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THE UNDERSIDE OF TECHNOLOGY: LIFECYCLES OF LIBERACIÓN IN THE DIGITAL AGE

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In *The Underside of Modernity: Apel, Ricoeur, Rorty, Taylor, and the Philosophy of Liberation* (1996), Enrique Dussel prescribes a philosophical pushback to what Eduardo Mendieta calls the 'discourses of Modernity.' Emanating from the global south, as both proximate and philosophical situations, Dussel elegantly unravels a metaphysical prescription of Modernity as the blueprint of empire articulated via political, religious, and cultural hegemonic universality. The goal is to reimagine the ethics of liberation outside of Modernity's stranglehold on philosophy. Dussel's thesis is simple: resistance to dominant hegemonic frames which center Western Modernity as that which must be repelled passively accepts those frames as a starting point. In other words, framing resistance as negation (i.e., postmodernism) upholds a binary of dominance/resistance wherein the myth of Modernity remains dialectically centered. What Dussel advocates for is a lens enabling us "...to stand outside the reality within which we live in order to critically understand it" (Burton & Osario, 2011, p. 26). To this end, he proposes a 'transmodern' position that privileges practices of the 'Other'—on outskirts of the Modern colonial scheme—as focal points of liberation philosophy.

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In his 'analectic' method, Dussel decenters the Modern as a starting point of investigation and/or resistance, privileging the material realities of the 'Other' as locus of cultural knowledge. In the vein of decolonial inquiry, the 'Other' is of the anterior of hegemonic frames, a subject on/of the outskirts that, when face-to-face with dominant hegemony, presents a new way of understanding systems, universalities (which Dussel believes exist, just not as prescribed by Modernity), and the very prescription of the Modern subject. In defining liberation as praxis, the analectic method accounts for the complex realities of the colonized as targets of, and transgressors to, systems of colonization, depending upon material context.

Our panel draws inspiration from the analectical approach and includes papers that elucidate the material realities of Otherness on the *underside of technology*. In an age of technological globalization tethered to neoliberal market principles, we argue that approaching questions of technological expansionism via traditional 'discourses of technology' that perpetuate the dominance/resistance binary is insufficient if the aim of decolonizing the internet, the systems which support it, and the artefacts which connect us to it is to be achieved. By focusing instead on individual acts of resistance to totalizing technological systems, we investigate the complexities of living within the landscape of technological hegemony from the lens of the user. From migrants of the global south who both rely upon, and transgress, mobile technologies and the critical infrastructure which supports it, to everyday consumers of technology that often universalize and therefore industrialize lived experiences, the metaphor of existing within and simultaneously reacting to systems of colonization persists. Specifically, we clarify the lifecycle of technological expansionism, from the act of occupation to individual acts of resistance in specific panel presentations that discuss:

- Imagined infrastructures of the 'smart' (neo-colonial) city.
- The push and pull of maintaining Latinx identity within homogeneous digital platforms.
- The emotional and physical labor of Asian American women in countering Western narratives which totalize "Asian" identity as monolithic.
- The South American migrant experience as dependent upon and reactionary to critical infrastructure.
- Corporeal memorialization as resistance to industrialized memory.

Each panel topic identifies technological systems, platforms, and/or infrastructures as modern-day instantiations of colonialism as a basis of investigation. For example, multiple papers clarify technological systems and infrastructures as conduits of cultural imperialism, evident in global urban transformation projects and the industrialization of memory, while others query the role of platform affordances in perpetuating inequity and encouraging monolithic identity. As pushback to this totalization, multiple papers highlight the liminal experience of 'Otherness,' caught between the tensions of material reality and the opacity of dominant technological systems that often shape, steer, and ultimately universalize human experience. Centering the lens of the individual, we investigate the necessary utility of global technologies (the 'realities within which we live') while articulating how actual experience with, and consumption of, these technologies by those on the periphery (those who 'stand outside' that reality) can inform a critical understanding of their socio-technical impact.

These research topics identify the importance and relevance of decolonial philosophy as a primary framework for understanding the path to liberation from the enveloping forces of global technological systems. In encouraging an analectic, transmodern approach to questions of technological hegemony, we decenter the discourses of Modernity, and by extension the circular dominance/resistance feedback loop which informs much traditional critical scholarship. This panel offers a glimpse from the outskirts, from the periphery of the colonial horizon, situating praxis as foundational to clarifying our socio-technical ontologies.

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IMAGINED INFRASTRUCTURES OF THE SMART (NEO-COLONIAL) CITY

In August 2021, the World Economic Forum launched the Centre Urban Transformation, which “works to increase public-private collaboration in cities and advance more inclusive and sustainable models for urban development.” (World Economic Forum [WEF], n.d., para. 1). Critically, Detroit, Michigan—the former seat of industrial capitalism in the U.S. and *de facto* symbol for the crises of accumulation that followed (e.g., Jay & Conklin, 2020)—was selected as the site of its global headquarters. As economists, politicians, and business leaders convened for the inaugural Urban Transformation Summit,¹ which featured panel discussions like “Healthy People, Thriving City” and regional spotlights on “Catalyzing Urban Innovation and Entrepreneurship” in Africa and Latin America, Detroit residents struggled with crumbling infrastructure, blighted neighborhoods, an under-funded education system, widespread unemployment, and the highest poverty rate in the U.S. (DePietro, 2021). The stark contrast of this image offers a glimpse into the Centre’s programmatic efforts to reinvent the global urban landscape in the interest of private capital. But what do these proposed transformations entail? What issues are being prioritized? What solutions are being advanced? And above all, *who decides*?

Seeking to answer these and related questions, this paper critically examines the Centre for Urban Transformation through an infrastructural lens, focusing on the institutional coordination and co-production of sociotechnical discourses for the so-called “cities of tomorrow.” Drawing together critical studies of infrastructure (Easterling, 2014; Star, 1999; Star & Ruhleder, 1996), science and technology (STS; Bijker et al., 2012; Jasanoff, 2004), and urban and carceral geographies (Gilmore, 2007; Jefferson, 2020), this study performs a poststructural discourse analysis of the Centre’s source materials (e.g., webpages, partnership documents, press releases, marketing content, etc.; Graham, 2011). The central argument is that the Centre’s seemingly benevolent

¹ The summit was held in Detroit from December 6–8, 2021.

aim to create “inclusive,” “resilient,” and “sustainable” cities mobilizes a distinctly Western, neoliberal imperative through the mechanisms and discourses of digital neo-colonialism (Mouton & Burns, 2021). Through an analysis of these practices, the concept of *imagined infrastructure* is advanced, which draws attention to infrastructure as both an object and a process of collective imagination. Building on the notion of *sociotechnical imaginaries* (Jasanoff, 2015; Jasanoff & Kim, 2009), it considers the infrastructural imperative of urban growth under capitalism (Kirkpatrick & Smith, 2011), and how visions of “desirable” urban futures are stabilized and projected through communicational infrastructure.

Insofar as infrastructure is relational, “something that emerges for people in practice, connected to activities and structures” (Star & Ruhleder, 1996, p. 112), the Centre readily captures these dynamics. However, it simultaneously reflects an elemental component in the development of infrastructure: *the institution*. In their article, “Institutions, Infrastructures, and Innovation,” Paul Edwards and John King (2021) call our attention to the role of institutions (e.g., governments, industry associations, multi-national corporations, and so forth) in shaping the deployment of sociotechnical infrastructure. Institutions, they argue, provide not only the financial resources but also the forward-looking visions needed to sustain technological innovation. A list of features distinguishes when and how institutions are involved in the provision of infrastructure: multi-institutional compatibility and embedding, scale and scope, sustained support lasting long enough for proof of concept, regulatory issues, red tape reduction and opposition interference, workable mechanisms for the long-term, cultivate infrastructural growth, and account for different paces of change (Edwards & King, 2021, pp. 107-108). These dimensions are applied as a heuristic model for understanding the functional role of interlocking institutions in developing and promulgating imagined infrastructures of urban transformation.

Drawing on the decolonial philosophy of Enrique Dussel (2003), this paper further considers the social, cultural, and political-economic dimensions of imagined infrastructure in the context of global urban transformation. For instance, the Centre recently launched the “Urban Innovation Challenge,” where eight participating cities (Bogotá, Buenos Aires, Lagos, Dhaka, Jakarta, Kigali, Nairobi, and Rio de Janeiro) “have designated neighborhoods to serve as urban testbeds for new businesses, products and services.”² The “challenge” features 800 entrepreneurs, competing to pilot, secure funding for, and implement *their* vision of urban transformation, with judges like the Co-Founder of Airbnb and the Director of Policy, Cities & Transportation at Uber. These inherent disparities in decision-making power, access, and inclusion signal fertile ground for theoretical intervention—particularly through a decolonial lens centered on the material realities of ‘Others.’

As Susan Leigh Star (1999, p. 380) rightly notes, we must attend to “those who are *not* served by a particular infrastructure.” Thus, responding to this call, I query the

² World Economic Forum (2021). “Centre for urban transformation launches urban innovation challenge in eight fast-growing cities.” Retrieved from <https://www.weforum.org/press/2021/12/centre-for-urban-transformation-launches-urban-innovation-challenge-in-eight-fast-growing-cities/>

pretension of Western universality in projecting the spatio-temporal fixes of capital accumulation into new geographic regions (e.g., parasitic municipal financing, privatization, etc.), and constructions of Otherness that both precede and precipitate those structures. Specifically, this means interrogating the transport of values, assumptions, and power dynamics/relations across cultural contexts, including narratives of entrepreneurialism, technological innovation, and public-private collaboration, which rarely deliver on their stated promises of equity, inclusion, and/or social justice (e.g., Harvey, 1989; Wang, 2018).

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“NI DE AQUÍ, NI DE ALLÁ”: A SERIES OF EXISTING WHILE RESISTING

Rooted in multiple forms of colonization, Latinx identities are situated between race and ethnicity. As illustrated by the expression “ni de aquí, ni de allá” (“neither of here, nor from there”), Latinx identities are liminal in nature— existing among multiple racial and ethnic labels while never fully fitting into one but *still* being Othered yet encouraged to achieve whiteness (Hernández, 2015). Ultimately, the process of simultaneously navigating multiple racial and ethnic labels, understanding the significance of their performance, negotiating their multiple meanings, and conforming to whichever one best represents you in the eyes of the white man is fundamentally Latinx (Alcoff, 2005).

In the digital sphere, the liminal nature of Latinx identities is further hyphenated. White hegemonic norms are enlaced and faintly threaded in the internet’s materiality, thus producing new forms of colonization (Nakamura & Chow-White, 2012). However, networked gatekeeping studies reveal how the open and inclusive logic of crowd-

centered platforms empowers users to navigate a fluid relationship to these norms (Meraz and Papacharissi, 2015). To understand how these fluid power dynamics affect the liminal nature of Latinx identity, this paper presents a networked gatekeeping study on Reddit's Latinx community. Networked gatekeeping captures the fluid power dynamics within the new media ecology (Barzilai-Nahon, 2008). This study applies this framework to evaluate the formation of Reddit's Latinx identity and explore new forms of colonial resistance in the digital age.

Framed within white hegemonic norms, the design of our current digital infrastructure is grounded in homophily— the notion that suggests people form connections based on their similarities (McPhearson et al., 2001). Regarded as an axiom, most systems are grounded in this organizing principle, thus prompting homophilous connections among users, digital artifacts, and digital content (Chun, 2019). In this form, homophily functions as an agent of digital coloniality. Our similarities (homophily) are exploited, while our differences (heterophily) become white noise. For inherently diverse populations, like the Latinx community, the ability to establish visible online spaces becomes dependent on the fluid power dynamics Web 2.0 applications enable.

Latinx networked publics emerge in the digital sphere when the intersection of a platform's architecture, affordances, and participatory culture enables the ability to navigate the negotiations that constitute Latinx identities. Central to these negotiations is navigating multiple racial and ethnic identities while forging homophilous and heterophilous connections (Alcoff, 2005). In the context of this study, homophilous connections refer to intra-nation Latin American connections while heterophilous connections refer to cross-nation Latin American connections. Sociotechnical systems that exploit homophilous connections prevent Latinx online communities from becoming visible as the cross-nation (heterophilous) connections that thread the community together are unable to digitally materialize. Consequently, most Latinx online communities emerge as isolated and disconnected clusters that represent different Latin American countries.

Reddit, however, is a crowd-centered platform that enables users to leverage both homophilous and heterophilous connections. It exists as an interconnected network of subreddits (Massanari, 2015). Networked publics emerge among the connections forged between and among subreddits. These ties are established by the site's moderators who provide hyperlinks to related subreddits on their forum's sidebar or wiki page. All interactions among Reddit users (Redditors) are centered around conversations about a certain link or topic. Therefore, connections among Reddit users are "primarily corralled by shared interests, which result[s] in multiple groups and identities." (Kienzle, 2016, p. 22). As moderators forge connections between subreddits, multiple groups and identities become organized into relational networks of subreddits.

The relational nature of Reddit's networked publics allows users to leverage homophilous and heterophilous ties (Kienzle, 2016). This is witnessed in early observations of /r/LatinoAmerica, which reveal reciprocal connections between subreddits that represent Latin American countries and /r/LatinoAmerica. While Reddit's infrastructure provides a unique opportunity to examine how Latinx users navigate the liminal nature of their collective identity, the platform's history reveals how toxic publics

tend to command the site's most visible content (Marwick, 2017). Reddit's toxic networked publics are grounded in toxic geek masculinity and are known to actively suppress the voices of women and people of color.

To understand the extent to which Reddit's Latinx community is able to exist within this form of digital colonization, this project locates the site's Latinx networked public and identifies its prominent actors. Using /r/LatinoAmerica as a port of entry, this project scraped the site's API and captured a network of 1,811 subreddits. After locating Reddit's Latinx networked public, this thesis conducts a 3-part content analysis to identify the gated, central actors, and networked gatekeepers of the captured networked public. This assessment reveals the negotiation of norms, values, and beliefs that constitute Reddit's Latinx identity. Following this analysis, the statistical significance of the captured homophilous and heterophilous connections was tested to reveal the extent to which the actors of this network were able to navigate the multi-dimensional white hegemonic norms embedded in the systems materiality.

Overall, the results reveal how the actors of Reddit's Latinx networked public navigated white norms on multiple dimensions: those that are central to Latinx identity, the white hegemonic norms embedded in the internet's materiality, and those that are central to Reddit's participatory culture. Although these actors had to navigate multiple hegemonic norms, the results reveal how the moderators of these subreddits were able to elevate subreddits that represent Latinx norms to prominent positions within the captured network. These findings provide further evidence that the open and inclusive logic of sociotechnical systems enables fluid power dynamics. These fluid power dynamics are further evidenced by the statistically significant homophilous and heterophilous connections that were established within the captured network. Ultimately, the results of this study illustrate how fluid power dynamics and the ability to navigate homophilous and heterophilous connections not only function as forms of colonial resistance but coloniality in the digital age.

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POSTING THROUGH A PANDEMIC: AN ANALECTICAL APPROACH TO ADDRESSING THE EMOTIONAL LABOR OF ASIAN-AMERICAN BLOGGERS

On February 1, 2022, a Chicago food and lifestyle blogger based out of Atlanta shared a post on her Instagram stories about the 2022 Lunar New Year and explained that she did not recognize the holiday as Chinese New Year since she is Korean and celebrates Seollal. The language she used to explain this cultural nuance (see Figure 1) to her 64 thousand followers was both informative and overtly friendly: “Just FYI for y’all DMing me! I so appreciate the kind words but I’m actually Korean, not Chinese and celebrate Seollal [heart emoji].”



Figure 1. Food blogger who shared an Instagram post about Lunar New Year.

A Tweet sent by @Annie_Wu_22 overlaying traditional red lanterns accompanied her statement. Moreover, the tweet also included information about the holiday, referring to what it is recognized as in Chinese, Vietnamese, Korean, Tibetan, and Mongolian. In the proceeding post on her IG story, ChicagoFoodGirl shares an unidentified follower's positive response (see Figure 2).

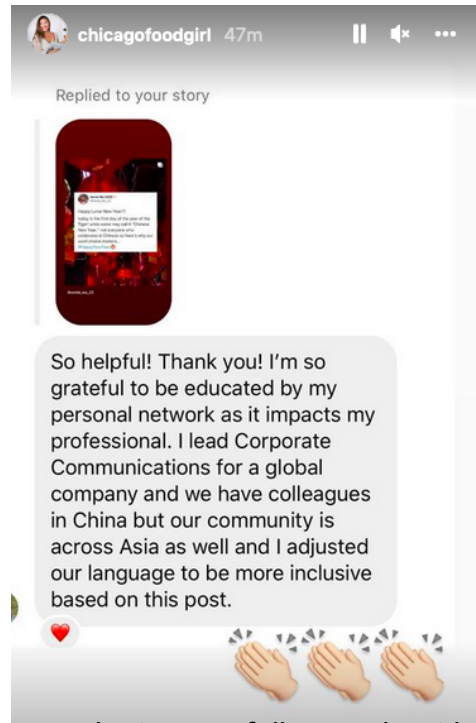


Figure 2. Response from an Instagram follower about her Instagram Story Post.

The follower acknowledged how the post was “so helpful” because they lead Corporate Communications for a global company and learned how their language should be more inclusive. This post on Instagram is just one example of how the analectical perspective of Asian-Americans includes labor such as explaining significant cultural differences in the way a nationality celebrates ringing in the New Year. This “lumping” of identities is necessary for unity in certain circumstances (i.e. mustering collective strength to fight racism, sexism, etc.), but resisting this lumping at other times is just as revolutionary / politically necessary. The “correcting” (i.e. “resisting”) of universal narratives and the emotional labor that comes with it is akin to resisting empire, or dominant hegemonic “universals.” A closer look at how Asian-American women experience and engage in public discourse online is warranted, specifically on Instagram. Instagram has become a platform known to increase users’ social capital and launch them into positions to profit financially (i.e., a sponsored post by a paid advertiser in exchange for their reach to followers). Instagram also supports and mobilizes communities. The Instagram posts about Lunar New Year are not the first instance where followers have seen ChicagoFoodGirl share a personal experience with race and culture on Instagram. Furthermore, although she is Korean-American, many other Asian-Americans celebrate the Lunar New Year, are not Chinese, and may have experienced similar online interactions.

The East Asian cultural experience on platforms is predominately examined by researchers situated in that region. Academics have examined the experiences of influencers from Singapore (Abidin, 2016); and South Korean bloggers (Song, 2018; Woo-young & Park, 2012). One study examined an Asian-Australian Facebook group community of 1.7 million members who discuss being East Asian and experiencing amplified racism due to COVID-19 (Abidin & Zeng, 2020). The Western Asian experience is discussed nearly at a whisper; the American experience rarely centers on Asian American participation. For instance, Son (2016) conducted a qualitative study on Korean immigrants' postpartum care expectations and experiences in America by analyzing comments posted to a bulletin board forum in a Korean online community and did not include American women of Korean descent. The study surveyed native-Korean women who lived in the United States. Duffy and Hund (2015) wrote about entrepreneurial feminism among top-ranked fashion bloggers, including Asian-Americans; however, the sample size of 38 included five Asian-American women (representing 8% of participants). Also, there was no indication of their nationality. Some studies illuminate the Asian-American's digital experience. For instance, Lopez (2014) wrote about Asian-American bloggers' emotional labor within the public sphere centering the research on how different forms of anger (productive/creative; community-building and transition through anger, and destructive) are impactful communication devices for political and social mobilization. Dosono and Semaan (2019) researched the moderation practices of Asian Americans and Pacific Islanders on Reddit and found that many of the women moderating Reddit forums encountered harassment and misogynist comments. They found that the moderators developed strategies to manage the stress of emotional labor (Hoschild, 1979), such as building solidarity from shared struggles (p.7).

Utilizing Enrique Dussel's analectical approach, this paper addresses the emotional labor of Asian-American bloggers to emphasize the work of American women, taking the dominant narrative of the Eurocentric-American blogger and replacing it with the experience of American women of Asian descent. Eurocentrism involves an unwarranted centering of Western thought and an unjustified marginalization of non-Western thought (Kim 2019). This study is particularly relevant as Asian-Americans experience racial animosity and increased racist attacks due to the coronavirus. Asian-American women continue to engage online and post through a pandemic even though one-third of Asian-Americans fear increased violence towards them due to the uptick in hate crimes (Pew Research Center, 2021) since former President Donald Trump referred to the coronavirus as the Chinese virus in an anti-Asian tweet (Reja, 2021) in 2020. Employing Dussel's work as a source for critical inquiry of Asian-American blogger's labor can reveal what these women experience as a collective and as individuals, along with the strategies they develop to navigate toxicity and racism.

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BREAKING THE MYTH OF THE “OTHER”: RESISTANCE AND THE USE OF TECHNOLOGY DURING THE MIGRATION JOURNEY

Mobility is one of the oldest phenomena of humankind. For centuries people have been moving around the globe in search of well-being and for survival. The 21st century has not been the exception to this. According to the World Migration Report, there are around 281 million international migrants in the world, this accounts for 3.6 percent of the global population. A number that has been increasing over the past five decades. Although the causes of migration are uncountable—as it affects each individual in unique ways—literature shows that it is the combination of microstructural and macrostructural factors (Castells & Miller, 1993) that causes migration. These causes originate from personal decisions and are embedded in larger political, economic, and environmental issues which play a determinant role in the person’s decision to migrate. Therefore, migration *is* an outcome of the injustices and asymmetries that colonization and modern globalization have provoked in countries located mostly in the Global South (Hegde, 2016; Sassen 1988/1996).

The maps of human mobility show that the United States, Germany, Russia, and the United Kingdom are the four countries with more immigrants in the world and where more people aim to migrate (International Organization for Migration Report; 2020). Exposing that migration from the Global South to the North follows the paths of colonization. Migration as the ultimate resource to escape harsh living conditions, violence, starvation, deprivation of human rights, and death remains as the only option of survival for millions of humans.

The use of technology during migration is not new either. People-on-the-move have always relied on technology to communicate with their loved ones, share information, organize their journey, and plan their movements. Letters, telegraphs, phone calls, emails, and currently the use of portable technological devices that allow instant communication through connectivity (such as smartphones); are tools that migrants have used throughout history. Thus, it will be unfair not to recognize the long tradition of usage and agency that migrants have had over technology; often being early adopters and users.

This paper challenges the traditional notion that technology is a *new* element during the migration process. Instead, it claims that migrants have been using, reappropriating, shaping, imagining, and embodying technology in unique and creative ways during their experiences of mobility thru the centuries. Therefore, it recognizes migrants as creative, and resilient individuals that use technology for resistance. Although, we should acknowledge that the migrant population experience multiple vulnerabilities and injustices—this shouldn’t make invisible their strengths to overcome adversities (with and without technology).

By looking at the experiences of migration of Central Americans to the U.S.—the largest migratory corridor in the world (Massey et al., 1993; Feldmann et al., 2019)—this paper analyses the ways in which young male migrants use the smartphone during their journey.

Theoretically, I engage with the work of the Argentinian-Mexican philosopher Enrique Dussel which challenges the construction of the “Other” in modernity (Dussel, 1997). This paper disputes the colonial construction of the migrant as the “Other”, as a subject incapable of creating knowledge. On the contrary, by exposing the ways in which young Central American migrants engage with technology, I expose that technology can be used as a practice of resistance.

By applying 5 in-depth interviews with young Central American males in transit towards the U.S. and by using digital ethnographic methods (Kaufmann & Peil, 2020) this paper exposes how young migrants engage with their smartphones for navigation, information-sharing, documentation, and emotional support during their journey.

I conclude that migrants experience navigation in a hybrid way, as they use in simultaneous and fluid ways digital (e.g., smartphones, apps, interfaces) and physical (e.g., trains, roads) infrastructures for movement. I claim that the ways they use technology are an outcome of their needs and context. Thus, through their engagement with technology, they create “situated knowledges” (Haraway, 2003)—ways of using technology that are different from those designed by the developers of the technology.

Mignolo (2017) claims that decoloniality is not a mere thinking, but instead, a radical doing. That it should be understood as the “delink from that overall structure of knowledge in order to engage in an epistemic reconstitution”. Considering this, I argue that the acts of resistance that migrants put into practice using their smartphones to avoid migratory authorities and organized crime and to cross borders; *are* decolonial practices and knowledge(s). And that they constitute an example of healing from the western/colonial domination, violence, and trauma.

This paper considers technology a double-sword, or as Diminescu (2020) calls it a “pharmakon”. A Greek word used to identify something which is both medicine and poison, that can heal but also destroy. Thus, technology is overall ambivalent and non-neutral. Hence, I expose the risks that technology poses to migrants. Such as threats of exploitation, deportation, and incarceration as a product of digital surveillance and data extraction—neo-colonial practices of digital globalization. I conclude that migrants choose deliberately to use technology during their journey. This breaks the myth of the “Other” (Dussel, 1997) as it shows the migrants’ agency to create their own meanings around technology. This challenges the colonial/western narratives reproduced by governments and humanitarian organizations which frame technology as the “savior” of the migrant and the migrant as the “Other” who has little knowledge around technology.

Through empirical analysis, I contribute to opening a discussion on important questions such as: Can we use technology in decolonial ways? Can we decolonize and heal our technologies? Can technologies be used for liberation?

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REMEMBER, YOU *WILL* DIE. CORPOREAL MEMORIALIZATION OF THE DEAD AS RESISTANCE TO INDUSTRIALIZED MEMORY

Leen Van Brussel (2014) articulates death both as a material and symbolic process. The “ultimate biological essentialism” (Van Brussel, 2014, p. 13), death is unavoidable—we expect it—yet our human impulse to avoid its looming specter reflects a peculiar persistence of human nature. When death occurs the living are forced to renegotiate their own individual identity and web of social relations, absent the deceased. Mourning, thus, is “largely about loss of our attachment to the material support underpinning the symbolic and/or imaginary roles the deceased played for us in shaping our social relations and fantasy life,” (Glynos, 2014, p. 140). This cycle of mourning, punctuated by loss of the material and impulse to renegotiate the symbolic, is most tangibly evident in rituals of memorialization.

From the Plastered Skulls of Jericho of the Neolithic Period to 19th century *memento mori* (which literally translates to “remember, you will die”), historical practices for memorializing the dead through material, often corporeal, means have been well documented. In recent years, the proliferation of modern-day *memento mori* such as plush “Memory Bears” made of a patchwork of clothing belonging to the deceased have gained in popularity. Situating these modern-day material *memento mori* (and the implied reminder that death is essential and unavoidable these objects conjure) within their historical lineage and the anthropological framework of *thing theory* (Brown, 2001) which centers objects—in this case *memento mori*—as socialized *things*, this paper argues that corporeal artefacts of memorialization represent a visceral rejection of the industrialization of memory prolific in an age of totalizing technological systems.

As will be explored, historically, eras where corporeal memorialization practices are prolific are often preceded by massive shifts in social and technological advancement (Lillios, 2008). Advancements in digital technology, particularly in the realm of simulated communication and avatars, have made the extension of life (at least through digital simulation) evermore possible, inching us past the precipice of another massive technological and ontological shift. To this end, and as Anthony Enns (2020) notes the “development of networked environments” have led to “the formation of complex and self-sufficient digital universes populated by virtual avatars and artificial intelligences” and which premise “no essential difference between identity and information, between real intelligence and simulated intelligence, which effectively made humans indistinguishable from machines,” (p. 40). As Arnason (2014) explains, society is a deathly creation. Echoing Durkheim, he argues that death represents the ultimate moral authority, and that ritual memorialization offers “...an opportunity for the construction of society as a moral order,” (p. 199). Complicating things in our digital age, global platforms invested in *mnemotechnologies*, or those technologies which allow for the industrialized storage of memory, threaten to impose an inauthentic moral order steeped in neoliberal market principles. As Bernard Stiegler notes, the point of this memory storage is not so much to foster connection between the living and the dead (i.e. continued connection with the deceased via their Facebook page), but to maintain connection between the living and revenue-earning platform (as cited in Prey & Smit, 2019). Furthermore, the landscape of digital remembrance is that of global platforms

that often do more to industrialized practices of bereavement for capitalist purposes, rather than cultivate individual experience.

Conversely, corporeal artefacts, as competing sites or landscapes of memorialization, provoke liminal experiences that both conjure the past (Pastor & Kent, 2020) and continue a fluid connection between the living and deceased in the present. Conjuring a more authentic connection between living and dead, Reichers (2013) argues that material memento mori are distinguished in the sensory provocation: “An object’s haptic qualities as well as its uniqueness as a singular object gives that item an inherent gravitas that encourages, even demands, serious personal contemplation,” (p. 3). Similarly, Deborah Lutz (2010) argues that tactile memento mori imbue what can be described as a *sympathetic magic* in that a piece of a once-living person can conjure the presence of the whole. In this way, the artefacts of bodily material captured as or within objects hold the fetish power of relics of bygone eras (Lutz, 2010), whereas objects that are mere representations (photographs, videos, digital memorial pages) do not. Along these lines, Tim Ingold (2007) argues that the tactile (not cognitive) relationship we have with objects distinguishes their status in that we can physically interact with the object in a way we cannot physically interact with mere ideation. In this vein, it is difficult to argue that the digital artefacts of memorialization constitute anything more than subjective projection of social and collective meaning.

Perhaps most importantly from a decolonial perspective, the liminal experiences of corporeal memento mori occur outside of the technological hegemony of networked environments, allowing the subject to renegotiate her relationship with the deceased on her own terms. The quest to apprehend, and subsequently conjure, the once-living in material objects via corporeal artefacts (like strands of hair in a necklace or ring), is steeped in a long tradition of spiritualism and, by extension, a belief in a form of *natural supernaturalism* which, as will be explored, has historically pushed-back against emergent scientism of the day (Lutz, 2011; Enns, 2020). Today, this “emergent scientism” can be clarified in the grammars of the ‘cybernetic turn’ in which the brain-computer model, as Jeffrey Sconce (2019) notes, while perhaps deeply flawed in principle, is something ‘we all believe’ (p. 235) to be self-evident. Thus, in an age where memory is stored and industrialized as a prelude to extending life in the digital realm, to remember the material limits of our mortality is truly a transgressive act.

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