

Platform (In)Justice: A Call for a Global Research Agenda

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This panel calls for a global conversation around platform (in)justice. By focusing on the experiences of marginalized communities, particularly those in the Majority World (also known as Global South), we aim to redefine justice and injustice through a global lens - as opposed to a Western-centric lens. Our panel will delve into the socio-technical realities of platforms as experienced by users and those doing the AI labor behind the platforms, recognizing platforms' tangible impacts on individuals and society. We invite the CSCW community to engage with five cases (involving Afghanistan, India, Korea, South Africa, and broader Latin America) that highlight the complex cultural, socio-economic, and political impact of technological systems on different social groups. With the Majority World as a framework of study, we explore locational forms of justice, and most importantly, open a discussion on structural solutions for platform injustice from the Majority World. Through our panel conversations, we aspire to shape a global research agenda for platform (in)justice, a focus area that can bring together expertise that is currently scattered across the CSCW community.

CCS Concepts: • **Human-centered computing** → **HCI theory, concepts and models**; • **Social and professional topics** → **Surveillance; Censorship; Hate speech; Race and ethnicity; Gender; Cultural characteristics; Geographic characteristics.**

Additional Key Words and Phrases: platform justice, platform injustice, critical HCI, feminist HCI, postcolonial HCI, social justice

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*The first three authors are the organizers, and their names are listed in alphabetical order of their last names. The rest are other moderators and panelists listed in alphabetical order of their last names.

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1 INTRODUCTION

“Platform (in)justice” encompasses a wide range of justice-related aspects in the platform world, including ethical concerns, algorithmic harms, societal oppression, and concepts of platform justice. It recognizes that injustice extends beyond intentional design to encompass broader power dynamics that emerge from platform operations [3, 4]. Regions within the Majority World, where most of the world’s population resides, often face disproportionate harm from platforms, yet have limited representation in the scholarship on platform (in)justice and solutions for design and governance [1, 5]. We aim to shed light on the experiences of populations in the Majority World and provide alternative solutions which are rarely considered in platform development discussions. Our panelists present five case studies of technology use and platform effects involving Afghanistan, India, Korea, South Africa, and the broader Latin American context. By addressing these diverse contexts and political landscapes within the Majority World, we challenge the oversimplified Western perspectives that have shaped conventional understandings of platform (in)justice. Inspired by the recent series of SIGCHI Equity Talks that facilitated important conversations around accessible and sustainable futures for the HCI and CSCW community, this panel seeks to bring together platform studies researchers, activists, educators, designers, and practitioners to critically examine platform (in)justice and learn from cases that center non-Western populations.

2 MAJORITY WORLD AS A FRAMEWORK OF STUDY

By centering our discussion on the Majority World, we aim to engage with emerging theories from “the South” and amplify perspectives that have historically been marginalized from discussions on platform justice. For instance, the concept “Asia as method” refers to a framework that encourages examining how Asian societies approach and tackle challenges in order to develop new paths of engagement [2]. Based on this framework, we propose the notion of “Majority World as method.” This notion invites us to transcend the limitations of Western-centric perspectives and consider diverse knowledge systems and practices. It challenges the Eurocentric biases that have shaped knowledge production and invites a more inclusive, equitable, and culturally sensitive approach to understanding and addressing platform justice. Moreover, individuals who have been displaced, forced to migrate, or are living in refugee situations may encounter unique challenges which are often faced and overcome by appropriating existing means and adapting to resource-constraint conditions. These experiences of deprivation can ultimately become potent, innovative, and meaningful solutions that benefit Western societies as well.

3 PLATFORM (IN)JUSTICE IN THE MAJORITY WORLD - CASES AND RESEARCH QUESTIONS

By drawing on five case studies, our panelists discuss how harm and injustice can manifest in diverse socio-economic, cultural, and political contexts. The case studies involve technology users and workers from different societies in the Majority World and marginalized communities in the Global North: Latin American filmmakers, Korean child victims of sexual abuse, Indian Dalit populations, South African policymakers, and Afghan refugee women in Germany. Panelists highlight the complex interplay between historical processes, power dynamics, and systemic biases within specific communities and in interaction with technology. They shed light on how these factors influence access, representation, and opportunities within and through digital platforms. The diversity of case studies enriches the conversation, offering concrete examples of harm and visions for alternative, just technological futures.

The panel calls for a global research agenda on platform (in)justice. This issue will be taken up and further explored in a Special Interest Group at CSCW'23. By presenting the five case studies, our objective is to engage participants in

105 three research inquiries, which could become part of a larger research agenda. Firstly, we seek to examine different
106 forms of injustice such as hate speech, misinformation, and platform violence in different contexts. Often, calling
107 out a problem is the first step to betterment, but also sets an agenda. Here, tensions may arise between competing
108 perspectives from the Global North and the Majority World but also between views of different populations in the
109 Majority World. We ask:

111 *Who should possess the authority to determine what constitutes oppression or injustice within a global online community?*
112 *How can we construct a contextual framework for regulating and legislating platforms that acknowledges the global and*
113 *transnational nature of the issue, but is also sensitive to local (autonomous) contexts in the Majority World?*

115 Secondly, we aim to delve into the mechanisms for holding platforms accountable as a possible solution to platform
116 injustice. Given the transnational nature of these concerns, national and community-based regulation may not address
117 cross-border harms. At the same time, it is important to avoid the imposition of universal, Western-centric rules in a
118 hegemonic manner. We are thus confronted with the following questions:

120 *What are the benefits and limitations of self-regulation of online platforms and individual online communities? What*
121 *are the benefits and limitations of global or regional regulation such as the European Union Digital Services Act? What*
122 *types of cross-community collaboration and solidarity is necessary to produce a just, equitable, and sustainable pathway to*
123 *platform accountability?*

126 4 POSITIONALITY OF RESEARCHERS ENGAGING WITH THE MAJORITY WORLD

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128 Lastly, this panel will probe the current landscape of CHI and CSCW, where studies on the Majority World are
129 predominantly conducted by researchers based in the Global North. Our panelists with relevant experience will raise
130 pertinent questions about positionality, power dynamics, and the necessity for equitable research practices. While the
131 location of researchers at Western institutions is often an indicator of privilege, it is crucial to avoid oversimplifying
132 the matter by viewing it as a mere dichotomy between the Global North and the Majority World. Many non-Western
133 scholars find themselves in the Global North due to the lack of resources, infrastructure, and academic networks in their
134 home countries, potentially paired with discrimination and exclusion. In our conversation, we wish to acknowledge the
135 limitations associated with researching marginalized populations or groups from the Majority World from a Global
136 North base. However, we also recognize that systemic factors limit the choices available to researchers from the Majority
137 World. Through open exchange on the aforementioned tension, we wish to foster understanding about the complexity
138 of research practices in the CSCW and CHI environment.

143 5 MODERATORS AND PANELISTS

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145 Our panel embodies the rich diversity of the CSCW community, encompassing various genders, geographic locations,
146 national origins, native languages, races, ethnicities, and career stages.

147 **Anne Burkhardt**(panelist) is a postdoctoral researcher at the Center for Rhetorical Science Communication Research
148 on Artificial Intelligence (RHET AI Center) at the University of Tübingen, Germany. Her expertise lies in the analysis
149 of media and (audio)visual discourses. Her current research focuses on imaginaries and narratives about AI in visual
150 cultures of the Majority World, with a focus on Latin America and decolonial views coming from this region. As
151 a panelist, Anne will present the perspectives of Latin American filmmakers, which reflect their experience-driven
152 associations with platform injustice, the dominance of Western platform corporations, and harmful alliances with
153 authoritarian regimes in their countries. The exploitative working conditions are central topics of the films, as well as
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157 the structural violence that platform operators and government officials exert against workers and users in the Majority
158 World.

159 **Heesoo Jang**(panelist) is a Royster fellow at the University of North Carolina, Chapel Hill, USA. She studies the
160 ethics and harms of digital platforms and artificial intelligence technologies with a focus on Asia. Heesoo's research
161 on the "Nth Room" case, a mass digital sex trafficking crime in South Korea, reveals how multiple internet platforms
162 and cloud storage providers, mostly headquartered in the West, enabled criminals to carry out their activities. These
163 platforms had less rigorous moderation for non-Western languages, making it easier for criminals to obscure their
164 actions. Heesoo emphasizes the need for reforms to prevent future crimes and hold tech companies accountable in
165 transnational contexts. Heesoo Jang will further discuss the complexities that arise in transnational contexts regarding
166 digital sex trafficking, such as challenges faced by tech companies in addressing the issue across different jurisdictions
167 and languages. Jang will highlight the need for collaboration between tech companies, researchers, and experts to
168 design community guidelines that are sensitive to local contexts.

172 **Nanditha Narayanamoorthy**(panelist) is a postdoctoral researcher at the Center for Information, Technology, and
173 Public Life at the University of North Carolina, Chapel Hill, USA. Her research at the intersection of technology and
174 democracy attempts to rethink platform design for marginalized communities in the Majority World. Her research
175 focuses on caste-based surveillance and violence on social media platforms and Artificial Intelligence systems in India
176 and the Indian diaspora in North America. She combines qualitative and quantitative methodologies to understand how
177 platforms facilitate caste surveillance, discrimination, violence, and systemic oppression across social, political, and
178 cultural contexts.

181 **Laura Schelenz**(panelist) is a researcher at the International Center for Ethics in the Sciences and Humanities at the
182 University of Tübingen, Germany. As part of her experience at the Ethics Center, she has worked on several research
183 projects including digitalization in sub-Saharan Africa, technology design and development under European ethical and
184 legal frameworks, and citizen as well as migrant involvement in shaping the digital society in Germany. As a panelist,
185 Laura will present the case of Afghan refugee women's experiences with technology in Germany. Studying Afghan
186 refugee women's interaction with technology sheds light on the socio-economic and structural barriers refugee women
187 are facing when they are trying to integrate into a digital society. Such challenges include a lack of (digital) literacy and
188 the impact of conservative gender regimes in interaction with contemporary social media. The case will also discuss
189 future innovations and how a Majority World perspective on technology design can help make technology accessible
190 for low-literate populations in order to benefit their social inclusion.

193 **Scott Timcke**(panelist) is a Senior Research Associate with Research ICT Africa, a Pan-African think tank. At
194 RIA, he leads the Information Disorders in Africa project. Drawing on Research ICT Africa's research projects on the
195 role platforms play in information disorders in Africa, Dr. Timcke will discuss how ideas within African democracy
196 theory, like data sovereignty, can enrich the discussion about how self-determination can help alleviate platform
197 injustices, especially those injustices that are amplified because platforms are controlled by major companies based in
198 the Global North. Centering the concepts and experiences from this portion of the Majority world can help broaden the
199 conversation about platform injustices.

202 **Lou Therese Brandner**(moderator) is a postdoctoral researcher at the International Center for Ethics in the Sciences
203 and Humanities (IZEW) at the University of Tübingen, Germany. During her doctoral studies in the Sociology of
204 Communication at Sapienza University of Rome, Italy, she researched the transformation of work in new urban and
205 digital contexts with a particular focus on platform labor and precarity. Lou's current work focuses on AI and data
206 ethics; she is particularly interested in the working conditions of Majority World click workers whose - often hidden
207

and precarious - labor is indispensable for machine learning models. At the same time, their demographics and lived experiences are commonly not represented in datasets and they are more likely to be discriminated by the very systems they help develop. As a moderator, Lou will contribute her expertise at the intersection of applied ethics and sociological considerations to the panel.

Simon David Hirsbrunner(moderator) is a senior researcher and team leader at the International Center for Ethics in the Sciences (IZEW) at the University of Tübingen. His research topics include applied AI and data ethics, responsible data science practice, digital media research and open science. As part of his research projects at the IZEW, he provides knowledge about global power balances regarding AI and data technologies to project partners and various external stakeholders. This experience will contribute significantly to the discussion at CSCW. Simon further has a deep understanding of cultural biases in AI (including foundation models) as well as knowledge of formal methods to reflect one's own positioning and one of the peers in transdisciplinary research settings (pragmatic reflexivity in research and design). His professional experience in international development cooperation enables him to be sensitive to the international audience and adapt to the needs of panel participants.

6 PANEL FORMAT

The panel session will feature a well-structured format designed to present diverse case studies and promote meaningful discussions on platform (in)justice. The session will incorporate a combination of individual presentations, moderated discussions, and interactive audience engagement through Q&A. The panelists will first share their research findings, and summarize their case studies in 3-4 minutes so that the presentation time does not go over 20 minutes. Following the presentations, the panel will transition into a moderated discussion format that will focus on defining and rethinking solutions for platform injustice. The moderators will facilitate a dynamic conversation among the panelists, encouraging reflection on 1) global concepts or definitions of (in)justice and platform governance, 2) the potential and limitations of (local or global) regulation of the platform world, and 3) the positionality of researchers engaging in work from a Majority World perspective. The moderators will encourage and focus contrasting viewpoints that bring to light competing visions of justice in the platform society. Audience participation will be actively encouraged throughout the panel session. Dedicated Q&A sessions will be included, providing an opportunity for the audience to engage directly with the panelists. Attendees will be encouraged to ask questions, seek clarification, and share their perspectives. The panel will prime the audience for the exploration of a global research agenda around platform (in)justice at a Special Interest Group (SIG) that follows immediately after the panel.

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