How To Decolonize the Web and other stories

Abdelrahman Hassan
LEARNING OUTCOMES

- Adopting a multi-lense prespective on data colonialism
- Understand the function and aspect of Data World building.
- A critical engagement with Critical Speculative design as a discipline
- Understanding and showcasing how speculative design can be a decolonial agent.
- Taking part in a collective speculative design excersize
Data colonialism combines the predatory extractive practices of historical colonialism with the abstract quantification methods of computing.

Nick Couldry, 2018
DATA COLONIALISM

Data as a 'naturally' available resource, just needs to be extracted.
- Jason Moore, 2015

Legislative practices legitimise appropriated data practices. 'terms of service'

Self tracking is both prevasive and invasive.
"THE EXTRACTION OF DATA FROM BODIES, THINGS AND SYSTEMS CREATES NEW POSSIBILITIES FOR MANAGING EVERYTHING. THIS IS THE NEW AND DISTINCTIVE ROLE OF PLATFORMS AND OTHER ENVIRONMENTS OF ROUTINE DATA EXTRACTION. IF SUCCESSFUL, THIS TRANSFORMATION WILL LEAVE NO DISCERNABLE ‘OUTSIDE’ TO CAPITALIST PRODUCTION: EVERYDAY LIFE WILL HAVE BECOME DIRECTLY INCORPORATED INTO THE CAPITALIST PROCESS OF PRODUCTION."
"A continuously trackable life is a dispossessed life, no matter how one looks at it"

- the colonisation, although hyper-present effects its subjects differently.
WHERE THIS PARADIGM COMES FROM?

The reductive universality that is inherent to European modernity. Its underlying rationality enables continuous appropriation to seem natural, necessary and somehow an enhancement of, not a violence to, human development.

Part of what Rolando Vázquez calls “oppressive grammars of power” (2009)
Other theorizations of coloniality of the web move beyond data as a proxy, or metaphor, but as a continuation of old colonial practices.

**COLONIAL CONTINUITY**

Information has always been spatial. It is produced somewhere; it is used somewhere; it moves between places (Graham et al., 2015a).
The Geographically Uneven Coverage of Wikipedia

While it is an invaluable resource of knowledge for numerous users, Wikipedia's articles have a strong bias in their geographic distribution. Below map is based on 3,336,473 geotagged articles in November 2012 data dumps of 44 language versions. Each article is represented by an orange dot.

There are more Wikipedia articles inside this circle.
1. Consider your geo-political and body-political orientation when designing, building, researching, or theorizing about computing phenomena.

2. Embrace the “decolonial option” as an ethic, attempting to think through what it might mean to design and build computing systems with and for those situated at the peripheries of the world system, informed by the ways of thinking and knowing (epistemologies) located at such sites, with a view to undermining the asymmetry of local-global power relationships.
Data worlds depart from the notions of 'data protection' and 'data liberation'.

It is a statement about what data CAN do, rather than what it represents.
Horizons of Intelligibility.

Data assemblages are more about making things up, than just putting things together.

Collective Accomplishments

Which publics create the data? Which publics does the data serve? which material infrastructures are hidden?

Transnational Coordination

How local data becomes global? what are the possibilities of activism?
HORIZONS OF INTELLIGIBILITY - CASE STUDIES.
COLLECTIVE ACCOMPLISHMENTS - CASE STUDIES

Open street maps
### Transnational Coordination

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IS WORLD BUILDING AN INHERENTLY RADICAL PROCESS
Abu Dhabi Police Technology Showcase video
COLLECTIVE MAPPING: WHAT ELEMENTS OF THE NEAR FUTURE ARE PRESENT IN THE VIDEO.
HOW DO WE BREAK THE DICHOTOMY OF INNOVATION/REVISION?
Critical Speculative Design

Johannessen, 2018
The visual discourse of SCD also seems interestingly devoid of people of color, who rarely (if ever) make an appearance in the clean, perfectly squared, aseptic world imagined by these designers-researchers. Couples depicted in these near-future scenarios seem to be consistently heterosexual; there is no poverty, there are no noticeable power structures that divide the wealthy and the poor, or the colonialist and the colonised; gender seems to be an immutable, black-and-white truth, clearly defined between men and women, with virtually no space for trans* and queer identities (let alone queer and trans* voices speaking for themselves). From its visual discourse to its formulations of near-future scenarios, SCD seems to be curiously apathetic and apolitical for a discipline that strives to be a critical response to mainstream perceptions of what design is, and what it should do.

Luiza Prado
Newer Languages of power

1. Solar Punk - A visual language to denote an alternate near future to cyber punk.

2. Intersectional internet book, centering use-cases of queer POC and feminist users.
Decolonising the data source

3. answering the question, what if Tay was an agent trained on addressing harassment?

4. Feminist datasets project by caroline sinders overrides the lack of representation of feminist narratives from big data systems.
Mixing Methodology - Mapping critical landscapes

Figure 9: The conversational footprint of the Paris2015 Terror Attacks

3. answering the question, what if we could use critical urban theories to map online space?

4. What if rhythm analysis could help us understand online irony?
SUMMARY

- Data colonialism is multi-faceted; based on extractive practices.
- Data colonialism is also based on colonial continuity and epistemological inequalit.
- Data worlds offer an escape. How do we move beyond one dimensional understandings of data?
- Understanding critical speculative design and deviating from discursive practices.
- There needs to be an innovation/speculation in data sources, data methods, data representations and data framings.