

Triangulating Race, Capital, and Technology

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ABSTRACT

This workshop transnationally triangulates race, capital, and technology to understand how colonialism and imperialism linger and mutate across various sites and scales. Furthermore, it brings together transnational HCI work that engages with critical ethnic studies as well as postcolonial and decolonial studies to intervene on the field's long-standing epistemology and site focus on the West and fixation on the nation-state at large. Attention to colonial residual, geopolitical tensions, and historical specificities brings HCI in conversation with geopolitical shifts and their very real impacts on the practice and theory of technology design, while troubling the presumptions of who "gets to be human" in HCI. We invite papers and presentations that seek to: 1) triangulate sites of study; 2) draw from different disciplines, theoretical approaches, and methodologies; and 3) engage themes of transnational capital, race, and technology.

CCS CONCEPTS

• **Human-centered computing** → **HCI theory, concepts and models.**

KEYWORDS

Transnational HCI; Capital; Race; Geopolitics

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1 BACKGROUND

This workshop aims to transnationally triangulate race, capital, and technology to understand how colonialism and imperialism linger and mutate across various sites and scales. Specifically, the workshop focuses on research that opens up relations between technocapitalism and racialization in the contemporary global economy. Two key observations undergird this focus: 1) the demonstrably

racial and geopolitical tones of contemporary technological discourses and practices, including commentary on "the new cold war," "the rise of China and India," etc.; and 2) the entrenchment of technocapitalism, seen through the growing power of "big tech." By technocapitalism or technoscientific capitalism, we mean the embedding of capitalism with technology and the increasing interdependence between science and innovation with financial capital and markets through the commodification of knowledge and the assetization of data [4, 5, 24, 25]. Racialization here refers to systems of signification made legitimate by mutually constitutive processes of unequal social organization and differentiation [21], including transnational and "colonial divisions" of labor, technology, and capital [18].

This framing of geopolitical struggles over technology as economic and ideological competition across empires and between superpowers is not new; we see it, say, in the appropriation of Cold War rhetoric in contemporary media discourses about China and the United States [11, 19]. What they reveal instead, are the long-standing and unresolved tensions (and arguably anxieties) about who can take on global leadership. The rise of big tech within this context, as much as they rely on colonial legacies of resource and knowledge extraction, create new forms of power relations across multiple capitalisms and imperialisms and across technological, economic, and state infrastructures [1, 12]. These new power relations also take on new forms of racialization across scales. Several examples demonstrate this: the racialized criminalization of trade espionage, "national security" concerns over platforms including Huawei and Tiktok; xenophobic sentiment during the COVID-19 pandemic against Asians and Africans; narratives of "tech authoritarianism" versus "unbridled libertarianism," etc.

Tracing the transnational circuits and triangulations between race, capital, and technology are (or should be) central to how HCI conceptualizes technology development and use [20]. The colonial and racial histories of technology development co-exist with various violences against Black, Indigenous, Asian and other 'marginalized others' that play out in local, regional, and global contexts. This modern world system of racial capitalism is dependent on legacies of slavery, violence, imperialism, and genocide [21]. Racial capitalism, the process of social and economic accumulation and extraction predicated on racial *difference*, in part continues to manifest through the development, innovation, and governance of computing technologies. The geopolitics of digital technologies therefore increasingly shape how states and regions relate with one another [15] and we perceive an urgent need to bring HCI in conversation with these geopolitical shifts and their very real impacts on the practice and theory of technology design and use.

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Thus, this workshop brings together transnational HCI work that engages with critical ethnic studies as well as postcolonial and decolonial studies to intervene on the field's long-standing epistemology and site focus on the West *and* fixation on the nation-state at large. We emphasize genealogies of critical ethnic studies that emerge from Third World liberation and decolonial movements that see race as constituted internationally within and against conditions of empire and mechanisms of power.¹ We see the need for transnational analysis in studies of race and technology that engage new and shifting formations of global racial capitalism and neocolonialism in both theoretical frameworks and empirical contexts to challenge U.S., Western, and English-centered dominance. Beyond locating the "West" as a sole site of opposition, a transnational framework also emphasizes "inter-referencing" across various sites, such as engaging supply chain organizing between India and China or technology development between South America and the Caribbean, or formations of city states between Hong Kong and Singapore [8].

Forms of racial "othering" manifest in both the discourse and practices of the "technology arms race" and STEM research exchanges and collaborations – cementing what Sylvia Wynter describes as racialized codes of "overdevelopment" and "underdevelopment" that undergird historical and contemporary social orders [26]. For example, while western media outlets continue to insist on the newness of China's control, exploitation, and power over other countries, seemingly unencumbered by domestic interests and agency, debates in computing and design have returned to nationalistic, bloc-like frameworks for characterizing technological dominance instead of attending to the complex, heterogeneous, and multi varied ways transnational logistics, investments, partnerships have enabled the development of tech economies and products. We emphasize both attention to transnational movements of people, capital, labor, and resources as well as "placed-based politics", grounding transnationalism in the welfare of local communities [9].

This workshop therefore invites critical perspectives interrogating different scales of racial violence and actors, including military, research institutions, investors/industry, governments, and inter-governmental organizations, to understand and reframe the residual effects and emerging mutations of colonial power and imperialism and its unevenly distributed impacts in a transnational context. Specifically, our goals are to:

- Provide space to collectively interrogate and reflect on theories of racialization, capitalism, and geopolitics in transnational contexts through studies of computing and technology;
- De-center particular kinds of theorization about technology and power that has largely been built on evidence and sites in the West, including decolonial interventions to dominant perceptions of HCI as "borderless" (see [7]);
- Facilitate interdisciplinary and transnational conversations on race and technology in HCI through bridging across fields like critical ethnic studies (e.g. Black studies, Asian American

studies, and Native and Indigenous studies), global communication and area studies; refugee, migration, and border studies; history and historiography; postcolonial and decolonial theory; feminist technoscience; gender, sexuality, and queer studies; political geography; and more;

- Offer methodological interventions to presentist debates in HCI by looking to archival, genealogical, ethnographic, and other qualitative and historical methods [23];
- Convene a first set of ideas and papers aimed at a special issue in TOCHI on racial capitalism, geopolitics, and technology and contributions to *Interactions*.

By triangulating race, capital, and technology, we approach the multiplicities and the continuities of colonial and imperialist power in various sites and scales, with attentiveness to historical specificities. In an attempt to complicate the well worn paradigms such as the "West and the rest" [8] our workshop troubles the presumptions of who gets to be human in HCI by calling for critical engagements of race, capitalism, politics, technology, power, (settler)colonialism, and imperialism in HCI through transnational contexts. We invite papers and presentations that seek to: 1) triangulate sites of study; 2) draw from different disciplines, theoretical approaches, and methodologies; and 3) engage themes of transnational capital, race, and technology.

We emphasize theorizations of geopolitical processes and triangulations of racialization in relation to technology and capital through studies grounded in different empirical contexts [6, 16, 18]. The workshop centers the following questions:

- How might the HCI community respond to the simplifications and reductive portrayals of geopolitical tensions, especially in the realm of data science, AI, and computing, without succumbing to racial tropes and narratives and without losing sight of new forms of power circulating across different scales and actors?
- To wit, what are different theorizations, imaginaries, and vocabularies surrounding technology, geopolitics, and power that enable us to critically engage transnational formations of race in HCI?
- And, how does technology interface with imperialism, nationalism, and empire today, including multinational corporations and governments, and how do they operationalize practices and ideologies of control through technology development and capital expansion?

We emphasize the transnational to trace the geographic and political dimensions of technocapitalism while attending to the histories of colonization and logics of empire [10, 13]. We welcome various theoretical and empirical interpretations, scales, and groundings, to invite more empirical understandings of domination, white supremacy, and imperialism in different sites and locations.

Already, CHI scholars have been contending with critical questions of race, politics, technology, and capital, especially in critiquing reductive portrayals of where technological expertise and economies originate from as well as attending to the multiple histories and politics of race and ethnicity outside of settler colonial regimes [2, 3, 13, 14, 17, 20]. This workshop builds on such work to investigate and contextualize specific forms, practices, and histories of racialization, and the lived experiences of those who

¹Consider this in contrast to current discussions of critical race theory that is rooted in a very particular US history of racial relations and domestic policy (see, [22] and [20]).

are racialized, displaced, and dispossessed in the context of global techno-capitalism. We therefore invite contributions that further explore, and solidify conceptual and empirical elaborations of how race, capital, and digital technology operate in various scales and geographies. Topics of interest include:

- Geopolitical, economic, and technological entanglements between multiple regions. For example, technopolitics between the U.S., China, and Africa; Belt and Road Initiative (BRI) investments across regions such as Southeast Asia and MENA (Middle East and North Africa) and the putative response of BBW (Build Better World) by the G7 (Group of Seven nations);
- Racial and technological imaginaries around transnational migration: eg. the "migrant crisis" between Europe and the MENA regions or between South America and the United States;
- Discussions of how capitalism profits from the ongoing production of racialized difference, such as through the extraction, control, and dispossession of data, land, environment, and natural resources and exploitative labor and material conditions;
- Different modes of imperialism facilitated by technological development and capitalist expansion. For example, the embedding of legacies of slavery and settler colonialism in digital technology systems such as AI and facial recognition across the US, China, Africa, South America, etc.;
- Military histories of computing and their relation to US hegemony embedded in transnational tech companies such as Facebook, etc; and in turn, discussions of how globalization further fuels militarism and war;
- Triangulation of academic discourses around labor and technology, for instance shifts in discourses around China and India from "human factories" to "cheap labor," etc. ;
- Explorations of contemporary and new formations of concepts such as Techno-Orientalism [25] to anchor how racial, technological, and geopolitical imaginaries of Asia intersect with Western hegemony;
- Transnational studies of technology labor, particularly those that trouble the centrality of the nation state. E.g work on software developers in big tech and multinational corporations;

2 ORGANIZERS

Each of the organizers has a long history of conducting qualitative and ethnographic work on race, politics, and technology throughout East Asia, East and West Africa, Southeast Asia, and North America. This workshop was initiated after multiple discussions between the organizers after more than six years of different forms of collaboration between them.

Dr. Rachel Kuo is a postdoctoral fellow at the Center for Information, Technology, and Public Life and the School of Library and Information Science at the University of North Carolina-Chapel Hill. She is also a Visiting Scholar at Duke University's program in Asian American and Diasporic Studies. She is interested in race, technology, and social movements.

Yuchen Chen is a PhD candidate at Communication and Media at the University of Michigan. Her research looks at the transnational flow of technology, knowledge, labor, and capital and how it relates to social experiments in China. Chen will be the main contact person for this workshop.

Dr. Cindy Lin is a postdoctoral fellow at the Atkinson Center for Sustainability and Department of Information Science at Cornell University. In Fall 2022, she will be an Assistant Professor at Pennsylvania State University's College of Information Sciences and Technology. Her current research and book project focuses on the genealogies of ground truth in artificial intelligence (AI) systems deployed within the environmental sciences.

Dr. Seyram Avle is Assistant Professor of Global Digital Media in the Department of Communication at the University of Massachusetts, Amherst where she studies digital technology cultures and innovation across parts of Africa, China, and the United States. This work primarily takes a critical approach towards understanding how digital technologies are made and used, as well as their implications for issues of labor, identity, and futures.

3 WEBSITE AND SOCIAL MEDIA

Details about the workshop call, details of the event, and participant bios will be made available on our website, <http://racecapital.tech/>. Accepted position papers from participants and future outputs of the workshop will be published on this website, which functions also as a repository for participants to develop workshop materials before and after CHI'2022. We will ensure that our website is fully keyboard navigable, screen reader accessible, colour-contrast compliant to accommodate a variety of needs and abilities.

4 PRE-WORKSHOP PLANS

4.1 Workshop Recruitment and Application

Information on the workshop and participation requirements will be posted on the website <http://racecapital.tech/> and on e-flyers for distribution on various mailing lists and platforms of scholarly communities, including the CHI and CSCW communities, science and technology studies (eg. STSGRAD), internet studies (eg. AoIR), ethnic and race studies (American Studies Association; African Studies Association, etc), and industry networks both within and outside of North America to attract participants with interdisciplinary training and regional representation. Additionally we will announce the call on social media platforms such as Facebook and Twitter. We will keep the workshop at a minimum of ten participants and maximum, twenty, including the organizers of this workshop. Participants will be asked to provide 2-4 page position papers (1,500 words maximum) responding to the following set of questions:

- How do you locate your work within HCI and critical studies? Which community do you serve in your scholarship? What do you hope to gain from this workshop?
- What theories, imaginaries, histories, methodologies, and vocabularies do you draw upon to think about the relationship between technology, geopolitics, capital, and power that enable critical engagements with transnational formations of race in HCI?

- What are your research sites and/or practices that demonstrate how technology interfaces with, operationalizes, and practices imperialism, nationalism, and empire?

These questions solicit examples of potential participants' research related to the workshop themes of race, capital, and technology and crucially, how that pertains to the CHI community's growing interest in social critique and anti-racist approaches to technology design and computing [20]. They ask authors to elaborate on how their own research has been informed by methods and techniques that draw from other disciplines, in an effort to elaborate on how treatments of race and capitalism have long been established in other disciplines and can further strengthen HCI approaches to critical computing and technology. Before the workshop, papers will be shared among participants so as to provide an adequate basis for discussion and interaction during the actual workshop.

5 WORKSHOP STRUCTURE AND ACTIVITIES

5.1 Workshop Setup

Our workshop will be a 1-day hybrid event broken into two three-hour working blocks to accommodate multiple time zones. We adopt this hybrid format to accommodate participants who may face travel limitations due to the ongoing Covid-19 pandemic, as well as individuals who share health and accessibility-related concerns and needs. Participants unable to attend in-person will participate via the Zoom meeting platform. To ensure audibility, we will have a dedicated laptop, monitor, and speakers to interact with our virtual participants. We will also ensure that Zoom live caption function is turned on throughout the workshop and if possible, for participants to share any updated copies of their presentation or case studies materials so that both synchronous and asynchronous participants can follow along. Additionally, we will have a wi-fi extender and mobile hotspot to ensure Internet connectivity throughout our event.

1-2 workshop organizers will be designated to facilitate the virtual portion of the hybrid event. This role will oversee any technical and logistic issues and will communicate accordingly with on-site organizers. We will set up a backend communication channel such as Slack or Signal for both on-site and virtual workshop organizers to ensure smooth progress of the workshop. The Zoom meeting will be recorded and shared with all participants, and the organizers will facilitate collaborative note taking and discussion during the workshop. As the COVID-19 pandemic unfolds over the next year, we expect this hybrid workshop structure to evolve according to local health, social, and political conditions.

5.2 Activities and Timing

Our "one-day" hybrid workshop will take place over the course of two days with three hours each per day (see Table 1 for preliminary schedule). The main activities of our workshop are introductory presentations, a power mapping exercise, a case study presentation, and final road mapping exercise.

The workshop will begin with introductions and brief 5 minute presentations by participants to orient their own contributions in relation to our workshop topic. We will then end the first part with a power mapping exercise where the goal is to trace how

our theoretical frameworks and conceptual apparatus fit with the different sites and regions we are working with. The goal of this activity is tracing different scales, sites, and actors behind racial and colonial violences across geopolitical contexts, such as military, research institutions, investors, and corporation/industry. We hope to keep all participants in the virtual room as well as on-site together in order to ensure that all conversations can be captured. We expect that this will be a feasible arrangement given that all workshop organizers have taught classes bigger than 20. We will use a collaborative application such as Miro to visualize the power mapping exercise and unpack the connections between different participants in order to elucidate larger themes and patterns. Any kind of conversations or questions that are not captured can be in an alternative live document such as Google Docs or Cryptpad.

The second part of the workshop will begin with presentations of case studies to ground the group in empirical examples of different transnational encounters between race, technology, and capital. From the case studies, we will build on the previous power mapping exercise to create a collective theoretical and methodological road map. The road map activity will distill the earlier connections and conversations into a shared vocabulary, methodologies, theories, and visions. This will serve as a draft introduction for a contribution to *Interactions* magazine. Since we are still attempting to work as a full group, we will ensure to carry out proper community agreements and protocols so that equitable participation for both on-site and virtual attendees is achieved.

At the end of the workshop, participants will re-group to reflect on their workshop experience and discuss future possibilities for collaboration and community.

6 POST-WORKSHOP PLANS

Discussions and experiences from the workshop will be archived on the website pending participants' consent and consensus. We also invite the participants to work on brief pieces for *Interactions* Magazine in which their work and the outcome of the workshop will be disseminated to a wider audience. In order to stay in contact after the workshop and to invite potential new interested parties, we would like to create a mailing list. This list will be used by workshop organizers to disseminate information as well as to stimulate new collaboration opportunities, and build community. With the brief *Interactions* pieces, we hope to work with participants to develop a TOCHI special issue contribution within the next two years. Interested participants will be informed about the current status via the mailing list.

7 CALL FOR PARTICIPATION

Triangulating Race, Capital, and Technology: This hybrid workshop aims to reflect on the role of computing in racialization, capitalism, and geopolitics in transnational contexts. We seek participation by scholars across disciplines including HCI, critical race, ethnic, post/de-colonial, migration/border, feminist, and queer studies, among others.

We welcome theoretical and empirical articulations of race, imperialism, and technology across locations. We invite scholars and

Table 1: Preliminary Workshop Schedule

Time	Activity
Part I	
9:00 am - 9:30 am	Welcome from convenors
9:30 am - 10:30 am	Introductions and brief presentations: how do you orient to the conversation Summary of what you wrote/position
10:30 am - 10:45 am	Break and setup for power mapping activity
10:45 am - 12:15 pm	Power mapping activity (theories/sites/discussion)
Part II	
9:00 am - 10:20 am	Presentations/discussion of cases
10:20 am - 10:30 am	Break
10:30am - 11:45 am	Continue power mapping to road mapping activity: where do we go from here?
11:45 am - 12:00 pm	Closing remarks and reflections

practitioners at various stages of their career to build a geographically, theoretically, and methodologically diverse cohort. We prioritize applications with demonstrated commitments to anti-racist and anti-colonial practice and inquiry and clear articulations of research position and stakes.

To apply, please provide a 2-4 page position papers (1,500 words) responding to the following questions:

- How do you locate your work? What communities do you serve in your scholarship? What do you hope to gain from this workshop?
- What theories, imaginaries, histories, methodologies, and vocabularies do you draw upon to think about the relationship between technology, geopolitics, capital, and power that enable critical engagements with transnational formations of race in HCI?
- What are your research sites and/or practices that demonstrate how technology interfaces with, operationalizes, and practices imperialism, nationalism, and empire?

Position papers will be shared among participants prior to the workshop. Workshop activities will be archived on the website (<http://racecapital.tech/>) pending participant consent. We will provide opportunities for collaboration and special issue contributions. At least one author of each accepted submission must attend the workshop and all accepted participants must register for both the workshop and for at least one day of the conference.

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