“There is no justice, just us”: Making mosaics of justice in social justice Human-Computer Interaction

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Figure 1: Visual mosaic of justice-orientated research compiled by the personal photographs of the organisers: [top-left] Interior of a community centre where a violence prevention programme is based, [middle] Autonomous deployment and maintenance of a community network in the Amazon Rainforest, [bottom-right] Academic-activist hand-crafting a representation of healing after a traumatic event

ABSTRACT

The concept of social justice in Human-Computer Interaction has become an emergent domain of practice and research across the past decade. Work has included research efforts into meeting the needs of under-served populations, providing method blueprints for inclusion of marginalised identities, and a call for greater consideration on how positive impact is defined both in and beyond research engagements. While the number of justice-orientated works may have increased, new social forces question what is meant by the term justice in social justice initiatives; asking who is included in how justice is defined, what its goals are and how might we measure it. We offer this workshop as an opportunity to: (a) build conceptual and visual ‘mosaics’ of social justice works in HCI to map out the existing landscape; (b) build a supportive community of HCI researchers, practitioners, activists and designers who work
with matters of injustice to share vocabulary, approaches and expertise with likewise individuals; (c) facilitate critical conversations around meaningful justice-orientated action and practice, and how they might relate to wider justice frameworks.

CCS CONCEPTS
• Human-centered computing → Collaborative and social computing theory, concepts and paradigms.

KEYWORDS
social justice, justice frameworks, fairness

ACM Reference Format:

1 MOTIVATION
Social justice has risen in prominence as a motivator for action in HCI over the last decade, inspiring method blueprints, design implications for just technologies and the identification of areas in need of urgent attention. Digital technologies have been posed as tentative assets to further social justice movement goals, from facilitating whistle-blowers and journalists reporting on human rights violations [22], to offering virtual meeting places for community action [24], and furthering the identification of ‘data silences’ in data-sets [10]. Still the field now stands on a stable groundwork of evidence that demonstrates the same tools can create novel societal inequalities, from reintroducing unjust legislation [14] to violating an individual’s right to privacy from state identification [26]. Indeed, there has been nuanced discussions around the complexities around environments where social justice issues intersect [11], and to questioning to what extent justice can be understood as an outcome in and of itself [2, 30]. Despite a welcome growth in critical consciousness around social inequalities, many works that reference social justice are only loosely associated with the epistemological origins of justice. This is paired with a paucity on descriptions of what doing or achieving justice may look like in different contexts. Indeed, there appears little critical discussion around what is meant by the justice inherent to social justice, despite there being calls to adopt such a lens [6].

1.1 Locating the ‘justice’ in social justice
Not being explicit about what is meant by calls to social justice can have significant consequences for the actions that individuals may take on behalf of what is deemed just. As a significant facet of injustice relies on the under- or mis-recognition of justice-orientated practices and outcomes [9], by not making evident the justice ideals or frameworks on which social justice HCI builds on, it is possible for such efforts to run in tension with, or counter to the goals for collaboration, equity and redistribution [3, 15]. Furthermore, adopting a language of justice without being explicit about ones understanding of the concept exposes authors to the risk of virtue signalling. A language of justice might put authors in a positive light, yet without being clear about the intended goals the persons or communities for whom justice is supposed to be achieved might not benefit at all or be actually exploited for the sake of the researchers, which has been termed “community fetishism” elsewhere [19]. In such a way, as HCI scholars adopt more pluralistic, intersectional, and broadly inclusive approaches to combating societal inequalities, it is vital that a critical lens is applied to the concept of justice. To do this, we trace the patterned history of justice as it has been used in HCI before turning our attention our activities that explore the main focus of this workshop: What do we mean by justice when we appeal social justice in HCI?

1.1.1 The changing picture of (in)justice: beyond distribution of fair treatment
The origins of the concept of justice reach back to antiquity where justice was synonymous with being ‘right’ (‘rightness’) in contrast to moral wrongs [23]. While long considered a property pertaining to the law, matters that relate to justice exist in all contexts where one’s freedom, opportunities and access to, or possession of resources are challenged prompting wider questions around one’s legal and moral rights to deserve them [27]. The attainment of justice, under this interpretation relies on justice principles for the “fair and equal treatment” that should ideally govern all modes of exchange and interaction for all whom hold equal basic rights while cooperating in an egalitarian economic structure [25]. For early works in Human-Computer Interaction, the influence of justice as fairness principles is noticeable in the evaluations of digital technologies and systems. Such works included evaluating the just-ness of digital systems from their ability to distribute of economic goods [17], their ability to calculate fair sentencing and/or bail [8, 16] and their ability to provide equal access to political infrastructure [12, 20].

Scholars more recently have cautioned the conflation of fairness as justice, stating that although the principle of fairness acts as “an improvement over inaction” in the face of unjustness, the concept “does not prevent the harms for which the technology opens space” [6]. In such a way, social justice cannot be distilled to distributive justice alone, or ‘fair treatment’ regarding the distribution of material resources. Indeed, not all matters of injustice revolve around redistribution of such resources, for the failures of (mis)recognition [7, 28] have also been identified to produce unjust social norms and practices restrict the agency and visibility of communities and groups [21].

1.1.2 The patterned mosaics of social justice in HCI
Beginning from the standpoint that existing social, economic and political infrastructures are a source of oppression in themselves, HCI scholars have sought to introduce radical analytical frameworks toward exploring justice through the design, deployment and evaluation of social justice aspirations and practices. Here we elicit just five of the many prominent and tightly interconnected ‘mosaics’ of justice-orientated work that, while distinctive in their own right, demonstrate the complex patterned nature of social justice HCI.

Citational justice: has emerged through the challenge of robustness and validity of knowledge production by diverse representation and lived experience of Black, Indigenous and People of Color’s (BIPOC) voices inside and outside of academia. This mode of justice goes beyond what Sarah Bond describes as “diversifying our footnotes” [1] and onto explicating whose work is valued and how that value is expressed in different structures of power [18], and the
negative impact of epistemic violence when such work is erased [13].

Research justice: is related to injustice in what is considered (valuable) knowledge in its own right. Academic and scientific knowledge frequently devalues, ignores or even eradicates other forms of knowing, such as knowledge rooted in lived experience rather than experiment, rooted in other non-western epistemologies and cosmologies [2, 19]. Research justice aims to include, build on and strengthen underrepresented, oppressed forms of knowledge.

Disability justice: concerns multiple analytical frameworks that examine both how disability is conceptualised, and subsequent approaches to advance access and inclusion for disabled people. Work within this space has explicated the justice outcomes for disabled people that focus on inter-dependency between persons over independence in design [6], meaningful design processes for disabled people, and encouraging critical dialogue around the role of critical disability studies to produce a manifesto to attain equity for disability scholars [29].

Restorative justice: is rooted in Indigenous societies that focuses on repairing the harm(s) caused by actions, behaviours and practices both inside of and external to wider criminal justice systems. By focusing on restoration over retribution, this approach has been applied both re-actively in response to conflicts or crimes, such as facilitating behaviour change for perpetrators of intimate partner violence [5], and proactively to strengthen community through facilitating communication, empathy and skill exchange [9].

Environmental justice: describes the interdisciplinary approach to scrutinising environmental law, policy and process, political ecologies and environmental discrimination and racism against minorities. Bates et al. [4] sought to encourage the interconnection of climate change and environmental sustainability with social justice and socio-political issues, such as racial justice and health inequality.

We see all these strands of justice having mutually constructive goals, and welcome critical perspectives on how they may assemble and separate around social issues.

2 WORKSHOP AIMS
This single session (four-hour) virtual workshop at CHI2022 will bring together a trans-disciplinary group of approximately 30 scholars, researchers, practitioners, activists and designers to discuss the concept of justice across their different domains of expertise. This is both to shape experiences and identify common approaches to using different concepts of justice in research, design and practice. Participants are encouraged to critique and rethink existing interpretations of justice and how these may differ from such interpretations of fairness, methods and frameworks that can "do justice" for those we work with. As such, the key objectives of the workshop are as follows:

- Construct conceptual and visual ‘mosaics’ of existing social justice works in HCI to map the existing landscape of research and practice;
- Build a supportive community of HCI researchers, practitioners, activists and designers who work with matters of in/justice to share vocabulary, approaches and expertise with likewise individuals;
- Facilitate critical conversations around meaningful justice-orientated action and practice, and how they might relate to wider justice frameworks.

3 WORKSHOP SCHEDULE
We intend to structure the workshop into three main phases: pre-activities, a one-day workshop (lasting no more than four hours) in the time-frame of CHI2022 and optional follow up activities. In order to reduce the impacts of screen fatigue, our main workshop shall be divided into four main activities that take no longer than 60 minutes each before coffee or screen breaks.

3.1 Pre-Activities
Our pre-activities will consist of the organisers encouraging all attendees to have a read of the submitted summaries of position papers to better situate their own experiences in a wider body of practice, and to better understand the workshop aims. Following these preliminary introductions, each organiser will be assigned a group, depending on skills and suitability, and direct participants toward the use of pre-selected digital tools for asynchronous collaboration, such as Miro, Mural or Jamboard depending on accessibility requirements.

3.2 Virtual Workshop
Table 1 shows a draft schedule for our four-hour virtual workshop. Our workshop is structured to prioritise group discussion of approximately 30 participants in small ‘breakout rooms’ around visual activities. Our breakout rooms should have no more than six to eight participants to ensure our spaces for discourse are compatible with the technical constraint of the video-conferencing software codex whereby only one person may speak at one time. Small groups also provide ample opportunity for individuals to connect and share their work, experiences and perspectives without feeling ‘drowned out’ by louder voices. Consequently, after small group activities Setting the base, Hammering out the tessarae and Applying adhesive and mounting, we shall re-gather as a group to present the findings of these activities to ensure cross-communication.

After a warm welcome to our participants, we will begin with rapid introductions inviting our participants to introduce themselves and present a thirty second example of what justice has meant to them in their work by a visual picture or a personal anecdote. Participants will then be invited into their first activity ‘Setting the base’ where they will work to highlight the most prominent influences of justice on their work; through selecting important theorists, practitioners, papers or studies in HCI and/or beyond. We shall then regroup and with each small group will elect a spokesperson to feedback to identify similarities and differences between these investigations. Following this discussion, we will then take a short break.

Participants will be re-grouped into different working groups to participate in Hammering out the tessarae, a slightly longer, visual activity on an asynchronous digital whiteboard such as Miro/Mural/Jamboard. Participants will be invited to digitally create a personal, visual mosaic of justice that answers a questions around the theory and practice of justice (e.g., 1). We believe this
shall encourage participants to spot virtual and conceptual similarities between their own mosaics and others. Once more, the group will be invited back to the main room for a short viewing period of other participants’ mosaics. We shall then take our final break of the workshop.

Applying adhesive and mounting is our final activity that brings together everyone in a collaborative activity to formulate how such mosaics could be used to cultivate best practice guidelines for justice-orientated work and educational materials for new designers and researchers. Organisers shall confirm the main takeaways of the main sessions before inviting participants to a shared, distributed meal if timings permit.

### 3.3 After activities

We aspire for our workshop community to continue to grow and build on the different themes of the workshop. Our participants will collectively decide together what the following steps should be following such activities: suggestions may include mutual publications based on the results of our work; formalising the development of the network (e.g., mailing list); making the constructed justice-orientated mosaics public through an online launch event in the future.

### 4 CALL FOR PAPERS

The concept of social justice in Human-Computer Interaction has resulted in an emergent domain of practice and research across the past decade. However, while the number of justice-orientated works may have increased, new social movements have emerged that question what is meant by the term justice, who is included in how it is defined and what the overarching goals of such a concept are within the discipline. This one-day (four hour) virtual workshop is dedicated to carefully unpacking what is meant by the term justice as it is used in social justice research and contexts, and making visual ‘mosaics’ of the colourful map of existing justice-orientated works in the space of Human-Computer Interaction and beyond. Our aims are to stimulate critical discourse for researchers, practitioners, designers and activists around our conceptualisations of ‘justice’ for both ourselves and those we work with.

We welcome contributions from any geographical location in the Globe that explore justice and justice-orientated action with an interest in navigating its epistemological roots in their practices. We particularly welcome intersectional contributions that look at matters of justice from the perspective of the axes of gender, sexual identity and expression, transgender status, (dis)ability, class, ethnicity, race, age and so forth. We welcome all submissions in both traditional (SIGCHI 2022 Proceedings Formats, maximum of four pages including references) and creative formats (such as personal anecdotes, pictorials) as accompanied by a short biography of authors attending the workshop. Submissions should address one or more of the topics described below that are to be discussed in the workshop and should be sent to rbellini@cornell.edu by Feb 23th, 2021. If accepted, we require that at least one author of the paper attends the workshop (virtually and/or in-person), who must also register for at least one day of the conference.

1. What does it mean to work toward justice, perform justice-orientated work, and attain justice through research?

2. How can we engage community to elicit wider critical reflections on how we are defining justice in research and practice?

3. What challenges exist for performing justice-orientated work in spaces that are resistant to personalised interpretations of justice?

4. What other factors, impacts or outcomes that arise from engaging with the concept of justice are important to address that we have not otherwise covered?

When submitting your application, please specify any accessibility requirements or concerns you may have that could shape your experience in attending our workshop. As organisers for this workshop we are committed to be flexible and inclusive towards ensuring everyone is able to attend in a way that they feel comfortable and included. This may mean we alter the schedule of the workshop, and/or select alternative asynchronous technologies pre-, during and post-workshop that meet your requirements.

For more information on our workshop, please don’t hesitate to reach out to one of the organisers, and/or see our website at www.justicehci.info.

- **Submission of Position Paper:** Feb 25th, 2021
- **Notification of Acceptance:** March 11th, 2022
- **Early Registration Deadline:** March 23rd, 2022
- **Workshop at CHI:** Apr 30th / May 1st 2022

### 5 ORGANISERS

Each organiser has ample prior experience in organising in-person and virtual workshops and special interest groups at HCI and related venues, and have each published articles on matters related to social justice.

**Rosanna Bellini** (corresponding organiser) is a Postdoctoral Associate in Information Science at Cornell Tech in New York City. She has conducted a number of investigations into how moral responsibilities for violent behaviours can be designed into digital devices and systems with perpetrators of intimate partner violence. She also is currently exploring dimensions for the potential for restorative justice in cases of technology-facilitated abuse for both victim-survivors and perpetrators of digital harms. She is a steering group member of the Centre for Research into Violence and Abuse (CRiVA), Durham University, UK

**Débora de Castro Leal** is proudly angry Brazilian academic, who is doing her PhD at University of Siegen, and board member of International Development Innovation Network (IDIN/MIT). Her research focus on the role of digital technologies in rural communities in the Brazilian Amazon rainforest and the tension between these technologies and coloniality and of being academic and activist.

**Hazel Dixon** is an educational researcher who is doing her PhD within Open Lab specialising in how immersive, playful design can be used for education and social change. She has used critical disability scholars, such as the social model of disability to demonstrate how immersive performance and inclusion can be achieved.

**Sarah Fox** is an Assistant Professor at Carnegie Mellon University in the Human Computer Interaction Institute, where she directs the Tech Solidarity Lab. Her research focuses on how technological artifacts challenge or propagate social exclusions by examining
existing systems and building alternatives. She has served as a Program Chair for the DIS and Communities and Technologies conferences and has organized workshops at ACM CHI, DIS, CSCW, and the decennial Aarhus conference.

Angelika Strohmayer is co-director of the Design Feminisms Research Group, board member on the Sex Work Research Hub, and a Senior Lecturer at Northumbria University’s School of Design. Her work brings together theoretical learning about feminist and justice-oriented research practices and in-the-world research with organisations, communities, and activities who aim to work in trauma-informed, participatory, and activated ways.

REFERENCES


