

**Socialised Technologies, Cultural Activism,  
and the Production of Agency**

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in fulfilment of the requirements for the degree of  
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## Certificate of Authorship/Originality

I certify that the work in this thesis has not previously been submitted for a degree nor has it been submitted as part of requirements for a degree except as fully acknowledged within the text.

I also certify that the thesis has been written by me. Any help that I have received in my research work and the preparation of the thesis itself has been acknowledged. In addition, I certify that all information sources and literature used are indicated in the thesis.

Signature of Candidate

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## Abstract

We are living in an era of unprecedented technological development, a post-industrial revolution with no end point in sight. Information communication technologies (ICTs) in particular have changed the nature of production dramatically, and the human mind, with its innate capacity for imagination, language, symbolic thought, and abstract reasoning, has become a crucial productive force. Post-autonomist theory contends that such “biopolitical” production could radically reorder social relations, as it both enables the formation of plural subjects desiring macro-level transformation and also offers this “multitude” the technological means for mobilising action. However, the theory has not accumulated many empirical studies of locally embedded, globally attuned projects of counter-power within “network society” to support its claims. This study enters the field of cultural production to gather data from key actors within three contrasting cultural activism projects to determine the extent to which information technology can operate as a productive force creating new social imaginaries and forms of political agency. The autonomously-organised projects are differentiated along geo-spatial and informational lines: citizen journalism in the newly-industrialising Periphery (Hong Kong), digital creativity in the global South (Jamaica), and network art in the global North (England). The research analyses how each project has adapted a diverse range of ICTs to create embodied cultural projects, contexts, and networks which then cross-pollinate and inspire other projects locally, translocally, and transglobally. The study found that first and foremost bare technology needed to be socialised by its constituent groups in order for it to be relevant and attractive to them. Socialised technology incorporates affective and experiential dimensions within technical and material structures. The methods of this socialisation differed dramatically amongst the groups, being influenced by a constellation of historical, social, cultural, and economic factors. Contextualised around specific projects, these technologies supported socially-engaged creative experimentation, open-ended play, cooperative labour, peer learning, and political action. Such techno-social processes frequently produced what I term “temporary affective spaces.” Continually evolving iterations of core and satellite projects generated not only material and electronic artefacts subsequently returned to the realm of the common, but also coalesced networked communities of practice. The research findings suggest that technology must be actively adapted by its users via community-specific iterations, and that such innovations must remain open to be freely shared and built upon by others, for technology to realise its potential to facilitate local, translocal, and macro level social transformation.