Introduction to the Minitrack on Decolonizing Technology and Society

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Abstract

Contemporary information systems research, often dominated by Western perspectives, mirrors colonial power dynamics. The call for decolonization emphasizes the need for diverse research methodologies. This minitrack presents research on decolonization, emphasizing decolonial viewpoints using local epistemologies, Indigenous theories and methodologies. It provides insights to information systems researchers on how decolonial approaches to technology and society can aid in combating oppression and fostering a more diverse and inclusive society.

Keywords: decoloniality, decolonization, demarginalization, ethics.

1. Introduction

In our modern world, colonial power structures largely dictate the ways in which one uses and access technology, often favoring dominant perspectives at the expense of marginalized communities. It reflects the historical assimilation of Indigenous communities into Western culture. Quite often, research studies, albeit unintentionally, perpetuate this colonial control by examining digital technology through a Western lens, using theories and methods ill-equipped to address coloniality. An absence of decolonial methods and theories in the IS literature has led some researchers to use Western and/or Euro-centric methods to explore and explain social aspects of technology, thus reinforcing a colonial mindset. Scholars have called this a new form of colonization using digital technologies. Decolonization of methods and theories is called for in research (Chughtai, 2023).

This minitrack invited scholars to explore decoloniality in information systems, challenging colonial legacies in the digital society and envisioning decolonial futures. We encouraged theorizing and developing decolonized technologies at all levels. Topics of interest ranged from decoloniality and critical race issues in technology, to decolonizing gender, sex, curriculum, and higher education through technology. Our call covered decolonial approaches to technology design, data colonialism, data justice, digital activism in decolonial contexts, and the application of decolonial methods, theories, and philosophies like Kaupapa Māori and Ubuntu.

We received five submissions on diverse topics. After a thorough review, we accepted two of these papers.

The first paper is by Mariá Scárdua and John Fennimore and is titled “Grassroots: Developing a Location-Based Game through a Decolonial Lens.” It introduces "Grassroots: Unite, Reclaim, Maintain", a location-based game (LBG) that aims to build community through decolonial practices and mobility justice. Contrary to mainstream LBGs, which often propagate colonialist narratives through competitive gameplay and territorial exploitation, Grassroots seeks to foster a deeper connection, accessibility, and understanding of physical spaces via its virtual world. The potential benefits of this work are twofold. Firstly, it offers a valuable contribution to decolonization research in technology by proposing a new design framework that respects and promotes indigenous rights and values. Secondly, it extends research on play more generally (Chughtai & Myers, 2014a, 2014b; Chughtai, 2021) by challenging the colonialist narratives often found in mainstream technologies and research and advocating for more inclusive and equitable digital landscapes.

The second paper by Alexander Chung and colleagues is titled “Decolonizing Information Technology Design: A Framework for Integrating Indigenous Knowledge in Design Science Research”. It discusses the importance of integrating Indigenous knowledge into design science research, which has been largely dominated by Western perspectives. The authors propose a framework for incorporating Indigenous knowledge, using the Mi’kmaq principle of Two-Eyed Seeing. They provide examples and a case study of a 3D carronade model to illustrate how this can be done. The aim is to make design science more inclusive and less discriminatory towards marginalized groups, including Indigenous Peoples.

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We believe these papers will be a valuable resource for both budding and seasoned researchers. It is our hope that this work will pave the way for more in-depth and critical decolonial research on a variety of topics, both qualitative and quantitative, furthering our collective understanding and knowledge.

2. References

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