



Maintenance and the Status Quo: Challenging “Innovation”

Gender and the innovation Agenda

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In their 2016 essay, “Hail the Maintainers,” Lee Vinsel and Andrew Russell argue that the attention paid to “innovation” in public policy focuses too strongly on the development of new technologies, failing to acknowledge the resources necessary for their implementation, upkeep, and use—their *maintenance*. They argue that the work of maintenance is highly gendered and racialized, and as innovation has increasingly come to be understood as the commercialization of STEM-related technologies (Herder, 2016), the profits accrue for those already able to access capital and power.

This paper takes “maintenance” as its starting point, applying it to the case of contemporary Canadian innovation policy. Focusing on “inclusive innovation” in the 2017 federal budget, it interrogates the conflation of commercialization and innovation as a site of gendered exclusion. The paper argues that this occurs in at least two different, intersecting ways. First, the emphasis on STEM related interventions perpetuates gender disparities in those disciplines, particularly the large number of women in entry-level STEM positions that support the work of those at the senior level, largely men. Second, the conflation of commercialization and innovation fails to take seriously interventions that do not easily translate into commercial opportunities, including social innovations and low-tech (yet innovative) solutions in health care. The paper concludes by asserting that “inclusive innovation” necessitates an eye to maintenance, and a rethinking of the relationship between the private sector and innovation policy.