and co-productions such as Srishti Films, Center for Public History, Centre for Education Research Training and Development, and Impact Edge Lab among others.

Slide 8:

The Just Futures Co-Lab is one of the research labs and centers at Srishti Manipal, which was instituted in October 2021 by Kush Patel and I.

Vision: The Just Futures Co-lab acknowledges technologically mediated futures in the plural and as visions that are also structurally accessible and socially just in the present. We have come together to call this space a “co-lab” to make explicit in name and practice the anti-caste, anti-colonial, queer, and feminist processes and politics of collaborative and community-centered knowledge production and project making in and with the digital.

With an orientation to learn from, with, and alongside individuals and communities along the campus-community spectrum, our scholarship will respond to and remain rooted in participatory learning, equitable labor, mutual accountability, and embodied research in history, theory, and design studies. We acknowledge how digital technologies aid in social exploitation, surveillance, disenfranchisement, and even epistemic and spatial violence. Our humanities- and design-based approaches to digital research and pedagogy, we expect, will not only produce cultural critiques, but also model possible alternatives for scholarly and interpersonal care in all such co-productions.

Research Inquiries include:

- + Care, Maintenance, and Information Infrastructures
- + Intersectional Feminist Histories and Futures

The Co-Lab fosters the inquiries through mentoring Transdisciplinary Research, Postgraduate Capstone project and facilitating Public Seminars and Reading Group Series across three project spaces: Queer Futurities initiated and led by Kush Patel, Futures at the “Peripheries” and Community Owned Health Knowledge Infrastructures initiated by Naveen Bagalkot.

Slide 9:

Eligibility Applicants should have successfully completed any ONE of the following:

- + Graduate Diploma Program in Arts (10+5 level) from a recognized University
- + NSQF Certification Level 7 in relevant industry sector
- + National and International Universities – 3 years Undergraduate Degree
- + National and International Universities – 4 years Undergraduate Degree
- + Professional Institute – 5 years Undergraduate Degree

Please note that all awarding bodies must be recognised by state and/or central government institutions.

The detailed course fees and its breakup are on the website. The total [Course Fees \(excluding Living / Hostel Costs\)](#) are:

- + Tuitions: INR 3,45,000 for each year.
- + Year 1 (Total): INR 4,64,000
- + Year 2 (Total): INR 4,19,000

As such Srishti Manipal currently does not offer any scholarships for the academic year 2022-23. However here are some of the possibilities for availing scholarships and financial support:

- + MAHE Scholarships <https://manipal.edu/mu/admission/scholarships.html>
- + Karnataka Govt Scholarships <https://ssp.postmatric.karnataka.gov.in/homepage.aspx>
- + National Scholarships <https://scholarships.gov.in/home>

Slide 10:

We have opened Round 2 Admissions.

The key dates are:

- + Last date of Application: May 26, 2022
- + SMEAT - GRAT: June 11-12, 2022
- + Online Interviews: June 18, 2022
- + Results Announced: June 22, 2022

Slide 11:

Hello, my name is Mudunuru Nithya Kirti. I am currently a first-year student in the MA Experience Design program.

I have a background in Philosophy and pure Humanities and my current emerging enquiry is at the intersections of digital humanities, speculative writing and research-creation.

I had the privilege of experiencing two units that draw on the Technology and Change discipline. The first was a semester-long Theory and Understanding Seminar, facilitated by Dr. Kush Patel, which engaged with the question of the Future of Human and Digital in the context of design and design research, from a justice-oriented lens. Each week, we engaged with and annotated literature and artefacts that dealt with themes ranging from gender, sexuality, race, caste, class, indigeneity and disability, in critically imagining futures that are intersectional, collectivist, justice-oriented and co-created, by reflecting on the structures and oppressions of the present. At the end of the Seminar, we each wrote a love letter to one of the authors we had read, whose work resonated greatly with us as well as a letter to our future selves, in reiterating some of the lessons learnt in the seminar.

Slide 12:

Secondly, during Interlude, which is a period of pause at Srishti Manipal that invited Masters' students and faculty to collectively reflect and respond to the theme of Inhabiting Learning, I was part of the Scaffolds thematic group, with Kush as one of the faculty participants.

We referred to ourselves as Members of the Office of Anti-Inequity and Anti-Exclusive Excellence, in critically thinking about Institutional Scaffolding- which is the structures in an institute that make learning possible or sometimes impossible for its inhabitants. We reflected on our personal experiences in thinking about individual inhabitants, of institutions both past and present, we felt affirmed or not affirmed in our personhood. Our experiences and memories were anchored in physical artifacts, with reflections on the same that informed questions of agency to prompt affirmative action and institutional change. These artifacts found place in this collective zine and our engagements, in the form of discussions with peers, critical literature and the annotations of publicly available institutional documents of SMI, informed an open letter that was written collectively addressing institutional leadership

My engagement with these course units directly shaped my trans-disciplinary engagement at the ArtScienceBLR lab, in critically thinking about the politics of digital archiving and user experience design.

It has further clarified my emerging inquiry in thinking of speculative futures and digital humanities

Slide 13:

Please read (or glance) through the picture while you listen to me talk, I was 19 when I wore my Fitbit. (Fitbit is a device that people can wear around their wrist to measure their daily steps, heart rate, and more. There are several types of Fitbits, with different features and styles. I owned a Charge 2). I was one among the privileged few to own it. It was expensive and the access to it was very special. It was a gift from my brother (whom I always look up to). Though I'd like to say I was always the cool and smart person - cool and smart are the adjectives which meant a lot to me, then - I felt Fitbit made me look cooler and smarter. Fitbit made me work on myself to walk more, breathe slowly, to be the better version of myself ("optimized"). Not that I understood or was aware of what happened in the backend (algorithms, conditions, assumptions) or the frontend (the numbers, charts, and the data).

I felt that I was solely accountable and responsible for the numbers and that everything was in my control. Now, I look back on my lived experience with Fitbit which is informing my current research interests.

Hi, I thank you for the time and effort you have put into listening to this session. I'm Sai Vidyasri Giridharan and I go by she/her pronouns. I'm currently pursuing a master's degree in Human-Centered Design at SMI. I have done my B.Tech in Biotechnology.

Slide 14:

The pictures on this slide represent my engagements, and participation in the MA in Technology and Change course units. I'll give a brief about it. A few months back, I was part of the Studio: Care Matters and Justice Dreams, which is a course unit of MA Technology and Change

(henceforth addressed as MA-TC). The studio was facilitated by Dr Kush Patel, Head of Studies for the MA-TC program.

In this studio, we worked on and produced care work biographies in relation to our interactions with technology and technological artifacts, through a medium called Twine, a digital micro-narrative storytelling tool. In Kush's words "How might you—and we—ensure that our current and future interactions with technologies and each other are rooted in and emerge from places and acts of care?"

This is when I started to look at "Design" and imagine "design" as intersectional, accessible, and responsive by critically analyzing it through the lenses of caste, class, gender, race, and disability.

The artifact I chose was "Fitbit". I produced my care work biography through a twine game called, Your Move, (the snapshots with a black background and white texts). This game is a satirical take on mocking technologies that defer or delay inclusive, accessible, affordable, and responsive design. Technologies that fail to consider data have value, context, an origin story and thereby dehumanizing it. Technologies that consider accessibility as an afterthought. Technologies that fail to interpret data, not better, but just what it deserves. The narrative is focused on "Data Feminism" which I draw from Feminist Data Manifest-No Project.

I'm building upon this work as my capstone project titled "Analyzing Wearable Fitness Trackers through An Intersectional Feminist Lens". I believe Intersectionality is a critical keyword for my project. All of our lives are nuanced and interconnected, and so should be the tools, frameworks, technologies, and fitness trackers we build to make our societies, and humanities work, maintain and repair.

The next engagement is the "Theory & Understanding Unit: Decolonizing Design?," which was also facilitated by Kush Patel. We worked on a Keyword Project: We did a collective reading and annotating of the texts shared by Kush (the annotations - the picture reference), together we made a list of keywords, and each one of us chose a keyword and a corresponding text from the reading, produced an essay by reflecting the chosen/particular keyword through the lines of Technology and Design from a decolonial perspective. Keywords like jugaad, data, relationality, intersectionality, sovereignty, access, consent, body, care, ownership. Throughout this engagement, we were reminded of Eve Tuck and K. Wayne Yang's 2012 article "Decolonization Is Not A Metaphor," decolonization is neither a substitute for some other term nor a concept that can be used interchangeably with other movements (in Kush's words)

The engagements I have had and been having - made me reflect on my positionality. Drifting away from this notion that technology can solve anything, an app for anything - technosolutionist ideology - as someone who is visioning (looking ahead) as a UX/UI Designer (User experience designer) - these engagements became very crucial as a designer/creator or a researcher to think cautiously of accessibility, inclusivity, accountability.

Slide 15:

Graduates of the MA in Technology and Change program will be equipped to work in the following sectors:

Higher Education Sector: As educators, administrators, and researchers across the practices of digital studies, engaged humanities, community development, journalism, design, design education, social entrepreneurship, and governance.

Not-for-Profit Social Sector: As facilitators, systems thinkers, and critical technological practitioners working with collectives and not-for-profit organizations towards integrating technological ideas into projects of social change, including, but not limited to, content and program development, environmental and public health services, digital publishing, digital media, and platforms innovators, among others.

Public Sector: As policy advocates, makers, and researchers within specific groups focusing on digital community lives and infrastructures.

Corporate/for-profit sector: As community entrepreneurs, digital journalists, critical technology practitioners, and entrepreneurial ventures in the design and publicity of digital platforms.

Slide 16:

Questions:

If you have any questions about the information session or the MA in Technology and Change program, please contact: Dr Kush Patel at kush.patel@manipal.edu

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Visit:

- + Admissions: srishtimanipalinstitute.in/admissions
- + MA-Technology and Change: srishtimanipalinstitute.in/programs/pg-program-ma-in-technology-and-change; and
- + The Just Futures Co-lab: srishtimanipalinstitute.in/centers-and-labs/just-futures-co-lab

Thank you.