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## December 2018, Issue 3

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The third issue of the **TCPD Newsletter** covers **TCPD**'s initiatives of shedding some light on the Vidhan Sabha elections results which were announced on December 11. Team members engaged in fieldwork, wrote media pieces and organized a public discussion to share their insights. **TCPD** also hosted two conferences - a Conference on [Empirical and Computational Social Sciences in India \(ECSSI\)](#) between December 13-15 and a Conference on [Democratic Politics in India \(LIA SPINPER\)](#) on December 21.

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### Elections

The team engaged with the recent Vidhan Sabha elections in multiple ways ranging from fieldwork to writing news articles and lastly to a public discussion of the election results. In last month's **Newsletter**, we read about the experiences of **TCPD**'s interns in Madhya Pradesh and Rajasthan. In early December, Basim U Nissa and Mohit Kumar, traveled to Rajasthan to collect data on the contestants. The team spent December 11 at the Hindustan Times (HT) newsroom. Tarini Nath, a 3rd year undergraduate at Ashoka, who accompanied the team to the HT office writes about her experiences in the post below. Observations and insights based on data were published in the Indian Express, Hindustan Times and The Hindu. And lastly, a public event was organized at the [Centre for Policy Research \(CPR\)](#) to understand the election results as a part of the [CPR-TCPD Dialogues on Indian Politics](#).

### From the HT Newsroom by Tarini Nath

It was an honour and privilege for me, as an undergraduate student, to have been part of the team that went to the Hindustan Times Newsroom on the 11th of December to collect election result data in real time. We were responsible for collecting data profiles of those elected in the 2018 Assembly Elections in Rajasthan, Madhya Pradesh, Chhattisgarh, Telangana and Mizoram. The team was primarily tasked with collating data on caste, religion and gender of all the candidates, in order to finally analyse the counts for those who were ultimately elected.

While we did not achieve our set goals at the end of the day because of a delay in the declaration of the results, it was an overwhelming experience for me. Even as a

student of Political Science who is heavily invested in data analysis, I had not grasped the amount of time, effort and skill that goes into putting a single sheet of data together and, eventually, making sense of it.

One important thing I discovered that day was that there are numerous ways to learn things; simply doing something until you get it right is one of them. Given that everyone else on the team had more experience than I did, I learnt a lot by observing them and adopting, and when required, even tweaking, their strategies.

This one day in an absolutely buzzing office environment taught me more than multiple lectures and seminars ever could. It made me realise, and value, the importance of firsthand experience, and of holding my own - without apprehension and self-doubt.

### Conference Notes

The Conference on [Empirical and Computational Social Sciences in India \(ECSSI\)](#) was held between December 13-15 and the second was a Conference on [Democratic Politics in India \(LIA SPINPER\)](#) held on December 21. Scholars from universities such as the Columbia University, Indian Institute of Management Bangalore, Sciences Po, University of Michigan, and University of California Berkeley participated in the conferences. A complete list of participants along with their institutional affiliations and conference presentations are available on the respective conference websites.

On the third day of the ECSSI conference, we organized a [computational social science workshop](#).

The workshop was a free and public event. There were 3 sessions led by four instructors who discussed their own research and conducted tutorials which lasted about 2 hours each. The first session led by [David Armstrong \(Western University\)](#) was on [Evaluating Measurement Models](#). The afternoon session led by [Monojit Choudhury](#) and Anshul Bawa (Microsoft Research India) was a tutorial on [Computational Sociolinguistics: Interaction between Society, Language, Data and Algorithms](#). And the last session in the evening was led by [Jule Krueger](#) (University of Michigan) was an introduction to [Using Latent Variable Models to Estimate the Prevalence of Sexual Violence in Armed Conflict](#). The purpose of this workshop was to expose participants to diverse computational techniques to investigate various topics within social sciences.

A couple of important takeaways from both the meetings. The first is that **TCPD**'s vision of leading by setting high standards for what constitute best practices in data collection was reaffirmed by everyone. It is imperative that all steps of data collection - recruitment, training, sound and ethical behavior on the field, documentation, submitting data, version control, data verification and data release - receive the same amount of attention.

Additionally, our commitment to making methodologies and data public were also reinforced. We will continue to work very hard to preserve data integrity.

The second take-away is that by setting an example of sharing data, we hope to encourage others to do the same. We are hoping this would lead to important discussions on how to manage and merge datasets. And furthermore, encourage empirical research across various subfields within political science.

We would not have been able to pull off these events without the support and encouragement of several institutions and individuals. **TCPD** sincerely thanks our sponsors - Ashoka University and Microsoft Research India for [ECSSI](#) and the Center on the Politics of Development at the University of California Berkeley, and France-Berkeley Fund for [LIA SPINPER](#) - for their support. We thank the **TCPD** team - Basim U Nissa, Hem Nath Mishra, Mohit Kumar, Saloni Bhogale - and a shout-out to our enthusiastic volunteers - Divy Rangan, Gauri Bansal, Mohamed Yusuf Sait, Sadam Hussain, Sukanya Janardhanan, Sumit Sadawarti, Tarini Nath, Vysakh Satheesh, and Zainab Firdausi - for all their help. And lastly, we are extremely grateful to the Ashoka team - Balbir Singh Jangra, Bineet Mishra, Chandan Sharma, Jaspreet Singh, Sunita Bansal, Vikas Antil,

Administration Helpdesk, Operations Team, IT Helpdesk, Dining, and Maintenance Helpdesk - whose hospitality made both these conferences a memorable experience for all participants.

### [Empirical and Computational Social Sciences in India \(ECSSI\) group photo](#)



### [Democratic Politics in India \(LIA SPINPER\) group photo](#)

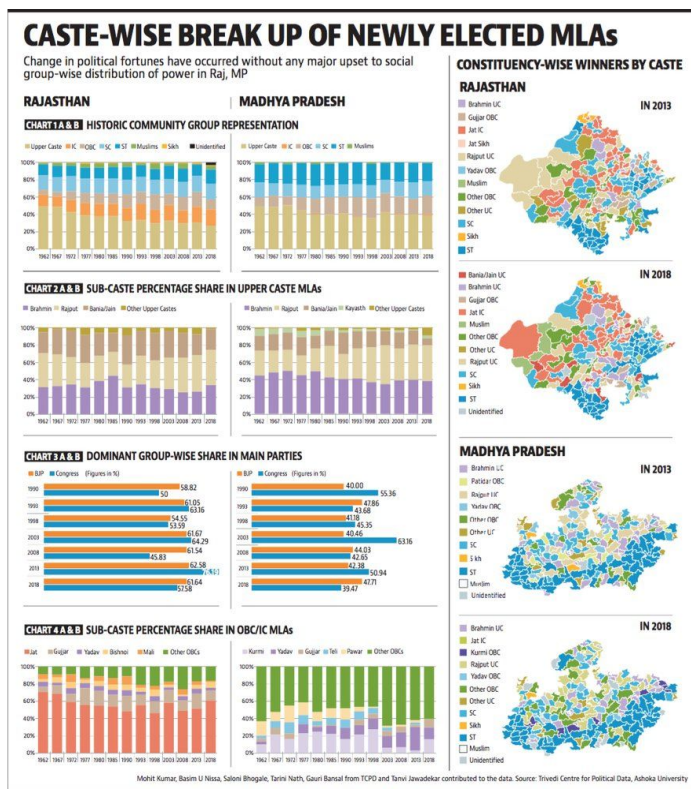


## **Publications**

### ***In the News***

Verniers, Gilles. "[How to read December 11.](#)" *Indian Express*, 8 December 2018.

Verniers, Gilles. "[Assembly elections results in MP, Rajasthan show upper castes still dominate heartland.](#)" *Hindustan Times*, 14 December 2018. (with assistance on data from Mohit Kumar, Basim U Nissa, Saloni Bhogale, Tarini Nath, Gauri Bansal and Tanvi Jawadekar - figure below)



- December 13-14 - [Conference on Empirical and Computational Social Sciences in India \(ECSSI\)](#)
- December 14 - [Web Session on Women in Social Sciences](#)
- December 15 - [ECSSI Computational Workshop](#)
- December 21 - [LIA SPINPER Conference](#)

Verniers, Gilles. [“Fewer women MLAs find place in Rajasthan, Madhya Pradesh assemblies this time.”](#)  
*Hindustan Times*, 14 December 2018.

Raman, Anuradha. [“There is no question of going back to the paper ballot: S.Y. Quraishi.”](#) *The Hindu*, 19 December 2018.

## External Engagements

Neelanjan Sircar, Gilles Verniers and Yamini Aiyar organized and participated in a panel discussion “Making Sense of the December 11 Results” which is a part of the [CPR-TCPD Dialogues on Indian Politics](#). The event was held on December 12 at the Centre for Policy Research, New Delhi. Watch the [discussion](#) and [Q&A](#) on YouTube.

## Research Updates

### TCPD Research Workshop

The [last workshop](#) was on December 10. We will resume our weekly meetings beginning January 23, 2019.

## Events

### Past Events

- December 7 - Telangana and Rajasthan elections
- December 11 - Election results for Chhattisgarh, Mizoram, Madhya Pradesh, Telangana and Rajasthan announced