The digitalisation of agriculture

ESRC DTP Joint Studentship

University of Leicester and University of Nottingham

The Midlands Graduate School is an accredited Economic and Social Research Council (ESRC) Doctoral Training Partnership (DTP). One of 14 such partnerships in the UK, the Midlands Graduate School is a collaboration between the University of Warwick, Aston University, University of Birmingham, University of Leicester, Loughborough University and the University of Nottingham.

We are now inviting applications for an ESRC Doctoral Joint Studentship between University of Leicester (where the student will be registered) and the University of Notthingham to commence in October 2023.

The student will work under the supervision of Professor Martin Phillips (University of Leicester), and Dr Carol Morris (University of Nottingham) to study how farmers and other inhabitants of agricultural landscapes engage with and are impacted by the growing reach of digitalisation within farming. Recent years have seen the emergence of series of forms of digitalisation in agriculture, including use of GPS navigation and digital monitoring to facilitate precision delivery of agricultural inputs; digital sensors on farm equipment, land and animals used alongside information from data-bases and remotely-sensed imagery from satellites, planes and drones; the streaming of data to cloud-based servers to facilitate the aggregation of 'big data' and algorithmic-based data analysis. While existing research has often focused on technical aspects of agricultural digitalisation, this research will develop a more critical perspective exploring issues such as the role of digitalisation plays in the formation of new social and more-than-social relations operating in the farm; transformations in farming knowledge, decision-making, practice and identities associated with digitalisation; the extent to which digitalisation creates new or reproduces existing social divisions and inequalities; and the degree to which impacts can be resisted through the development of more 'open source' forms of digitalisation and the continuation of analogue practices. The PhD will involve an examination of digitalisation arable and pasture dominated areas of the Midlands, and will employ interviews with agricultural advisors, equipment suppliers and policy makers as well as farmers, plus in-depth ethnographic research and the use of digital videoing and photography to examine everyday engagements with agricultural digitalisation.

Application Process

To be considered for this PhD, please complete the Joint Studentship application form available online here. Please upload an anonymised cover letter and CV as part of the online application process. Shortlisted applicants will also be required to provide transcripts and two references.

Application deadline: 31st July 2023, 5pm (BST)

Midlands Graduate School ESRC DTP

Our ESRC studentships cover fees, a maintenance stipend, and extensive support for research training, as well as research activity support grants. **Support is available to applicants with Home fee status only.** For further details, visit: www.mgsdtp.ac.uk/studentships/eligibility/.

Informal enquiries about the research or School of Geography, Geology, and the Environment prior to application can be directed to Professor Martin Phillips (martin.phillips@le.ac.uk). For advice on the application process, contact to PGRGeog@le.ac.uk.