CHIdeology: Disentangling the fragmented politics, values and imaginaries of Human-Computer Interaction through ideologies

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Abstract

Against the backdrop of shifting political landscapes, this workshop approaches the fragmented politics, values, and imaginaries in Human–Computer Interaction through the lens of ideologies. Ideologies, underlying belief systems of sections of the population, influence both society and the design of technology. Ideologies help to highlight tensions and forces that play a role in our research practices. We aim to disentangle ideological framings, allowing participants to identify possible research areas and collaboratively develop new ways of working with ideologies in HCI. Through hands-on activities—crafting conceptions of ideology and engaging in thematic group discussions—we explore how ideologies shape fundamental assumptions and catalyze societal change. This leverages HCI's interdisciplinary methods to generate knowledge and impact beyond technological design.

CCS Concepts

• **Human-centered computing** → **Human computer interaction (HCI)**; **HCI theory, concepts and models**; **Collaborative and social computing theory, concepts and paradigms**;

Keywords

Ideologies, Values in Design, Critical Computing, Politics

1 Motivation

We live in times when political shifts shake the foundations of the societies we inhabit and the practices of our work as academics. This stands in stark contrast to fairly recent views of societal progress. Political scientists have debated how the *end of ideology* (since the 1950s) and *end of history* (since the 1990s) lead to a situation where ideological tensions have been resolved, and political matters become more administrative in nature [4, 15]. These claims were fueled by the decreased scholarly focus on political ideals, the need to form unity during the Cold War era, and later the collapse of the Soviet Union and with it the Soviet-communist ideology [4].

However, recent years have shown us the revitalization of political ideologies in policy-making, academic research and public debate. On the level of international relations, Russia's ongoing full-scale invasion of Ukraine has been described as an unapologetic example of imperialism, and the geopolitical conflict between the United States and China is prominently framed as a conflict of ideologies in the public discourse. On a national level, the reversals of protections for women, transgender persons, and other disadvantaged groups in the US and other developed countries have drastically limited their freedoms and livelihoods, fueled by partisan framings of "woke" or "gender" ideology. At the same time, the entanglement between the tech industry and politics have become front stage through, for example, Elon Musk's direct involvement in the US government.

1.1 Politics and Values in HCI

The recognition that technology is not neutral has deep roots in science and technology studies. Langdon Winner's foundational work "Do Artifacts Have Politics?" [24] established that technological artifacts embody politics by requiring or promoting certain social orders. Winner's analysis of Robert Moses' bridges in Long Island, which excluded public transportation and therefore access to lower-income communities, is a clear demonstration of how design can perpetuate social inequalities.

Building on this foundation, HCI work has increasingly acknowledged that technology design and research are based on embedded values and are not neutral processes [18]. Approaches such as value-sensitive design [10], feminist HCI [1, 2], speculative design [26],

and other critical approaches [see 14, for more] have emphasized the role of human values, ethics, and social context in shaping technology. Value-sensitive design for instance, provides a systematic approach for incorporating stakeholder values throughout the design process [10], while Feminist HCI advances frameworks for ensuring pluralism, participation, and advocacy in interaction design while addressing questions of agency and empowerment. Addressing issues of social justice with/through design has become a central point of conversation in the discipline [6].

1.2   The Ideological Turn in HCI?

These critical approaches have made significant contributions to HCI by directing attention inward, encouraging HCI scholars to reflect on their community's internal processes and power structures, and how these might perpetuate biases or inequalities [16]. They have successfully broken ground in including marginalized voices – such as those of those who have been silenced before due to their gender, ethnicity, and socioeconomic status – and sparked more critical discussions on our academic practices. However, as the current political landscape demonstrates, these fragmented concerns and values, operate within larger ideological systems that shape how broader society understands technology's role.

Recent scholarship has begun examining these broader ideological framings more systematically [7, 8, 11, 12]. During her keynote at CHI 2024, Kate Crawford reflected on Gebru and Torres [11]'s analysis how interconnected ideologies shape AI development. Their work shows how seemingly technical decisions about AI, are deeply embedded within specific worldviews about what constitutes human progress or desired future societies. This work was published as part of a special issue specifically focused on the underlying ideologies governing AI [5]. The relationship between ideologies and technological development is therefore no longer a matter of academic discussion, but explicitly stated and openly discussed by current corporate tech leaders as guiding their efforts.

1.3   De-fragmenting political and value-sensitive HCI work through ideologies

Following this developments, our workshop frames political research in HCI at the level of ideologies. As a higher level construct, ideologies can be understood as foundational belief systems that shape how groups perceive and interact with the world. Ideologies inform more specific group attitudes and have the capacity to shape how individual members of the group interpret events, construct opinions, and engage in social practices and discourse [7, 23]. Ideologies are not just isolated belief systems but through the processes of group identification and differentiation they section society. Note that in this understanding ideologies are not solely an object of criticism, but rather the object of study and observation.

> The minimum necessary structuring ingredient of every ideology is to distance itself from another ideology, to denounce its other as ideology. – Slavoj Žižek

In political science, ideologies are not just described as different "-isms" (i.e. capital*ism*, social*ism*, among others) but understood as competing belief systems mapped along multiple value dimensions. Following Heywood [13], we can understand political ideologies as belief systems that rely on (1) a coherent *worldview*, (2) a *desired*

future and (3) *action* to move towards that future. As we will show in the following paragraphs, HCI research touches on *worldviews*, *desired futures* and *normative action* in several ways and therefore already engages with ideologies.

Competing *worldviews* in HCI are inherent due to the diversity of the field. For example, HCI has engaged with ideologies by criticizing *hegemonic* perspectives, which are shared by a large fraction of society and therefore create widely accepted norms, like capitalism, individualism or modernism. Keyes et al. [16] revealed how certain practices in HCI follow the beliefs of capitalism and how without questioning those latent values various efforts are made in their interest. Differing views about the world are also reflected in methodological tensions: for example, feminist methodology refutes the belief in objective truth in science and postulates a science influenced by social values. This creates a tension with the influences of the natural sciences in computer science and consequently, HCI [2]. In design, differing worldviews of stakeholders have been identified as constraints to approaches like value-sensitive design [19] and participatory design [17, p.9].

Further, HCI is a future-oriented field bringing in a plethora of value statements about how the future should be, through design guidelines, policy suggestions and technological innovation prioritizing certain problems over others. These *desired futures* in the form of technological visions or sociotechnical imaginaries [20] therefore shape or follow belief systems. Speculative design and other critical futures work have challenged those assumptions, like technosolutionism, which often is entangled with positivist and modernist thinking [3].

At last, large sections of HCI have proposed *normative action* beyond academic research. Those works range from latent attitudes to design technology for "good" to the recent prominence of more-than-human and post-humanist approaches, which extend on the sustainability paradigm in a central call to action against the threat of the climate crisis [14, 22]. Additionally, Wong [25] suggests labor activism as a resource for a more ethical design practice [25]. From these examples, we can see how ideologies can connect various strands of HCI research as overarching collections of systems of values held by communities.

1.4   The aim for the workshop

As a reaction to the societal and academic debates above and the obvious potential of ideologies to connect often fragmented political and critical work in HCI, we organize a workshop to

(1) disambiguate the term ideology,
(2) identify areas of ideology in and around HCI, and
(3) develop new ways of working with ideology

To work toward these aims, our collaborative endeavor will initiate discussion on:

- How do ideologies manifest across HCI topics, such as design principles, user engagement, data ethics, privacy, inclusion, or access?
- Why should we care about ideology in HCI? What is ideology not appropriate for in HCI?
- How do ideologies affect core assumptions, research questions, and methods in HCI?
- What are the ideological dilemmas of HCI?

- How can our field's unique methods inform ideology research and produce knowledge beyond our field?
- How do we leverage theoretical concepts and/or frameworks from political science, critical theory, and other social sciences to inform HCI research?
- What methods or frameworks can help to study and explicate the covert ideological influences in HCI research? Pragmatically, how does attending to ideology help HCI researchers and practitioners do their work better?

Identifying and curating various ideological forces, tensions, and dilemmas in HCI and ways to operationalize and study them will foster productive discussion for the evolution of the field and make our political work more transparent. By placing HCI's works in to the larger landscape of political forces, we should increase its impact on fields beyond technology design, like policy and the social sciences.

2 Length of workshop

We plan our workshop in the long format. Our workshop aims to bring in interdisciplinary perspectives from different sections of the CHI community and sets a new focus for critical HCI research. To connect with scholars and allow for deeper discussion we need two sessions to deliver on our aims.

3 Organizers

The workshop organizers bring together interdisciplinary perspectives from their diverse backgrounds in HCI, design, political science, social psychology and social science. This will pave the way for including various perspectives for injecting the HCI community with new ways of working with and on ideologies.

Felix Anand Epp is a postdoctoral researcher at the Department of Design at Aalto University and the Faculty of Social Sciences at the University of Helsinki. Using design practice and in-situ research, he investigates how interactive technologies and sociotechnical imaginaries shape social life. He is coordinating this workshop relying on his extensive experience in organizing participatory workshops and will facilitate parts of the workshop activities.

Matti Nelimarkka is a university lecturer at the Faculty of Social Sciences at the University of Helsinki and an affiliated researcher at Aalto University's Department of Computer Science. His work has focused on the intersection of politics and technology, both examining the construction of technology and the use of technology for political communication. He has extensive experience in CHI and CSCW on publishing and reviewing papers related to politics. For the workshop, he advises on political science perspective, manages the web page and serves as a senior editor on the planned special issue.

Jesse Haapoja is a postdoctoral researcher at Aalto University's Department of Computer Sciences and a visiting researcher at the Faculty of Social Sciences of the University of Helsinki. His work has focused on social studies of algorithmic systems, with a recent interest in moral discourse and its relationship with ideologies on social media platforms and their users. Jesse serves as the technical program chair, managing the review of submissions and advising from a social psychology perspective.

Pedro Ferreira is an Associate Professor at the IT University of Copenhagen. His work focuses on examining the discourses surrounding the design and deployment of technologies in different contexts, specifically the ways they construct users, tasks and goals, often in tension with stated intentions. Drawing from a background in design research, running a wide range of workshops across different countries and contexts, Pedro will take main responsibility for facilitating the workshop activities.

Os Keyes is a Postdoctoral Fellow at the University of Massachusetts, Lowell. Their work frequently explores the political and ideological underpinnings of computing technologies, with a focus on questions of gender, disability and race. In the workshop, Os will organize and manage the online participation and advise on critical perspectives from their background in law and studies on gender.

Shaowen Bardzell is a Professor in the School of Interactive Computing at Georgia Institute of Technology. A common thread throughout her work is the exploration of the contributions of feminism, design, and social science to support the role of technology in social change. She provides advocacy for social change during the planning and execution of the workshop, facilitates some of the activities and serves as senior editor for the planned special issue.

Together our team represents different sections of the HCI community and our shared experience in facilitating group work, will guarantee productive discussion on a delicate and polarizing topic as ideologies.

4 Publishing plans

For participation in the workshop, we invite interested authors to submit a position paper that relates to the topic, primarily serving as material for thematic discussion during the workshop sessions (see for more information in sections 7 and 9). We will provide guidance to authors on how to add their submission to arXiv.org and create an index submission using a report number, enabling archiving and an overview of all submissions. We will make this available by the conference dates at the latest. This will be optional for authors, as we plan for a special issue that invites authors to extend on their ideas (see in section 8).

5 Accessibility and Online Participation

Considering the current constraints for vulnerable populations and scholars in crossing borders in the USA and other parts of the world some scholars might not be able to travel to Barcelona without exposing themselves to intolerable risk on return to their home country. This infringement of human rights touches on the core issue of our workshop and inclusion of those voices is paramount for discussing ideologies. Therefore, we aim to provide participation for attendees in a dedicated pre-workshop online event. We will enable this ourselves through the platforms Zoom and Miro.

We have no needs for accessibility support. Through Zoom and our own guidelines for Miro usage, we will ensure that materials (and the collaboration process) are screen-reader accessible.

6 Offline materials

Position papers will be published before the workshop. Tangible outcomes will be documented and shared with participants, and integrated into a post-workshop synthesis manuscript (see 8).

7 Workshop Activities

The workshop employs creative, hands-on methods to move beyond traditional presentations and engage participants in embodied ideological thinking.

Online Pre-event: Gathering Framings, Cases and Topics

Prior to the conference, we hold an online event for authors of all accepted submissions. Collaboratively we will structure themes for the in-person workshop from all accepted position papers.

Session 1: Ideology Collages and Enactments

Making Phase: After welcoming the participants to the workshop by the organizers and an introduction into the agenda, participants work in groups of 4-5 determined by themes identified in the pre-workshop online event. Each group receives craft materials — magazines, imagery from submissions, markers, posters, and other common craft supplies — to create provocative collages representing polarizing ideological positions within their theme. As a constraint, participants will communicate through visuals and slogans only to surface tacit ideological commitments without defaulting to academic prose.

Performance Phase: Groups present their collages through brief "ideological manifestos" — 2 minute performances, in the form of a protest, that embody the perspectives they've crafted. Other participants respond with questions, challenges, or alternative framings.

Synthesis: Organizers will capture emerging concepts, themes and tensions on a shared visual map.

Session 2: Methods Café

Rotating Discussions: Drawing from the World Café format [21], participants rotate through themed tables every 15 minutes, building on previous groups' ideas. Each table focuses on methods for working with ideology in HCI — from design methods to critical analysis.

Collective Mapping: Participants collaboratively organize insights into a methods toolkit inspired by the Nordic Algorithms card deck [9]. This activity will help identify potential research, methodological approaches and productive tensions for future work within ideology and HCI.

These activities directly support our aims: disambiguating the term ideology, identifying its manifestations in and around HCI, and developing new ways of working with ideology through collaborative synthesis. The workshop will produce a shared synthesis of concepts, methods, and tensions around ideology in HCI, and seed a peer network to sustain future collaboration.

8 Post-Workshop Plans

The workshop organizers will edit the synthesis of how to engage ideologies based on the workshop outcomes in the ACM Interaction magazine as a wave, thus promoting the perspective further.

In addition, the workshop serves as the initial kickoff event towards a special issue in ACM Transactions of Social Computing or a similar journal, focusing on different ways political ideologies are represented and discussed in our work. We work on a concrete special issue proposal once workshop participants' position papers are in to ensure it captures ideas and insights from participants, but aim to have the call published by the time of the workshop. This will include an introduction written by the workshop organizers to situate each contribution within a wider framework, as well as individual papers showing conceptual, empirical, or design-oriented works where ideology is prominently presented. The primary goal of the special issue is to serve as the go-to material for future scholarship and capture the current state-of-art in a single issue.

9 Call for Participation

Technology continually carries fragments of politics—design choices and values shaping outcomes. This workshop explores how broader ideologies—coherent worldviews underpinning political and technological systems—influence and connect work in HCI. We aim to foster explicit discussion of ideology's role in shaping research agendas, values, and assumptions through a hands-on half-day workshop.

We invite up to 20 scholars at any career stage to submit a 2–3 page position paper (ACM single-column or DIS2026 pictorial format) engaging with any of the following: how they define or interpret "ideology"; examples of ideology in HCI research or practice; or political/methodological suggestions for making ideology visible. Non-verbal or pictorial contributions are welcome, as the submissions will serve as material for the workshop activities. Papers will be reviewed for relevance, originality, and potential to advance the conversation. Selection will balance diversity in background, seniority, geography, and perspective, if oversubscribed. Selected contributions will be published on arXiv with author consent. One author per submission is required to attend, either in person at the conference or during the pre-workshop online event. For more details and submission instructions, visit: https://ideologies.digital.

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