

Reflection 9

When discussions are had on science and technology, especially with regards to pushing frontiers, no continent exists closer to the margins than Africa. Although language these days is changing to have Africans become owners of technology and improvement as opposed to just receivers of 'Western technology', I would argue a large mental barrier still exists in the minds of the world that essentially separates the idea of 'Africa' from that of tech. I believe it is this barrier that Eglash tried to overcome in his work about Generative tech in Africa. Eglash speaks of the power of bottom up technology to create a true egalitarian society not dominated by the 'monopoly' of large companies. Throughout the piece we learn of various ingenious and sustainable ways to create value and give power to people, be it through urban gardens or 'fractal' style housing. However, the author also warns against the 'self-deluding' practice of believing this technology created by Africans can take on the role of 'mending' a harsh history. This piece makes good points about African technology and the benefits it can carry for but leaves an important question relatively unanswered. Given the state of large multinational economies in the world, something the author points out very early in the piece, it becomes hard to see how ordinary people can create technology that may be against the interests of these corporations. The author seems to speak of an Africa that is not grappling with these same corporations and discusses very little how bottom-up egalitarian tech may be thwarted by 'bigger' interests. And overall the piece seems to imagine Africa as removed from these interests, a playground for true creativity so to speak. However, I believe a detailed discussion and auditing of these interests and examples of African tech that have been able to co-exist with and even outcompete these influences may be something that not only helps our understanding the potential of African generative tech but also help identify avenues for advancing this potential to reality.

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