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Beyond the discipline, beyond the institution: The outward reach of French Information and Communication Sciences (SIC) through the prism of editorial collaborations (2012–2018)

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Abstract
The internal interdisciplinarity of Information and Communication Sciences (*Sciences de l'information et de la communication*, SIC) in France has often been discussed in an effort to apprehend how various academic inputs and scholarly traditions have integrated to form SIC. However, the external interdisciplinarity of SIC, or cross-disciplinarity, i.e., its connections and collaborations with other disciplines, has received comparatively less attention. The present contribution seeks to address this gap through the prism of editorial collaborations. Our dataset consists of a list of collective publications covering the period 2012–2018, published in 2019 (*Dynamiques des recherches en sciences de l'information et de la communication*) under the coordination of the Permanent Conference of Directors of Research Units in Information and Communication Sciences (CPDirSIC). In this dataset, narrow interdisciplinarity is observed within France. Outside France, joint editorial endeavors mostly bring together researchers who are already located in the field of information-communication. The study also suggests the significance of linguistic proximity, with the majority of international collaborations concerning countries with French-speaking areas. Finally, the thematic area within SIC also plays a role in the way interdisciplinarity materializes. Given the limitations of the dataset, however, these findings should be interpreted with caution and must not be generalized or extrapolated beyond the specific scope of this study.

Keywords
SIC, Information and Communication Sciences, interdisciplinarity, discipline, linguistic proximity, France

1 Introduction

Information and Communication Sciences in France (*Sciences de l'information et de la communication*, alias SIC) is a well-established scholarly discipline that has developed a distinct academic identity over the past decades. Emerged in the 1960s and 1970s, it is characterized by its strong internal interdisciplinarity, its foundations being deeply rooted in a combination of social sciences, humanities, and information technologies. It draws from various disciplines and areas of study such as sociology, psychology, linguistics, semiotics, philosophy, political economy, library science and documentation, cybernetics, film studies, etc. This interdisciplinary nature is reflected in the diverse research topics covered by French SIC scholars, including media studies, digital communication, public communication, organizational communication, and knowledge management.

The *internal* interdisciplinarity of SIC, especially during the first years of its institutionalization in France, has attracted a lot of attention and discussions among its members, who have tried to apprehend how various academic inputs and scholarly traditions have integrated to form SIC (e.g., Boure, 2006, 2007; Carbou, Christophe, & Negrel, 2016; Dacheux, 2009; Durampart, 2015; Fleury & Walter, 2007, 2011; Gallot, 2014; Miège, 2012 – this list is not exhaustive). However, the *external* interdisciplinarity of SIC, or cross-disciplinarity, i.e., its connections and collaborations with other disciplines, has received comparatively less attention, despite the significant insights such links could offer. As Robert T. Craig has highlighted (2008), disciplines derive their identity and coherence from their participation in

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the conversation of disciplines. Investigating the outward reach of SIC, within or across the French institutional framework, could contribute to a better understanding of SIC and its challenges.

Following Jean-Louis Fabiani (2006, p. 15) and along with Sarah Cordonnier (2017b), we use the term "discipline" in its institutional dimension to refer to "both a pedagogical framework (stable and stabilizing) and a place for the production of new knowledge. The discipline is an inseparably organizational and discursive, cognitive and cultural device" (Cordonnier, 2017b, p. 89)[1]. In what follows, we also use the term "field"[2] to designate a broader, often more flexible and less institutionalized area of inquiry (Casadevall & Fang, 2015; Nordenstreng, 2007); in order to more clearly delineate this distinction, we capitalize the initial letter when we refer to a discipline in its institutional sense (e.g., Communication), while using lowercase letters for fields (e.g., communication).

Against this backdrop, our research focuses on the external, i.e., cross-disciplinary, collaborations of SIC. Our dataset consists of a list of collective publications covering the period 2012–2018, published in 2019 under the coordination of the Permanent Conference of Directors of Research Units in Information and Communication Sciences (CPDirSIC): *Research Dynamics in Information and Communication Sciences,* which we will refer to in this paper as ReDynSIC (in French *Dynamiques des recherches en sciences de l'information et de la communication*, 190 p., edited by Walter, Douyère, Bouillon, & Ollivier-Yaniv, 2019, 3rd edition). This initiative aimed to "highlight the richness of the domains they [SIC] encompass and the potential for scientific innovation they carry" (ibid., p. 11). It sought to promote research in SIC focusing on recent collective volumes illustrating its current dynamics (as we write these lines, an updated edition is in preparation, and its study could certainly serve as a means to put in perspective the observations of the present study). Joint book editing and thematic review issues thus constitute the data analyzed in the present paper.

Obviously, the findings of this analysis primarily reflect the choices made in the ReDynSIC collection to foreground the discipline itself, its members, and its (potential) audience within the constrained format of the book – choices certainly shaped by compromises, strategic considerations, and other contextual factors; and clearly, the ReDynSIC corpus of bibliographical references cannot be regarded as a comprehensive representation of the entire discipline in recent years. Firstly, joint editorial contributions measure only the collaborative output of research, but they do not capture the full range of interdisciplinary activities. Coediting does not reflect how deeply integrated the disciplines are, and many interdisciplinary collaborations or informal exchanges of ideas do not always result in published works. The ReDynSIC bibliographic references do not provide information on the contents of the publications or the authors who contributed to them (i.e., besides coeditors). Secondly, the selection of works, as operated by ReDynSIC editors and/or co-authors (directors of research units), inevitably restrains the exhaustivity, representativity, and scope of the dataset. For example, interdisciplinary approaches can be present in single-authored works; interdisciplinarity can also be measured through the number of publications in journals external to SIC, etc. Finally, research programs would most certainly show significant interdisciplinary and international collaboration, the latter often being a requirement for obtaining funding. However, the ReDynSIC presentation did not include details allowing for the assessment of these aspects (although some coediting works cited in the book might also constitute the outcome of these programs).

In any case, even in its current form, ReDynSIC provides the only official list in SIC and could serve as a tangible outcome of collaborative efforts (Wuchty, Jones, & Uzzi, 2007), also reflecting the image of the discipline sought *at a given time*. Nevertheless, due to the inherent limitations of the dataset, the findings presented here should be approached and interpreted with caution and should not be generalized or misrepresented beyond the contextual and time boundaries of this study.

1 The term will be further discussed in the following sections.

2 "Field" is not employed here as in Bourdieu's (1992) theoretical framework ("le champ", in French), although power relations do structure the realm of epistemic production.

We thus observe in our dataset that interdisciplinary openness seems to be more pronounced within the country's geographic perimeter. Narrow interdisciplinarity is, in this case, mostly observed. Outside France, joint editorial endeavors mainly bring together researchers who are already located in the field of information-communication. These observations form the first result of our research.

The second result extends the aforementioned findings. Our study suggests the significance of linguistic proximity, the majority of international collaborations concerning countries with French-speaking areas (Canada, Belgium, etc.) or with traditional connections with SIC (e.g., French-speaking scholars in Germany or Romania). Unlike other forms of proximity that have been identified and studied to understand the underlying mechanisms and logics of interdisciplinarity, linguistic proximity has attracted less attention, which makes these findings even more relevant.

Finally, the third result of our study highlights that although the trends identified above globally apply to the entire dataset, differences are detected across SIC internal thematic areas (i.e., journalism, organizational communication, etc.). In other words, the object of study also plays a role in the way external interdisciplinarity materializes.

All these elements translate the latent dynamics and limitations that forge a discipline within a specific geographic and institutional frame; they also relate to its internal epistemic configuration. These are the starting points of our research.

2 Theoretical framework: Discussing the discipline

2.1 Discipline as a national and institutional realm

Scientific disciplines – the "prerequisite" of interdisciplinarity (Carbou, Christophe, & Negrel, 2016, p. 8) – are not purely intellectual constructs but are profoundly influenced by the national[3] and institutional contexts in which they operate (Crow & Dabars, 2017; Fabiani, 2006; Heinze, Von Der Heyden, & Pithan, 2020). At the national level, governmental policies, cultural values, and economic priorities shape the evolution of disciplines. Educational systems embedded in national frameworks define the structure of disciplines through curricula, degree programs, and research priorities, reinforcing or challenging established disciplinary boundaries. At the institutional level, universities and research organizations play a pivotal role in organizing and sustaining disciplines. They do so by creating departments, faculties, and research centers, which serve as both intellectual and administrative units. Academic journals and professional societies – often tied to specific institutions – serve as gatekeepers of disciplinary knowledge, influencing the trajectory of research and the emergence of new fields. Paraphrasing Martin Guntau and Hubert Laitko (1991, p. 17), one could reasonably argue that disciplines, even though challenged, have "institutional conditions and consequences". According to Björn Hammarfelt (2020, p. 244), disciplines are characterized by their institutional and organizational features. In this sense, even though cognitive proximity is often associated with the notion of discipline, the terms are not synonyms: cognitive proximity can also be interdisciplinary, especially in social sciences, which, as demonstrated by Andrew Abbott (2001), tend to circle around an inevitable pattern of core principles.

In France, the development and organization of scientific disciplines are deeply embedded in national and institutional frameworks, combining State oversight and academic autonomy. The National Council of Universities (*Conseil national des Universités*, CNU) plays a crucial role in this system. Its structure, organized into disciplinary sections, emphasizes clear delineation of knowledge domains, trying to foster coherence in research and teaching practices.

As Kaarle Nordenstreng has highlighted (2007), Communication is widely referred to as being an academic discipline, in its own right alongside traditional disciplines such as History, Literature, Sociology, or Political Science. However, the author also uses the term "field" as a means to compensate for a certain lack of a more robust definition of disci-

3 The term "national" is used here to refer to a specific geographic scale (the country), in its political and administrative dimensions, and not as a means to necessarily indicate a form of cultural coherence.

pline, the nature of the latter often remaining unclear, and its identity being determined by administrative convenience and market demand. Indeed, the emergence of French Information and Communication Sciences in the 1970s was shaped by the country's intellectual traditions on critical theory and structuralism, but also by institutional efforts to address the growing significance of media and communication in a modernizing society (Boure, 2006; 2007). Ever since, the national and institutional context has played a pivotal role in defining the scope and priorities of SIC research. SIC occupies the 71st CNU section within the national and institutional landscape. SIC programs are housed within universities, specialized schools, and technical institutions offering professional training. State-driven initiatives, such as the Research Programming Law and the Second French Plan for Open Science, have encouraged the adoption of open-access practices and interdisciplinary collaborations. The professional association SFSIC (*Société française des Sciences de l'information & de la communication*) serves as a platform for disciplinary cohesion, advocating for the discipline's growth and international visibility.

According to Paul Trowler (2014), the emblematic metaphor stipulating the existence of "academic tribes and territories" (Becher, 1989) has evolved over time, moving from epistemological essentialism towards a more nuanced understanding influenced by social practice theory. This perspective recognizes disciplines as both constructed and enacted, with their development shaped by contextual factors in academic departments, universities, and broader societal influences.

2.2 Discipline as an epistemic and geographic territory

Because of its institutional dimension, a scientific discipline can generally be conceptualized as both an epistemic and a geographic territory. As an epistemic territory, it allegedly encompasses a specific body of approaches, terminologies, methodologies, and frameworks that define how research is conducted, evaluated, and interpreted. Research usually refers to this feature as cognitive proximity (Boschma, 2005).

A certain degree of cognitive proximity assures a common language that can facilitate communication and collaboration. It thus influences the formation and dynamics of collaborative research relationships. According to Mattes (2012, p. 1086), "the transfer of knowledge deeply relies upon proximity, as the assimilation of the exchanged knowledge is not possible at all without it". In an often-cited paper, geographer Ron A. Boschma (2005) retraces the history of academic research on proximity, and studies the concept in its different – evolving and sometimes overlapping – dimensions. Proximity can indeed take several forms (cognitive, organizational, social, geographic, technological, temporal, etc.), each of which plays a crucial role in shaping who collaborates with whom and how these collaborations unfold (Bozeman & Corley, 2004; Cummings & Kiesler, 2005; Gilly & Torre, 2000; Torre & Rallet, 2005).

However, as explained by Fabiani (2006) or Abbott (2008), disciplines, due to their various dimensions (institutional, pedagogical, cognitive, etc.), are not coherent gatherings of knowledge. Sarah Cordonnier (2021, p. 8) argues that the works on discipline often start from a *normative* ideal of scientific knowledge rather than from the reality of practices, or, on the contrary, remain too close to those practices without putting them into a broader historical context. In the field of communication, epistemic proximity has also been debated and contested. According to Robert T. Craig (1999), communication theory as an identifiable field of study does not really exist, and this is the reason why the author strives to provide a comprehensive framework unifying this rather disparate field. Silvio Waisbord (2019) considers communication studies to be a post-discipline and argues that it is impossible to transcend fragmentation through a single project of intellectual unity. Without fully embracing this thesis, we do agree that specialization is also an intrinsic part of SIC, as is the case with other disciplines, though. In this sense, we rather align with his argument on the importance of the institutional architecture of academic disciplines, hence the role of geography.

Indeed, a scientific discipline can also be viewed as a geographic territory, defined by the institutions, networks, and physical spaces that enable and constrain scientific activity. Geographically, this territory includes universities, research institutes, and professional

organizations that serve as the institutional frameworks for the discipline. These spaces are crucial for the dissemination and institutionalization of knowledge, where scholars collaborate, publish, and debate. As indicated above, traditionally, the geographic spread of a discipline is often influenced by national or regional policies, funding structures, and educational systems, which direct where research is conducted and which topics receive attention (Gibbons, Limoges, Nowotny, Schwartzman, Scott, & Trow, 1994). Doctoral students engaged in international joint thesis supervision encounter first-hand the significance of national – geographic and institutional – contexts in shaping research (Friche & Kanaani, 2024).

Surely, a certain "globalization" of science (Caillé & Dufoix, 2013; Keim, 2014), facilitated by conferences, journals, and digital networks, has led to a more transnational expansion of knowledge. Furthermore, the expansion of "studies" (gender studies, war studies, etc.) crystallizes a noticeable tendency to practically engage with research through themes or objects, rather than from a strictly disciplinary anchoring (Darbellay, 2014). Against this landscape, Claudia Derichs (2015) argues that disciplines are not bound to geographical settings but are politically constructed, deriving from a process of politically-informed defining and "scaling" of localities, ethnicities, languages, religions, and cultures.

In the wake of these theses, our argument in what follows is that disciplinary boundaries are still marked by their institutional, geographic, but also linguistic perimeters. It is actually because of the latter that they become political.

3 Dataset and methodology

3.1 The dataset: Coedited volumes as a platform for dialogue

As mentioned above, the institutionalization of SIC in France began in the 1970s. The discipline was officially recognized in 1975 when it was granted its own section (71st), the CNU section, which formalized SIC as an academic discipline. This institutionalization allowed for the expansion of specialized journals, research groups, and professional associations (some of which pre-existed the institutional recognition). In 2017, 830 tenured researchers were identified in SIC, including 108 male professors and 79 female professors, 281 male associate professors [*maîtres de conferences*], and 362 female associate professors [*maîtresses de conferences*] (Walter, Douyère, Bouillon, & Ollivier-Yaniv, 2019, p. 11). Since the 1970s, SIC has emerged as an "interdiscipline" (Olivesi, 2006; 2007; Ollivier, 2000; 2001), integrating, among others, methodologies and approaches from semiotics, sociology, linguistics, film studies, etc. Initially seen as a risk of dilution, this interdisciplinary positioning has become a "hallmark" (Walter, Douyère, Bouillon, & Ollivier-Yaniv, 2019, p. 12).

Against this backdrop, *Research dynamics in information and communication sciences* was edited by CPDirSIC and released in 2019 under the direction of professors Jacques Walter, David Douyère, Jean-Luc Bouillon, and Caroline Ollivier-Yaniv (Eds) – professor Jacques Walter, who served as President of CPDirSIC from 2012 to 2021, having initiated the project and overseen its implementation[4]. Co-authored by a panel of 32 directors or deputy-directors of 38 research units involved in SIC[5] (Walter, Douyère, Bouillon, & Ollivier-Yaniv, 2019, p. 12), it aspired to provide an overview of the discipline in France, analyzing its practices, theories, and foundational research topics. Obviously, the volume should be apprehended at the crossroads of multiple aims: scientific, institutional, and political. It sought to map research areas and trends, forge a coherent and attractive disciplinary image, as well as promote SIC within the larger scientific community and civil society: indeed, it has to be noted that unlike other social sciences and humanities disciplines that have consolidated their positions within the French National Centre for Scientific Research (*Centre national de la recherche scientifique, CNRS*), SIC have not been granted a dedicated CNRS section.

4 The author of the present paper has also been representing her research unit at CPDirSIC since 2021 and has been following the discussions on the volume's update, under preparation.

5 Not all of these units are monodisciplinary, and the place occupied by SIC scholars can considerably vary from one case to another.

ReDynSIC identified ten primary research "domains" within SIC – to avoid confusions, we will call the latter "areas", "topics" or "subfields", following the OpenAlex naming system:[6] (1) "Media and journalism"; (2) "Images, cinema, audiovisual media, and cultural industries"; (3) "Public and political communication"; (4) "Communication and organizations"; (5) "Memory, cultural and heritage mediations"; (6) "Digital strategies, devices, and uses"; (7) "Information, documents, and writing"; (8) "Design"; (9) "Knowledge organization"; (10) "Knowledge mediation, education, and training". This classification was based:

> On the results of an internal questionnaire at CP-DirSIC, on reports submitted by its members to the Agency for the Evaluation of Research and Higher Education (AERES) or to the more recent High Council for the Evaluation of Research and Higher Education (HCERES), as well as on online information available on the concerned laboratories' websites. (Walter, Douyère, Bouillon, & Ollivier-Yaniv, 2019, p. 12)

Each of the thematic areas was supported by examples of research programs, professional associations, as well as joint editorial works offering a panorama of SIC's diversity. The focus on collaborative editing – books or scientific journals having at least one SIC coeditor – sought to highlight collective dynamics: "it is the collective dimension which is privileged" (Walter, Douyère, Bouillon, & Ollivier-Yaniv, 2019, p. 13), also illustrated by the fact that chapters are not signed, deliberately aiming to avoid putting forward specific scholars or individual initiatives. The included bibliographic references were mainly selected by research directors. Several versions of the chapters circulated among CPDirSIC members. They were intended to be passed on to all adherents of the research units involved, though it is true that the degree to which large consultations were conducted within units remained at the discretion of directors. It was also possible to directly address the editors with eventual individual claims and demands, after the preliminary release of the list, which were, when necessary, taken into consideration.

3.2 The methodology: Epistemic and geographic proximity

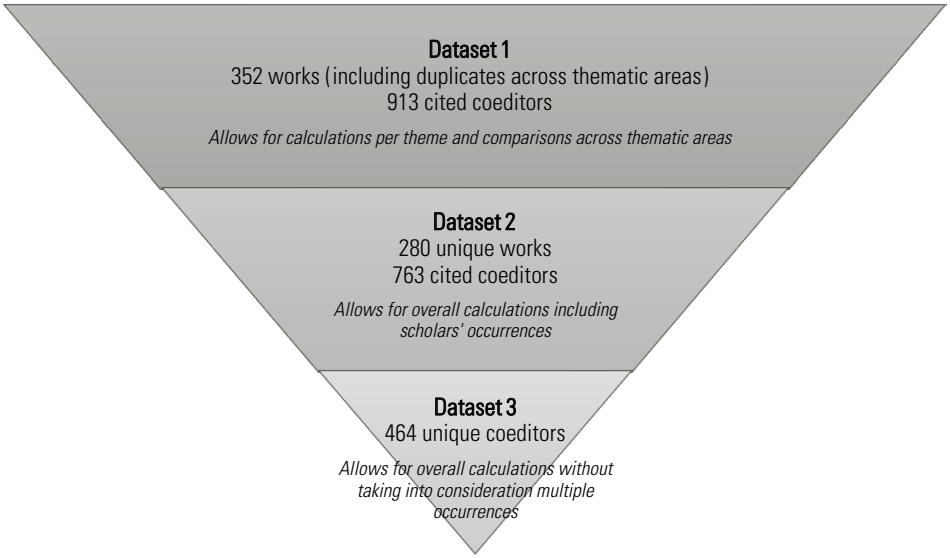
It has, of course, to be remembered that despite the substantial literature on the topic (e.g., Charaudeau, 2007; Frodeman, Klein, & Mitcham, 2010; Huutoniemi, Klein, Bruun, & Hukkinen, 2010; Klein, 1990; Pohl & Hadorn, 2008; Repko, 2008; Resweber, 2011; Schmitt, Goldmann, Simon, & Bieber, 2023), interdisciplinarity still remains an epistemologically unclear construct. We therefore only use the term to refer to visible associations between disciplines as they appear through coediting. We resort to the hyphenated term "cross-disciplinarity" when we seek to further highlight these interconnections across different disciplines.

Our approach is dual, focusing on both the epistemic and geographic dimensions of SIC scholarly connections. The epistemic reach refers to SIC's interaction with other academic disciplines through joint editorial works. The geographic reach pertains to SIC's coediting endeavors across French borders. *Each of the ten SIC thematic areas* identified in ReDynSIC was analyzed by calculating: the proportion of monodisciplinary (SIC) vs multi-disciplinary works; the proportion of SIC vs non-SIC researchers (coeditors) involved; their disciplinary affiliations and geographic locations at the period of the publication – the latter being manually investigated and as much as possible verified through online queries. In total, the list consisted of 352 works corresponding to 913 coeditors, some of whom appeared several times in the dataset (dataset n° 1). The average number of occurrences of coeditors was 1.96 (suggesting a certain diversity in the dataset), whilst the highest number of coeditors in a single work was 9.

In a second phase, we have cross-examined the thematic areas and *removed duplicates*, i.e., works that were indexed in more

6 The OpenAlex database uses a hierarchical and granular structure starting from 4516 topics, and moving to 252 subfields, 26 fields, and finally 4 domains (broad disciplines). An example provided by the platform's technical documentation is the following: The topic "Artificial Intelligence in Medicine" is part of the "Health informatics" subfield, which is part of the "Medicine" field, which belongs to the "Health Sciences" domain: https://help.openalex.org/hc/en-us/articles/24736129405719-Topics

Figure 1: Stages of dataset development



than one theme. We considered duplicates to be important and necessary to keep when analyzing production per thematic area, but they tainted global results. This new dataset allowed us to calculate the *overall* presence of monodisciplinary (SIC) vs multi-disciplinary works, and SIC-only vs non-SIC coeditors, as well as their disciplinary affiliations and geographic locations. It comprised 280 publications, including a total of 763 scholars (dataset n° 2). When even further refined, the corpus resulted in a list of 464 "unique" coeditors, i. e., listed at least once, no matter how many times (dataset n° 3). The arithmetic mean of coeditors per work was 2.5. Figure 1 illustrates the stages of the development of the dataset.

4 Research results and discussion

In order to facilitate the presentation of the results, we will first deal with the overall trends before delving into the findings from each thematic area.

4.1 Overall trends

4.1.1 Monodisciplinary Focus

As Tables 1 and 2 showcase, a high number of SIC-only coedited publications is recorded, corresponding to more than half of the registered publications in all datasets (54.5% of all works, 51% of unique works). This comes as no surprise, as bibliographic references in the ReDynSIC volume have been mainly chosen for their belonging to the discipline; in this sense, it is expected that they occupy a dominant place. The same trend is observed in the contribution of SIC scholars, which remains paramount: the majority of the coeditors involved are institutionally situated within SIC.

However, the data also shows significant interdisciplinary collaborations in France and abroad, though the latter are less prominent. These figures suggest that SIC scholars are actively engaging with, or being solicited by, researchers from other disciplinary fields – likely in response to problems that require interdisciplinary approaches. Alternatively, from a more nuanced standpoint, such interactions may reflect a strategic effort to enhance the legitimacy of SIC within a complex and competitive landscape shaped by power dynamics between disciplines. We can assume that such collaborations have most probably some impact on the breadth and applicability of SIC research in terms of methodologies and insights. The international dimension is also crucial for the discipline's visibility and relevance, especially as the rec-

Table 1: SIC vs. non-SIC works

Works (coedited volumes)	Dataset 1	%	Datasets 2 & 3	%
SIC-only coedited works	195	54.50	145	51.00
Coedited works containing at least a non-SIC coeditor located in France	98	27.40	84	29.60
Coedited works containing at least a coeditor located outside France	65	18.10	55	19.40
Total number of works	354*	100.00	280*	100.00

* Four works include at least one non-SIC coeditor in France and one coeditor abroad.

Table 2: SIC vs. non-SIC scholars

Coeditors (scholars)	Dataset 1	%	Dataset 2	%	Dataset 3	%
SIC coeditors	698	76.50	580	76.00	299	64.44
Non-SIC coeditors located in France	130	14.20	114	15.00	104	22.41
Coeditors located outside France	85	9.30	69	9.00	61	13.15
Total number of coeditors	913	100.00	763	100.00	464	100.00

Table 3: Affiliations of non-SIC coeditors within the French perimeter (dataset 3), in descending order

Discipline/field (France)	Number of occurrences (coeditors)	%
Sociology	16	15.39
Political Science	15	14.42
Literature/Letters	13	12.50
Language Sciences	11	10.58
Anthropology	9	8.65
History	9	8.65
Other: professional sector	9	8.65
Educational Sciences	5	4.81
Arts (& Cinema)	4	3.85
Management	4	3.85
Economics	3	2.89
Computer Science	2	1.92
Law	1	0.96
Philosophy	1	0.96
Psychology	1	0.96
Urban planning*	1	0.96
Total	104	100.00

* Scholar's official affiliation, although anthropology is also displayed on the scholar's online page.

Table 4: Affiliations of coeditors institutionally located outside France (dataset 3), in descending order

Discipline/field (Outside France)	Occurrences	%
Communication-media-journalism-information	44	72.13
Sociology	6	9.83
Literature/Letters	3	4.92
Other: professional sector	2	3.28
Political Science	2	3.28
Economics	1	1.64
Geography	1	1.64
Language Sciences	1	1.64
Philosophy	1	1.64
Total	61	100.00

ognition of Communication as a contributor to the broader international research community constitutes a topic of debate (Cordonnier, 2017b; 2022)

4.1.2 Narrow interdisciplinarity within the French perimeter

As Table 3 indicates, Sociology and Political Science lead the collaborations (15.39% and 14.42%, respectively), reflecting the natural alignment of these disciplines with SIC, as they share an interest in analyzing societal structures, communication processes, and institutional interactions. Similarly, Literature/Letters (12.50%) and Language Sciences (10.58%) represent a significant portion of external collaborations mirroring their traditional ties to SIC in areas such as discourse analysis, semiotics, and media narratives. Anthropology and History show moderate levels of collaboration, suggesting a shared focus on cultural heritage, identity, and educational transformation. Arts & Cinema, and Management represent smaller but still relevant contributions. Collaborations with the professional sector (e. g., members of cultural institutions) are also observed, and we have included them in the results.

In our dataset – and keeping in mind that the study of funded programs may suggest otherwise –SIC shows minimal engagement with certain disciplines, such as Computer Science, Urban Planning, Law, and Philosophy. In this sense, SIC's interdisciplinarity has a narrow *scope* (Kelly, 1996; Klein, 2005; Huutoniem et al., 2009) (or *range*, Porter & Rossini, 1984), bringing together closely related disciplines, mostly situated in the humanities and social sciences, with sometimes overlapping concepts and terminologies. As it appears, this trend is even more pronounced when it comes to interdisciplinarity outside France.

4.1.3 Outside the French perimeter: The importance of the field

The pursuit of international collaborations as part of academia's performance indicators is a long-standing directive within SIC (Cordonnier, 2017a; 2017b; Cordonnier & Wagner, 2018). As Table 4 shows, in our dataset, the overwhelming majority of coeditors institutionally located outside France fall into the field of information-communication (72.13%). This dominance suggests that SIC research resonates with scholars abroad who work on similar objects. Of course, the latter do not necessarily apply the same theories and methodologies as French SIC, and, because of their institutional dimension, these collaborations should still be regarded as interdisciplinary. These findings also need to be apprehended in the frame of back-and-forth movements (post-doctoral fellowships, expatriation, etc.) of French researchers towards French-speaking regions abroad.

With a moderate but notable percentage, Sociology is well represented in the corpus

Table 5: Country affiliations of scholars institutionally located outside France, in descending order (dataset 3)

Country	Occurrences	%
Canada	22	36.07
Belgium	7	11.47
Germany	6	9.83
Romania	6	9.83
Brazil	4	6.56
Switzerland	4	6.56
United Kingdom	3	4.92
Spain	2	3.28
Australia	1	1.64
Cyprus	1	1.64
Italy	1	1.64
Japan	1	1.64
Luxembourg	1	1.64
The Netherlands	1	1.64
Tunisia	1	1.64
Total	61	100.00

(9.83%). The presence of Literature/Letters (4.92%) also aligns with SIC's traditional connections to textual and discourse studies, semiotics, and narrative analysis. Other disciplines, including Political Science, Economics, Geography, Philosophy, and Language Sciences, play smaller roles in SIC's international collaborations. While Political Science is a key partner domestically, its representation in international collaborations is modest within our analyzed dataset. Meagre international collaborations with Language Sciences come perhaps as no surprise, the study of specific languages often being conducted within the perimeter of the related countries. The "Other: professional sector" category refers to collaborations, possibly with media professionals and industry stakeholders.

4.1.4 The role of linguistic, geographic, and cultural proximity

Interdisciplinarity is often discussed in terms of its structural or epistemic dimensions, such as institutional support, cognitive distance, or methodological integration (e.g., Barry, Born, & Weszkalnys, 2008), linguistic factors being treated as logistical challenges rather than integral determinants of collaboration patterns. This oversight is striking given its profound influence on the dynamics of knowledge production and dissemination, particularly in international collaborations.

Against this backdrop, the geographic distribution of coeditors institutionally located outside France provides valuable insights into the international reach and collaborative patterns highlighted in the ReDynSIC volume. Most cited works are in French (we have identified ten works in English and two bilingual French-German publications). Canada stands out with 36.07% of unique coeditors, representing the largest group of international collaborators. Datasets 1 and 2, which take into consideration scholars' occurrences as well as duplicates across thematic areas (see appendices A–E), confirm this trend. This significant presence highlights the historical, cultural, and linguistic ties, particularly with Francophone Canada (e.g., the conferences hosted by the French-Canadian Association for the Advancement of Science / ACFAS).

Notable contributions from neighboring European countries are also observed. The contributions from Belgium (11.47% of

unique coeditors) and Switzerland (6.56% of unique coeditors) indicate the close cultural, linguistic, and academic connections between these countries, particularly in their Francophone regions. Romania's and Germany's representation (9.83% for both) is also noteworthy. Since its foundation in 1993 in Bucharest by Ioan Dragan, the Franco-Romanian Colloquium on SIC has created a favorable environment for collaborations between scholars from these two countries in areas as varied as journalism, political communication, organizational communication, or cultural mediation (Tajariol, Roxin, Pélissier, & Oliveri, 2020). Various French-German interactions also emerged over the last ten years because of the involvement of a small group of – mostly bilingual – researchers who analyze the ties between these two presumably distinct academic fields (Averbeck, 2008; Averbeck-Lietz, Bonnet, & Bonnet, 2014; Averbeck-Lietz, Bonnet, Cordonnier, & Wilhelm, 2019; Averbeck-Lietz, Bonnet, Cordonnier, & Wilhelm, 2023; Roth & Wilhelm, 2016). Brazil's representation (6.56%) highlights ties with Latin America – for example, in the domain of journalism (Adghirni, 2019; Le Cam, 2019).

Data reveals moderate to limited collaborations with countries like UK, Spain, Italy, Luxembourg, the Netherlands and Cyprus, but also meagre and most probably sporadic engagement with institutions outside Europe and North America, with only a few coeditors from regions such as Australia, Japan and Tunisia (1.64% for each of the latter)[7]. In addition, despite a traditional interest in African media studies (e.g., Kiyindou, Ekambo, & Miyouna, 2009), SIC's collaborations with African institutions (beyond Tunisia) remain limited within the studied references. The absence of collaborators from research hubs like China, South Korea, or India attracts our attention. Of course, various factors, such as the geopolitical stakes of such endeavors, should be considered when interpreting these observations. It is also important to note that the authors who contributed to the listed publications are not included in the dataset. A more refined analysis of the authors, beyond the coeditors, could thus reveal more pronounced links.

Finally, only four works in the ReDynSIC collection simultaneously combine external coeditors from France and abroad, underlining the limited overlap between domestic and international collaborations observed in the dataset.

4.2 Observations by thematic area

The findings presented above are based on calculations applied to the completely "cleansed" dataset (dataset n° 3), which does not include duplicates and consists only of unique coeditors, i.e., scholars listed at least once, no matter their occurrences. However, similar trends can be observed in dataset n° 2, which also leaves out duplicates of works but takes into consideration all occurrences of scholars' names. Finally, the tendency is furthermore consolidated in dataset n° 1, which comprises all works (even duplicates) and all scholars' occurrences, as they appear across the 10 thematic areas identified by ReDynSIC. Varying degrees of divergence are noticed in this case. Appendices A–E, at the end of this paper, provide the necessary supporting data.

More particularly, SIC scholars approach "Media and journalism" (T1) focusing on the socio-economic transformations of media industries and the shifts in journalistic practices, influenced by technological advancements and economic pressures. This involves examining the mediatization of political processes, the framing of public issues, and the evolving norms around professional ethics in journalism. Our data shows that when external input is observed, the discipline involved is mainly Political Science. Specific collaborations are identified with institutions in Belgium, Canada, Brazil, Germany, Romania, etc. The numeric distribution of such partnerships probably indicates the importance of linguistic proximity, crystallized through collaborations with French-speaking universities in Belgium and Canada.

"Images, cinema, audiovisual media, and cultural industries" (T2) focuses on media forms and content, as well as on their industrial development at the confluence of media production, distribution, and consumption. SIC scholarship in this area underscores media's dual role as economic sectors and cultural expressions, highlighting how they shape

7 A variety of actions currently seek to consolidate SIC's international presence (e.g., within the International Communication Association).

and are shaped by societal values, political agendas, and global market forces. Studies on television, the dominant media of the 1980s and 1990s, have particularly marked the field and allowed the cross-fertilization of many approaches. Our data suggests that international editorial collaborations mentioned in the ReDynSIC volume mainly concern countries with French-speaking regions (Canada, Switzerland), and generally fall within the field of communication (gaming, interactive narratives, etc.). Within France, interdisciplinary collaborations mostly involve Sociology and History.

SIC scholarship explores the evolving dynamics of "Public and political communication" (T3), emphasizing their critical role in shaping contemporary democratic societies. Research in this area sheds light on the impact of technological, social, and political transformations on public discourse and governance. Our analysis reveals a relatively strong interdisciplinary reach, marked by recurrent collaborations in France with scholars coming from Political Science, but also, although to a lesser degree, Sociology, Language Sciences, Anthropology, etc. Outside France, joint editorial works are rare in our dataset, mainly with researchers in the field of communication and located mostly in Germany.

The thematic area "Communication and organizations" (T4) concentrates on the interplay between communication processes, professional practices, and organizational structures, examining how these interactions shape and are shaped by institutional goals, cultural contexts, and technological advancements. Areas investigated are numerous: hospitals, universities, think tanks, NGOs, large companies, and local associations, etc. The geographic reach observed in the corpus mainly concerns Canada and falls under the general umbrella of the information and communication field. Interdisciplinary collaborations within the national geographic perimeter mostly involve Management Sciences, and to a lesser degree, Arts, Language Sciences, and Sociology.

SIC scholarship in "Memory, cultural and heritage mediations" (T5) investigates how societies engage with their past, construct collective memories, and interpret cultural heritage through various media and practices. It focuses on the tension between history and memory (terrorism, migrations, etc.), the role of testimonies in shaping collective identities, and the use of digital technologies in preserving and presenting patrimonial assets. Research takes an interest not only in physical artifacts and sites but also in intangible cultural elements like rituals and traditions, which are increasingly recognized as pivotal to understanding societal evolution. Our data reveals a substantial production, with a large panel of interdisciplinary collaborations in France. History, Literature, and Sociology appear to be the dominant disciplines solicited. Outside France, scholars from Canada, Romania, and Germany remain the most frequent partners; editorial endeavors are mostly within the field of communication. It is noteworthy that collaborations are also forged with non-scholarly partners, notably cultural institutions, both in France and abroad.

The "Digital strategies, devices, usages" thematic area (T6) underscores the transformative role of digital tools and platforms. From a stand-alone object of study within SIC not as far as twenty years ago, digital technology has nowadays become the environment of most research objects, both an ecosystem and a horizon for almost every research endeavor. SIC scholarship in this area explores how digital ecosystems – comprising infrastructures, algorithms, and networked interactions – structure contemporary societal practices. Collaborations with foreign scholars in the field of information and communication are numerous, especially with Canada, whereas interdisciplinarity within the French perimeter concerns a variety of disciplines, from Anthropology and Literature to Language Sciences, along with some links with the professional sector.

"Information, documents, and writing" (T7) investigates the intersection of information theory, the materiality of documents, and the evolution of "writing" practices, in a general sense. Central to this theme is the notion of the document as both a medium for preserving memory and a tool for coordinating actions. The study of "documentarization" and "editorialization" – processes that structure and organize information across various media – emphasizes the document's evolving role in the digital age, from printed texts to

interactive and multimodal formats. In our dataset, though, fewer works are registered with this thematic area.

Initially associated with aesthetics and artistic creation, "Design" (T8) in SIC has evolved to encompass broader concerns, including user-centered innovation, interaction, and mediation. By emphasizing usability and ethical considerations, design research within SIC not only addresses the immediate needs of technology adoption but also contributes to a reflective and holistic understanding of human-technology interaction in a rapidly evolving sociotechnical landscape. As with the previous thematic area, fewer works are registered here, and interdisciplinary trends are hard to identify.

"Knowledge organization" (T9) addresses how knowledge is classified, managed, and accessed in various contexts. It refers to the development of systems and frameworks, such as taxonomies, ontologies, and thesauri, to structure and represent knowledge for effective retrieval and use. Its roots lie in traditional library science, whilst more dynamic and user-centered approaches have been developed in the digital era. In our dataset, this area showcases some international reach within the field and with scholars coming from countries with French-speaking regions (Canada, Switzerland) and beyond (Brazil).

The thematic area "Knowledge mediation, education, training" (T10) delves into the transmission, transformation, and social dissemination of knowledge, either through media outlets or through scientific institutions, specialized school or university programs, etc. SIC research examines the interplay between traditional educational structures and the informal learning opportunities offered by digital media and technologies, as well as, more recently, open and collaborative ecosystems. It highlights the evolving dynamics of media literacy, digital pedagogy, gamification, and e-learning. Joint editorial collaborations with non-SIC scholars occupy half of the overall production. Given the thematic orientation of this axis, it comes as no surprise that Education Sciences constitute an important partner of SIC. Some international collaborations are observed (Germany, Switzerland, Canada), along with links with the professional sector.

5 Conclusions

As highlighted from the outset, the findings of this analysis primarily mirror the decisions made in the ReDynSIC volume to promote the discipline itself and its members, decisions certainly influenced by compromises, strategic choices, and contextual constraints. In this dataset, interdisciplinary collaborations are slightly more pronounced within France and typically exhibit narrow interdisciplinarity. Beyond national borders, collaborative efforts predominantly involve researchers already rooted in the field of information, media, and communication. Linguistic proximity seems to be important, with countries with French-speaking regions (e.g., Canada, Belgium) occupying a significant place, along with countries with historical ties to French SIC (e.g., Germany, Romania).

Obviously, the ReDynSIC corpus of bibliographical references cannot be considered to be a simple representation of the entire discipline over the last few years, and a more thorough study of SIC productions – e.g., those registered in HAL[8] – would be needed. In addition, the absence of any empirical benchmark coming from other countries or disciplines does not allow for comparisons with other institutional environments and calls for prudence when it comes to generalizations. However, even though this dataset does not fully cover all the existing production in SIC between 2012 and 2018, its significance still remains paramount since it constitutes the only official list in the discipline. The dynamics observed are in this sense of value, questioning the factors shaping academic collaborations.

For example, concerns were expressed in the past that the increasing reliance on Computer Science may lead to an overemphasis on technical and quantitative approaches at the expense of the critical, theoretical, and humanistic dimensions that have traditionally characterized SIC (Jouët, 2011). Even though such evolutions can still take place within SIC (e.g., through the evolution of methodologies), it has to be noted that collaborations

8 HAL stands for Hyper Article Online (*Hyper Article en Ligne*). It is the French multidisciplinary platform for the deposit and consultation of writings, works and results of scientific research.

with computer scientists were not quantitatively salient in our dataset – though more recent data and/or the study of interdisciplinary funded programs could lead to different observations, as mentioned above. Also, the fact that Computer Science is not very well represented in our corpus does not mean that there is no evolution in the way SIC scholars work with and on digital technology.

The limited engagement with disciplines such as Computer Science or Economics may generally reflect a decision to align with more traditional, humanities-oriented disciplines rather than embracing the epistemological challenges posed by emerging technologies and market-driven research agendas. As to the dominance of French-speaking collaborations in SIC, beyond its practical dimension, it may also suggest a deliberate effort by some scholars to maintain and strengthen a Francophone academic identity in an increasingly globalized and Anglophone research environment (Ammon, 2001; Van Weijen, 2012).

Clearly, interdisciplinary and international collaborations are not merely academic exercises but political acts that shape the boundaries of a discipline. Interdisciplinary engagements – both epistemic and geographic – serve not only cognitive or methodological purposes but also act as mechanisms for establishing authority, forging alliances, and shaping the political economy of the discipline itself. As noted by Connell (2007), knowledge production is not politically neutral but is embedded within global hierarchies where certain countries dominate the academic landscape. In the field of communication, Wendy Willems (2014) has demonstrated how academic knowledge production is frequently driven and constrained by particular dominant social, political, and economic interests. By choosing specific disciplines and countries as partners, SIC scholars participate in a process of political positioning within academia. Understanding these dynamics requires a broader analysis of the political economy of academic disciplines and their place within global hierarchies of knowledge production.

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Conflict of interest

The author declares no conflict of interest.

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