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# #GatekeepersMustChange

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**Abstract**

Post-colonial critique in HCI causes us to reflect on how researchers and their products, processes and networks act to mediate power in Western/Northern-centred ways. Alongside critiques from feminist and development studies, these perspectives promote reflective and honest dispositions toward HCI research for and/or in developing regions. We turn our focus, in cultivating discussions on these power relations, toward gatekeeping and increasing awareness amongst stakeholders that we are all gatekeepers in one way or another.

**Author Keywords**

Information and communication technologies and/or development; Post-colonialism; Mainstream; Methods; Self reflection; Intersectionality; Positionality.

**ACM Classification Keywords**

Human computer interaction (HCI); Interaction design process and methods; Interaction design theory, concepts and paradigms.

**Aim/objective for the session**

The main intention of this workshop is to provide a space for established scholars in the ICTD/HCI4D discourse, from the North, South, East and West, to articulate the diverse, intersecting and multi-layered,

## Getting it to work

**Preparation:** Participants are encouraged to write a short reflection, not longer than a page, on their positionality in relation to the topic of this workshop and within the context of the wider CHI research community. The reflection paper should be submitted to the organizers before the conference date.

**Vision:** *The provocations intended for this workshop are not merely about how research is funded, reported and managed, but also about the conceptual and electronic artefacts introduced, and the lenses through which research and development are understood.*

*We will utilise a panel of scholars (the organisers) who have been working extensively to provide a space to do so; and intend to relay the workshop's movement forward into other workshops at other relevant conferences throughout the year.*

systemic obstructions to and enablers of the mutually symmetric world that ICTD/HCI4D aspires. This offers a way to advance the ICTD/HCI4D discourse by recognising our roles as respective gatekeepers in various guises. Our aim is to provoke critical discussions around the following topics:

- Research collaborations and power relationships
- “The researcher” and “the researched” - whose knowledge and knowledge practice are prioritised?
- Deterministic relationships between donors/funders and researchers/researched
- Tensions introduced by the demands of creating/maintaining research careers
- Academic research, publications and representation and citation of work done by researchers in the global south
- Issues of multi-layered and intersecting social inequalities - gender, race and class

### Important Questions and Provocations

The following themes will be used as a guide to encourage participants to engage with the topics:

1. Are you an academic from the global South or East doing ICTD/HCI4D work based in the North or West and perceive (or possibly want to remove/poke through) various glass ceilings or walls at your university or when you visit a research site?
2. Are you from the global North or West, working in the South or East and feel something similar, whether you live there or bungee jump into research situations in low and middle income countries (LMICs) and resource limited environments (RLEs)?

3. Do these questions even matter?
4. How do you think of yourself and the stakeholders in your work with respect to neocolonialism, decolonisation, technology, economics, identify and self?

### Background and positionality for the session

There is increasing critique in ICTD/HCI4D discourse of the methodological, ethical and conceptual frameworks that are implemented when conducting field research. Accompanying this critique, many scholars are provocatively working to create spaces that challenge the system, with ambitions to decolonise power relations by trying to de-centre the discourse, empower and support the marginalised and practice collaboration based on valuing agency in the periphery. However, there is still an ongoing debate as to what the word ‘development’ stands for, in relation to whom and what are we developing and on whose terms? Scholars from different school of thought often define (or not) and contextualize their own sense of ‘D’, which makes the quest for ‘uniform’ understanding of development impossible.

We wish to foment active awareness in order to open up pathways to cultivate or destabilise power relations in ICTD/HCI4D research between and within all stakeholders: communities, participants, researchers and funders. The workshop organisers have been part of numerous conversations and workshops worldwide on such power dynamics and have come to realise that provocative inquiry is needed to challenge the status quo. We wish to move beyond predictable discussions about asymmetric power relations between the global North and global South; East and West, and encourage

## **How the session works**

### **Part 1**

- We will start with round table introductions and sharing of positionality statements.
- The first part of the session will comprise of panel and presentation by the invited scholars.

### **Part 2**

- The second part will comprise round table discussions. Participants will organically engage with and reflect on their experience following the first session's discussions.
- There will be a break between the two sessions, after which each attendee will be asked to volunteer to speak their mind (using the sandwich method described above).
- The second session will be determined by the trajectory of the first.

deeper and wider recognition of the ways power is deployed by researchers and through the artefacts of ICTD research.

Over the years, the ICTD/HCI4D community has asked questions and (re)evaluated its practices. Questions knowledge that, except in rare cases, particularly for researchers from the North, we hold a 'privileged' position vis a vis various stakeholders?" (based on Lynn Staeheli and Victoria Lawson, 1995); "How to actively involve and make conversation with practitioners and policy makers?"; "How can we find ways to balance the asymmetric power dynamics that persist?"; "How do we create a way to promote and produce knowledge from the South by researchers from the South?". These and many other questions will continue to exist in different forms; and titles (such as this workshop proposal's title) aim to raise awareness and persist and advance the conversation. Often the strategies to move forward that are proposed in such workshops/seminars are not implemented once we all return our respective research institutes and communities. Often the energy gained from events does inspire us to reflect on our methods but, eventually, we concede to "the system" and continue working under normative research power relations. Thus, the question remains: how do we move on from becoming "complicit with the system that contributes to widening the gap between rich/poor, urban rural, developed/undeveloped?" (Bidwell, 2014). The provocations intended for this workshop are not merely about how research is funded, reported and managed, but also about the conceptual and electronic artefacts introduced, and the lenses through which research and development are understood.

We will utilise a panel of scholars (the organisers) who have been working extensively to provide a space to do so; and intend to relay the workshop's movement forward into other workshops at other relevant conferences throughout the year. We are, therefore, submitting variations on this proposal to several ICTD-related workshops/conferences: CHI Development Consortium (San Jose, May) as well as two conferences related to human-computer interaction and design: PDC (Aarhus, Aug) and AfriCHI (Nairobi, Nov). These variations will involve different panel memberships and methods to establish ongoing face-to-face, momentum to breathe life into subsequent virtual discussion and potential collaboration. The organiser panel will manage time-keeping and housekeeping. The rules for each speaker, whether facilitator or not, are to employ the 'sandwich method': start with praise, then critique and lastly provide/envision a way forward. The end goal of organising these exploratory workshops can be put in three different yet related points:

1. To understand various productive and unproductive gatekeeping mechanisms that act as enablers/disablers to the ICTD/HCI4D research community. This is especially within the context of collaborations between the South/North and East/West and the under-representation of the South/East in knowledge production.
2. To, first, precipitate all stakeholders in ICTD/HCI4D to recognise that we all individually gate-keep, and thus are all responsible for perpetuating systemic gatekeeping; and, second, to liberate ourselves and the discourse, we must all actively, consciously and continuously try to adapt and evolve our practices to achieve (and mentor) more compassionate and wise gatekeeping.

3. To invite interested participants to collaborate and contribute to an open access book or journal article (depending on funding acquired along the way) on our workshop trajectory and its organic intellectual outputs.

### **Acknowledgements**

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