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BEYOND VICTIMHOOD AND STIGMATIZATION

Trauma, Ruptured Memories and Agency in the Context of Global Migration

“migr-AI-tion”: self-representation, data & collaboration

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ABSTRACT

Migr-AI-tion is a collaborative platform and data literacy project for the self-representation of migrants. Social inequalities are being reinforced and propagated by the neoliberal operations of the tech industry, specifically in the ways that data is scraped and trained for AI technologies. Blind trust that is placed in software to provide “objective” judgements creating problematic divisions between those who shape knowledge, and those who are tracked and exploited to create technologies for First World users. **Data colonialism** is rooted in colonial history, wherein scientific, ‘objectivist’ rationales were provided to the colonial project. While migrants are one of the most targeted groups of machine vision surveillance, this project explores the possibilities to **build technologies of alterity** through postcolonial optics based on transcultural theories and intersubjectivity. Currently, machine vision systems are problematic for their reifications of colonial taxonomies. **Migrant experiences** provide the transcultural basis for liminal forms of knowledge that are the starting point to reframe approaches to data.

RESEARCH QUESTIONS

- Can participatory methods de-colonize AI technologies, and how?
- What participatory methods can be tools for transnational, community healing?
- How should migration trauma in this instance be framed? How can it be mobilised for productive ends using data?
- What forms of migration knowledge are elicited through participatory methods?
- How can data be reframed using participatory methodologies?

THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

- **Phenomenology:** Merleau-Ponty (1945) points to the body as the subject’s primary mediating agent of the real and emphasizes indeterminacy as a focus of inquiry
- **Informatics:** Galloway (2012) describes the neoliberal conditions under which the body is de-humanized and reduced to an extractable data source
- **Semiotics:** Pierce (1931-1958) situates language and logics within a field of semiotics, emerging from evolutionary biosemiotics.
- **Liminality:** Galloway (2012): “being on the boundary” is the “act of mediation in general”
- **Transcultural Media:** Marks (2000) theorizes haptic visibility as a form of ‘touch’ between members of diasporic communities in the circulation of intercultural films
- **Multidirectional Memory:** Rothberg (2009, 3), beyond competitive collective memory, memory is “subject to ongoing negotiation, cross-referencing and borrowing; as productive and not privative”

METHODOLOGY

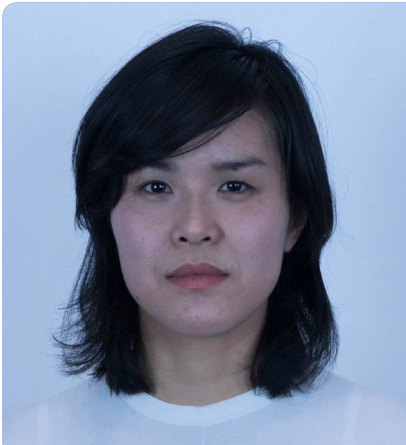
- **Future Anthropology:** “messy and interventionalist” (Futures Anthropology Network Manifesto); A ‘futures’ framework provides a critical distancing framework for workshop participants to decolonize knowledge systems. (Pink 2006, 91).
- **Design Anthropology:** “re - framing the social, cultural and environmental relations in both design and anthropology (Gunn and Donovan, 2012)
- **Speculative Design:** Using ‘futures’ as a medium to imagine speculative technologies and the ethics, economics, geopolitics and ecologies of the societies that produce them, ‘futures’ becomes a departure to remember the present (Dune and Raby 2013, 50).
- **Applied interventions:** a type of activism to ‘mediate across cultural boundaries’ and to ‘heal disruptions of cultural knowledge’ (Ginsburg 2002a 214-215)

ETHICAL CONCERNS

- data/image policy
- protecting project participants’ and their data

MOTIVATIONS

- storytelling with data
- experimental methods



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