Meta-HCI: Practising Reflection in HCI Research

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Abstract

Reflection is recognised as vital for rigorous and responsible (HCI) research, yet it is often treated as secondary, hidden in the margins of papers. This meet-up invites CHI attendees to come together in the META HCI community to explore how we as researchers and practitioners reflect on our own practices – and how we might do so more intentionally. Over 90 minutes, the session will provide a lively, informal forum for sharing experiences, surfacing challenges, and discussing the role of reflection in HCI. By fostering candid conversations about ourselves, our practices, and the structures that shape the field, the meet-up offers an opportunity for collective self-examination and connection across subfields, laying the groundwork for an enduring community of reflective practice.

CCS Concepts

• **Human-centered computing** → **Human computer interaction (HCI)**; **HCI design and evaluation methods**.

Keywords

self-reflection, reflective practice, meta-HCI, research methods, critical HCI, positionality

1 Introduction

HCI is a field that thrives on novelty and cross-disciplinary innovation, yet the rapid pace of change and academic pressures leave little room to reflect on how we conduct research and what values

shape our practices. Reflection has been a recurring theme in HCI – from Schön's reflective practitioner [24] to Sengers et al.'s reflective design [25]. However, it is seldom centred in our collective conversations [2].

This meet-up proposes to change that. We ask: What happens when reflection itself becomes the focus? How can HCI researchers make space to reflect on their methods, positionalities, and the barriers that hinder reflection, and what creative practices might help embed it more deeply into our everyday work? The goal of this meet-up is to create a space for CHI attendees to discuss and practise reflection in HCI research and design. While reflection is acknowledged as crucial for rigorous and responsible research, it often remains tacit and under-discussed. This meet-up legitimises reflection as an explicit practice by offering a lively, informal forum where attendees can share experiences and become inspired to embed reflection into their work. We understand reflection as a multifaceted concept [6, 24, 25] with implications and relevance at different levels for researchers [2, 3, 8, 28]:

(1) **Self** — reflection on the *self*: a deliberate, structured evaluation of one's thoughts, feelings, and actions [7, 13]. We distinguish this from more momentary or automatic *introspection* [21], instead assessing ourselves against salient artefacts such as goals or personal standards [20, 30].

(2) **Practice** — reflection on *practice* (processes): the ways we design, study, and collaborate [32]. In HCI, this includes synthesising diverse perspectives and aligning with standards that protect participants and the public [15, 26].

(3) **Structures** — reflection on the *structures* that condition HCI and our own standings within them: societal constructs (positions, values, power) shaping what problems are visible and whose knowledge is legitimised [1, 5, 9, 10], and institutional arrangements (hiring/promotion, publication practices, productivity incentives) governing what research occurs and how it circulates. This consideration entails explicit assumption-testing and attention to how life circumstances or environment mediate practice [22, 24].

In this meet-up, we encourage discussion by framing reflection as a means to explore how we appreciate *ourselves*, *our work*, and the surrounding *environments* [14]. We believe this to be a helpful

device to introduce more researchers to concepts that can assist them as practitioners *holistically*, as entities of many nuances.

Reflection, as we envision it here, is not limited to standardised methods and codified practices, but also includes the hidden, vulnerable conversations about academic life: The informal "ranting" about why and how we publish, the compromises of salami slicing, the scramble for funding in a climate where LLM-driven outputs increasingly dominate, or the relentless demand to measure impact through citations and metrics. These forms of reflection rarely appear in published work, yet they profoundly influence how we practise HCI. Importantly, reflection happens on multiple levels: as individuals questioning assumptions and choices, as groups working together in projects or labs, and as a community negotiating shared values, norms, and directions. Equally, reflection must extend to the institutional structures that underpin our field – from publication models to hiring and promotion systems – if we are to move beyond individual introspection and towards collective transformation. Creating space for such conversations – whether at the level of the individual, group, or community – is essential if we want HCI, and academia at large, to do better.

The topic is highly relevant for CHI 2026, as meta-HCI research and critical perspectives are increasingly central to the field. At CHI '25, an entire session was dedicated to reflecting on the future of HCI, examining, for instance, the "LLM-ification" of CHI [19], the use of positionality statements [27], citation practices at CHI [16], HCI's future orientation [23], and the decreasing disruptiveness of HCI [4]. Earlier reflective contributions examined related themes, including autoethnographies [12], milestones [11, 17], and literature reviews [29] in HCI. Recent critical reflections, such as Varanasi and Šerpytytė's interactive narrative on the "death of participatory design" in Living Labs [31], further illustrate the candid conversations this meet-up aims to foster. Their use of storytelling to question institutionalised practices mirrors our goal of creating space for raw and vulnerable reflection on how HCI is actually practised.

This meet-up complements formal tracks by providing an accessible, participatory space for reflection and sharing. It will bring together researchers and practitioners from across subfields to collectively explore how reflection shapes our practices and how it can be more deeply embedded into the future of HCI.

2 Meet-Up Format

The 90-minute meet-up will combine interactive and participatory activities with space for open conversation. We will begin with a short welcome and framing of reflection in HCI, followed by an icebreaker where participants share a moment of reflection that shaped their research, forming initial bonds that extend beyond the meet-up. Next, an opinion spectrum activity invites participants to position themselves in response to provocative prompts (e.g., whether reflection should be personal or institutionalised), sparking dialogue about tensions in the field. In small story circles, participants then share personal accounts of reflection in their work, including practices, barriers, and lessons learned. The session will conclude with a wrap-up and synthesis, during which all participants collectively identify common themes and discusses future

directions, including ways to stay in touch and build a community that outlasts the event.

3 Organisers

The organisers bring complementary expertise in reflection, meta-research, and critical design, combined with practical experience in facilitation. Collectively, they have led workshops at CHI, Ubi-Comp, CSCW, and DIS on topics such as meta-research in HCI [18], human–AI interaction, human cognition, HCI's values, methods, and critical perspectives, as well as the entanglement of researchers' personal lives with their work.

Annika Kaltenhauser is a PhD researcher at the University of St. Gallen, Switzerland. Her practitioner background as a UX researcher and designer strongly informs her doctoral work, which focuses on reflective practices in HCI research. She critically examines how research practices are shaped, questioned, and legitimised.

James Arnéra is a postdoctoral researcher at the University of Lausanne (UNIL), Switzerland. His research focuses on systems that scaffold or augment self-reflective practice, examining modality differences and adaptive features. His work explores reflectivity and reflexivity as a means to address complex societal issues.

Amelie Unger is a PhD researcher at the University of Luebeck, Germany. Her work focuses on ability-based design and how reflecting on ability models influences technology design. She sees reflection as essential for questioning assumptions, making design choices explicit, and addressing technology-driven exclusion.

Sophia Ppali is a Researcher at CYENS Centre of Excellence and an Associate Lecturer in Interaction Design at UCLan, Cyprus. Her work focuses on the design of technology directly informed by lived experiences.

Niels van Berkel is a Professor at Aalborg University. His work focuses on the design and evaluation of intelligent computing systems in real-world contexts, with emphasis on collaboration, reflection, and decision-making.

Benjamin Tag is a Senior Lecturer at the University of New South Wales with a focus on Human Factors in the physical and virtual worlds, and the impact of digital technology on human emotion and cognition.

Elena Glassman is an Assistant Professor of Computer Science at Harvard University, where she leads The Variation Lab @ Harvard SEAS. Her research focuses on human–AI interaction and intelligible systems.

Phoebe Sengers is a Professor at Cornell University with a background in computer science, cultural studies, and design. She has been a leading voice in advocating for reflexivity within HCI.

Simo Hosio is a Professor and the leader of Crowd Computing Group at the University of Oulu, Finland. His research interests include self-reflection and digital wellbeing.

Jonas Oppenlaender is a curiosity-driven postdoctoral researcher at the University of Oulu, Finland, with a background in computer science and HCI. His current research focuses on generative AI and meta-science in HCI.

4 Website

The website https://meta-hci.github.io provides further and updated information about the meet-up.

5 Community of Interest

This meet-up is relevant for anyone in the CHI community with an interest in thinking more deliberately about their research and design practices. Reflection is not limited to one subfield or methodology: it is a concern that cuts across the entire discipline. By keeping the theme broad and accessible, while still grounded in concrete practices, the meet-up invites a diverse and interdisciplinary community. In this way, it has the potential to be relevant to everyone attending CHI, regardless of background or methodological orientation, and to spark cross-pollination of ideas across groups that might not otherwise interact. Participants can expect to: (a) become part of a community of HCI researchers and practitioners interested in strengthening and legitimising reflective practices in the field, (b) explore their own understanding of reflection and its role in shaping research processes and outcomes, and (c) contribute to a discussion on a shared understanding of the value, challenges, and ethics of reflection in HCI. The exchange will lay the groundwork for future collaborations and may lead to shared recommendations or resources on embedding reflection more effectively into mainstream HCI research and design.

Acknowledgments

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