

# Critical Computing, Sustainability, and Social Justice

## Part 2

# Tinkering with Governance: Technopolitics and the Economization of Citizenship

**Method** multi-year ethnographic study in the U.S., China, and Ghana

**Argument** Visions and practices of making, innovation and tech entrepreneurship are used to tinker with governance → i.e. variety of actors (government, NGO, private sector) are experimenting with who is included and excluded from political processes based on people's ability to self-fashion themselves as both technological and economic actors.

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## Contributions

1. Draws attention to technology design and production as sites of political work
2. The relationship between technology and citizens have been framed in economic terms & **positions the ability for citizens to transform themselves into technology producers as key to a future of social and economic life** on a national and global scale
3. Making of **digital technologies is not separate from capitalist processes** but are the very sites of political work, governance, and commodification

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## Results

China - deals with economic crisis by compelling citizens to turn themselves into economic actors through technological innovation

Ghana - it took becoming tech entrepreneurs to gain access to international spaces that then compelled the Ghanaian government to take these entrepreneurs seriously regarding their concerns

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## Conclusion

- CSCW may have championed everyday life into becoming productive/commodities → field has entanglements with the Silicon Valley's mindset of technological progress, individual empowerment
- CSCW researchers tend to believe that they have little power in intervening in capitalist and political processes. → surprising because of how much technology researchers and designers are valorized and given increasing political and economic voice.
- **Our field's resistance to dealing with the process of economization prevents the field from living up to the ideals of changing the world for the better**

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## What must be done?

- Recognition that **designing** and implementing and envisioning digital **technologies are necessarily political**
- Challenge how the field has related to intervention and who it has given agency to intervene in the past
- Currently, we borrow a lot from STS but do not borrow its critical scholarship roots. This undermines the reach of critical scholarship. **We should aim to form alliance across disciplines to contend with technology critically.**

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- Have things changed since the study was done?

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- Have things changed since the study was done between 2009-2017?
- Why do technologists, engineers and designers have more power in this current moment?



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“K-12 schools and university colleges call on students to be entrepreneurial by applying methods and principles of design thinking. What is urgently needed are approaches embedded in computer science, engineering, and design curricula, that train people not only in design and engineering, but in engaging deeply and critically with processes of economization and the many forms of inequality they proliferate.”

- Should we teach students in interaction and user experience design not only how to study user needs but also how to do political work and how to intervene in existing structures of power and inequality?
- How can CS/design education broaden the capacity for critical thinking of engineers and designers regarding their role in reifying or potential ability to challenge technologically-enabled oppression and exploitation?

# Technologies for Social Justice

**Overview:** **Justice reform** and the criminalization of one's occupation.

- The “List”
- Reckoning with relationships to digital and physical landscapes by sex workers

**Methods:** Participatory Action Research framework, did a three month field study observing the Stella organization. Conducted **interviews**, hosted **workshops**, and **performed artefact analyses**.

**Findings / Conclusion:**

Technologies as **aides** not necessarily **solutions**.

# Technologies for Justice: Lessons from Sex Workers on the Front Lines

- What are the lessons in this piece?
- What do you all think about the contribution regarding:
  - That universalizing the app would impoverish the contribution that it provides to the community
  - The preservation of the human contact in the beginning and end points
- What do these lessons look like in more complicated scenarios in situations of their stakeholders or technical complexity?
- What does this technology do to challenge our conceptions about justice?
- What is your stance on their statement that technology doesn't offer solution?