#01 Decoso Meeting: Decolonizing Socialism X Cybernetics Thursday 25th of February 2021 13.00-15.30 (CEST)

The Decoso Meeting is a seminar-like series that seeks to discuss cybernetic practices and aesthetics for probing the epistemological condition and historical legacy of cybernetic thinking that underpin contemporary concerns about big tech and the rise of digital feudalism.

The framework of the Decoso Meeting series is the transdisciplinary study *Decolonizing Socialism Entangled Internationalism* (decoso), funded by the Swiss National Science Foundation. The case-based studies spark academic and para-academic methodologies in order to mobilize specific historic practices in the field of the arts, architecture, technology and cybernetics from former socialist geographies of Eastern Europe always in entanglement with actors, agents and partners in Africa, Asia and/or Latin-America. Our specific focus are cybernetics in an expanded sense in the context of world-communist politics or socialist internationalism between 1949 and 1990 in the conflicting conditions of the Global Cold War: Not as a historic-archival find alone, but as a trajectory to problematize techno-politics such as “planetary computation” (Benjamin Bratton) or “planetary automation” (Luciana Parisi) within the present. Committed to study micro-political engagements, we aim to move below the macro-political narrative that the Cold War's binarism imposed by means of unearthing the potentialities of art and technology towards a communist worldmaking that aimed to create societies across borders, yet, united by "anti-imperialist politics" (Angela Y. Davis) or "anticipatory politics" (Marion von Osten). We consider art-research’s experimental forms of research as highly necessary in such a transdisciplinary / transnational investigation towards decolonial times.

Each Decoso Meeting consists of workshop-like work meetings with invited international scholars and/or artists. The interlocutors offer a theoretical proposition (15-20min). Invited respondents as well as members of the decoso-research shall respond to the presented proposition by thinking through and extending the proposition while relating it to their personal project and perspective. This shall spark an exchange including also students and young researchers. Each session shall be protocolled, transcribed and archived for future research. The Decoso Meeting shall end with a collective review of the session. Key points of the proposition and discussion will be collected and fed into a conceptual map. The visual documentation will be helpful to create dotted lines between fields and concepts, show

intersections and dichotomies, and create a point of orientation during and after the discussion.

We are inviting scholars and artists and friends to discuss and speculate about cybernetic logics and its possible reinventions.

#1 Decoso Meeting: Decolonizing Socialism X Cybernetics will address in particular the intersection of decolonization and decoloniality in relation to calculus and mathematics. How and in what way do we situate mathematics and algorithms in relation to socialism and socialist internationalism? In this context, it remains pertinent to understand socialism, both, as a political project of modernity and as a philosophy of worldmaking to fight imperialism, colonialism and fascism.

Participants : C.K. Raju, Ramon Amaro, Ghalas Charara, and Aarti Sunder, vinit agarwal, Doreen Mende, Lea Marie Nienhoff, students, guests, et al.

Agenda

13:00 introduction
13:20 proposition by C.K. Raju
13:50 short break
14:00 conversational responses by Aarti Sunder and Ramon Amaro
14:20 deepening with further questions from the participants
15:00 intervention by Ghalas Charara with students
15:15 conclusion
15:30 end

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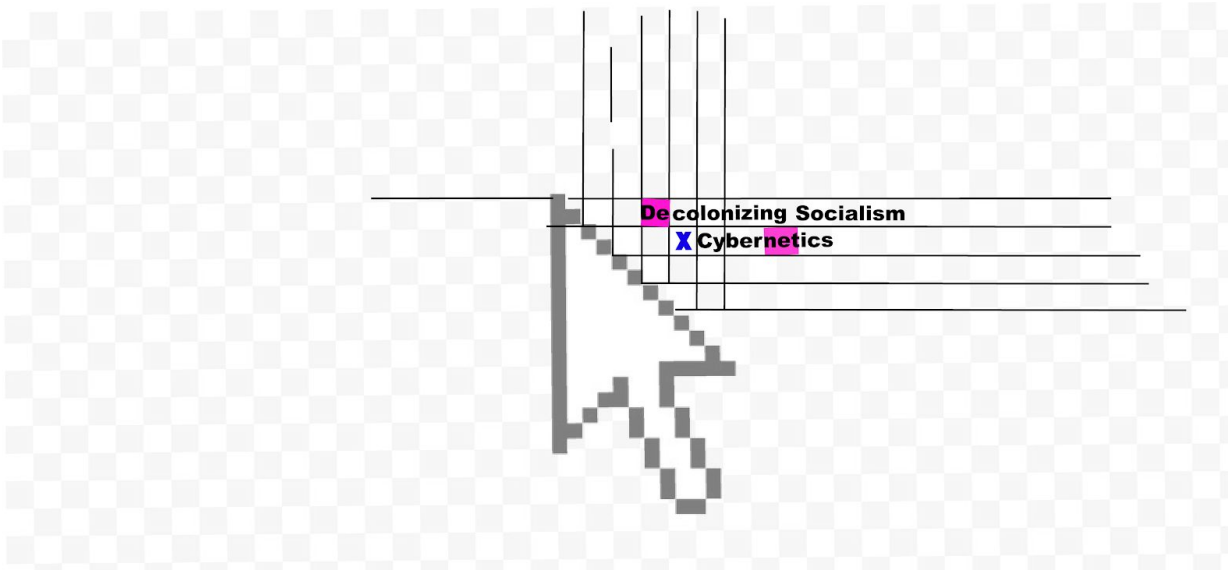


Framing Questions :

1. How do we articulate the geographic and historical specificity of processes of decolonisation, socialist thinking, and cybernetic practices?
2. How to displace cybernetic practices from their eurocentric inertia in socialist practices? How to think of coloniality (both in vector to european imperialism as an incomplete exercise that continues and neo-colonization as the phenomenon that functions through similar mechanisms) as cybernetic practices?
3. How to think of cybernetics in relation to internationalism and feminist internationalism in particular? Where do these two practices coincide and depart?
4. At which point does the material constitution and construction of technology in cybernetics become contingent on race, extraction of material resources, ecocides, and the exploitation of human resources? How to think of a socialist vision of cybernetics that accounts for the violence of its (technology) production? How to question the racial fabric of various cybernetic and algorithmic practices, such as artificial intelligence?
5. Which kinds of contemporary cybernetics are decolonial and/or socialist? What are contemporary mutations of cybernetics?
6. If computation depends on a logic of norm or a law of calculus that defines the infrastructural conditions under which computation takes place, then what could be possible methodologies or practices to problematize this logic in regard to class and the role of the state today?
7. How can artistic research methods shape programming languages, algorithmic processes and the aesthetics of applications of cybernetics? How can artistic research methods develop into cybernetics of the future?
8. What are examples for the intersection of cybernetic logics with decolonial logics in the context of a global socialist modernity? What happens to cybernetics when socialist modernity partakes into globalization? What are the differential factors of cost that will question its socialist paradigm? (Abeba Birhane) How do they materialize in master plans, infrastructures, and housing? What visual cultures do these interactions produce?
9. How do we deal with the “problem of scale” (Matilde Marcolli) from a position of practice that is informed by the search or the urgency for decolonial techno-politics?

Key Interlocutors

Prof. C.K. Raju

Prof. C.K. Raju is a computer scientist, mathematician, educator, physicist and polymath researcher. He received the Telesio Galilei Academy Award in 2010 for defining "a product of Schwartz distributions", for proposing "an interpretation of quantum mechanics, dubbed the structured-time interpretation, and a model of physical time evolution", and for proposing the use of functional differential equations in physics. Prof. Raju was a key contributor to the first Indian supercomputer, PARAM (1988–91), he has also done considerable historical research, most notably claiming infinitesimal calculus was transmitted to Europe from India. He has authored 12 books and dozens of articles, mainly on the subjects of physics, mathematics, and the history and philosophy of science. http://ckraju.net/

Dr. Ramon Amaro

Dr. Ramon Amaro is a lecturer in Art and Visual Cultures of the Global South, Department of History of Art, UCL. Dr. Ramon Amaro's writing, research and practice emerge at the intersections of Black Study, psychopathology, digital culture, and the critique of computation reason. Dr. Ramon Amaro draws on Frantz Fanon's theory of *sociogenic* alienation to problematize the de-localisation of the Black psyché in contemporary computational systems, such as machine learning and artificial intelligence. Dr. Ramon Amaro's research pulls away from notions of psychic negation, as set forth by the Fanonian model of representation, to investigate alternative modes of relation between race and technology. Dr. Ramon Amaro's ultimate aim is to develop new methodologies for the study of race and digital culture. Dr. Ramon Amaro completed his Ph.D. in Philosophy at Goldsmiths, while holding a Masters degree in Sociological Research from the University of Essex and a BEng in Mechanical Engineering from the University of Michigan, Ann Arbor. Dr. Ramon Amaro has worked as Assistant Editor for the SAGE open access journal Big Data & Society; quality design engineer at General Motors; and programmes manager for the American Society of Mechanical Engineers (ASME). https://www.sambarhino.com/

Aarti Sunder

Aarti Sunder is an artist and researcher who is interested in ideas that create the subject: the infrastructure of technology, economy, and experience; how we relate to these ideas and how they make us. Aarti Sunder uses video, performance, writing and drawings as tools of her research and practice. She graduated from the Dutch Art Institute, was a fellow at Ashkal Alwan's Home Workspace Programme in 2016–2017, Art Dubai in 2017–2018, and resident artist at Alserkal in 2019 as well as member of the Sommerakademie Paul Klee for 2019–2020. Aarti is currently enrolled at MIT Program in Art, Culture and Technology.
http://act.mit.edu/people/students/aarti-sunder/

Ghalas Charara

Ghalas Charara works with the scrambling of narrative codes, silent mysteries and vocal ambiguities. In her written or performed texts, she travels towards the ambivalent figure of an obsessive detective, where we no longer know if she will be the one helping us solve the crime or become its perpetrator. Ghalas has scoured the musical and artistic scenes of Beirut, going from assistant sound engineer, to

boom-operator, to technical manager, to then finally obtain a BA in visual arts studies at ECAV and then the research-based MA at CCC at HEAD-Genève.

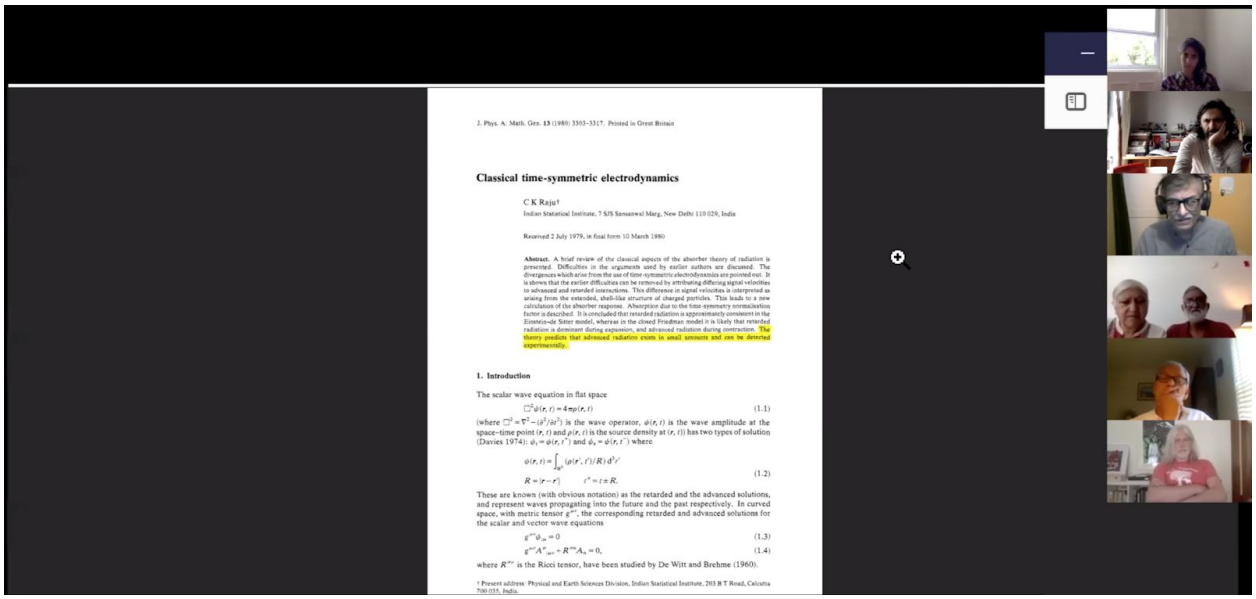
Further Readings

Raju, C.K. “To decolonise math stand up to its false history and bad philosophy.”
Originally published in Conversation Global Perspectives, October 24, 2016.
Find this article and more readings on C.K. Raju’s Blog
http://ckraju.net/blog/?p=117

Ramon Amaro and Murad Khan
“Towards Black Individuation and a Calculus of Variations”
https://www.e-flux.com/journal/109/330246/towards-black-individuation-and-a-calculus-of-variations/

Aurora Apolito (Marcolli, Matilde) “The Problem of Scale in Anarchism and the Case for Cybernetic Communism”
https://www.its.caltech.edu/~matilde/ScaleAnarchy.pdf

Viewings



Image/linked viewing : C.K. Raju with participants in testing assemblies, screenshot taken from the conversation.

Raju, C.K. "Testing Assembling - Movement 23,1 - C.K. Raju - On Decolonizing Mathematics." Vimeo video, 51:48. August 30, 2020.
https://vimeo.com/453532527/b2e6a6fda7

Aarti Sunder

GHOST CUT:
"This film I am(Aarti Sunder) in the process of completing focusses on Mechanical Turk workers (turkers) on Amazon's Mechanical Turk platform (Mturk). Ghostwork or crowdwork is a broad term to refer to intentionally hidden and opaque form of labour. The way it used is here refers to a digital assembly line of distributed workers who can be accessed via online platforms such as Mturk, Crowdflower and Clickworker. Businesses/universities/individuals who use these platforms to employ between one to thousands of people to complete work that software cannot do. The word *ghost* indicates that it is not just the physical absence of a person doing a particular job, but the pretense that such a person does not even exist; the silent laboring hand behind the magic of technology; the silence that requires spontaneity, creativity and cultural interpretation.

For this work I posted two high paying HITs (human intelligent tasks) on the Mturk platform to ask workers for:
HIT 1: Four images of their work place
HIT 2: A slow 360-degree video of the space they work and describe what they see

Video 1: https://vimeo.com/504109656 **pswd: kuttikannukutti**
Conversations with 6 people have been edited into a video piece. The background moving image for this piece is from training images into models from HIT 1 and HIT 2. The subtitle-text is a recording of Google's live transcribe interface which is considered the best in the industry at the moment. You see the live-transcribe algorithm attempting to decode the voice overs – often failing but always learning. (In English - partially subtitled).

Video 2: https://vimeo.com/492858112/61eae0e068
The 360-degree videos from HIT 2 were trained by using a pre-existing model that would determine all the objects in the image (chair, table, fan etc). The closest objects to those were then identified, replaced and then stitched together as a video. This work is presented as one three channel video. A voice-ever attempts to decode what the viewer sees: Here you can see how image recognition is attempting to take place, but failing because the models are incomplete. (In English, Tamil and Hindi - not subtitled)

Both works are still in progress"

Bahar Noorizadeh, “After Scarcity”, 2018, 35 Mins
https://www.e-flux.com/video/374045/bahar-noorizadeh-nbsp-after-scarcity/