

Building Transnational Solidarities in the Tech and Democracy Space

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**Global Technology
for Social Justice Lab**

UMassAmherst

my burning questions

01



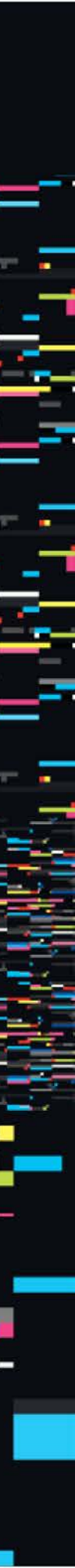
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how can we gather more comprehensive and precise evidence of digital harms thru knowledge pluralism?

what are examples of Global South-centered tech and democracy interventions?

what does a truly globally minded and community-driven approach look like in the tech and democracy space?

how are we “pro-democracy” actors all complicit in upholding unjust global governance structures and extractive systems of knowledge creation?



I - towards knowledge pluralism?

02

our field is heavily tilted toward computational methods, social psych experiments, and legal analysis

many overlooked and understudied platforms

leave-up or take-down is the fixation of social media policy debates (douek 2020)

narrow genre of debunking in Global South is a product of platforms' investments in fact-checking (Lelo 2024)

moral panics about the “social media-brainwashed” can be exploited by illiberal leaders, perpetuate anti-poor sentiments, and alienate voters



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My ethnographic work: from content to process regulation

03



‘Duterte trolls’ in the Philippines are not the brainwashed, uneducated, poor voters in rural areas

there’s a classed hierarchy of paid operatives: public relations strategists, influencers, fake account operators

trolling is not a full-time job; it’s a side hustle to make ends meet

journalistic investigations often expose low-level workers but fail to hold accountable political and commercial elites and the complicit industries of advertising, PR, digital marketing

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2- Centering Global South advocacies?

04



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can we access the same toolkits as the Global North: ad libraries, transparency audits, local platform policy officers, legal support? (Free Press, 2024)

Global South tech activists are often overlooked in global advocacies, e.g., 58 organizations challenged UNESCO platform governance recommendations as “rubber stamping local overregulation” via #PushbackUNESCO (2023)

what is a sincere vs tokenistic engagement with global South advocates and activists?

Southern creativity and activism need to be amplified

05

**GLO
TECH**

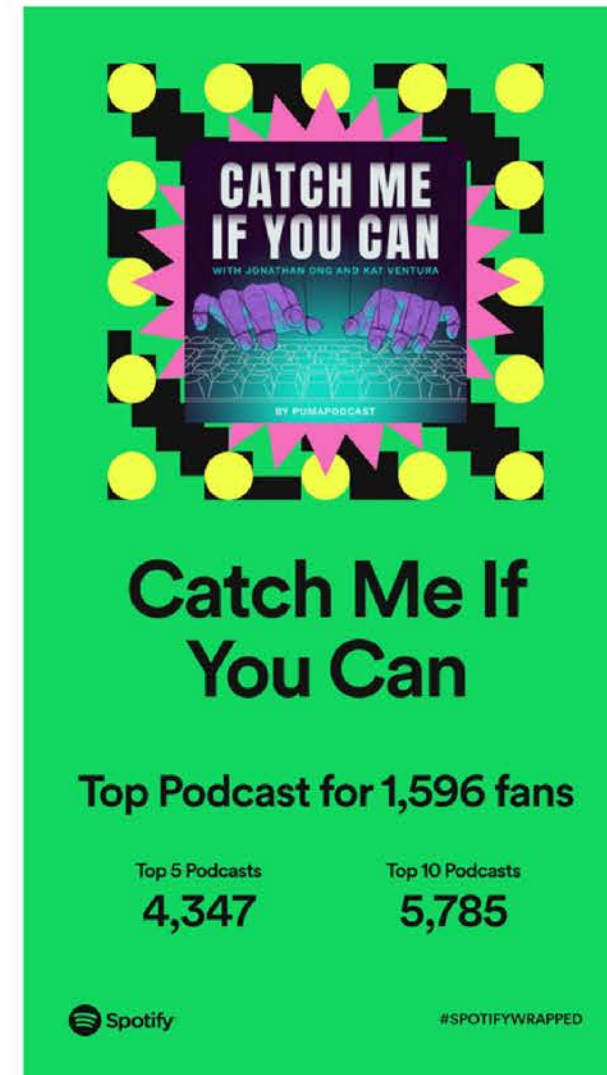
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The man leading Kenyan content moderators' battle against Meta

Nathan Nkunuzimana claims Meta and Sama fired content moderators for protesting working conditions and demanding the right to unionize.



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3- towards a globally minded & community-driven space?

06



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“whole-of-society approach” vs disinfo (Donovan & Wardle 2020) sounds good. But term occludes power inequalities in knowledge creation and the global aid industrial complex.

Global South election coalitions have higher number of participating organizations but all financially incentivized to use same database, tools, and strategies (Lanuza et al, forthcoming)

[To parachute researchers in Myanmar:] “We are not your f*cking case study.” (Panelist, South-to-South Knowledge Exchange Workshop in Rio, 2023)

Global South disinfo researchers redirected toward militarization and cybersecurity agenda.

South-to-South Knowledge Exchange (Rio de Janeiro, 2023)

07



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4- Blueprint for South- to-South Knowledge Exchange

08



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Global South as sites of digital innovation not of dystopia (Arora 2020).

Ways of working in the Global South are more culturally proximal and resonant vs replicating tools from the Global North (Wasserman & Madrid-Morales 2022)

Reflexivity in collaboration, citation, knowledge creation (Medrado & Verdegem 2024) vs co-option of indigenous tech activism (Lehuede 2024)

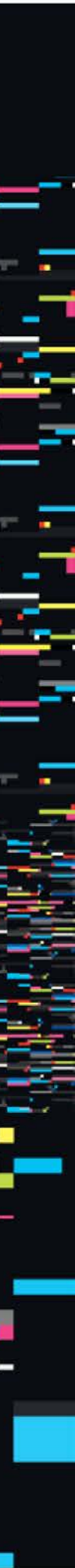
Designing “*custom built* disinfo solutions” begins with critique of unjust global governance structures and extractive systems of knowledge creation (Lanuza et al, forthcoming)

CUSTOM BUILT / FEITO SOB MEDIDA (Lanuza et al, forthcoming)



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Global Technology for Social Justice Lab is a hub for interdisciplinary scholarship at the intersection of critical tech studies and global studies. Our research projects and community partnerships promote social justice, accountability, and healing for our tech-mediated global public sphere.



UPCOMING EVENT

Empowering Election Integrity in the Global Majority

APRIL 18-19 2024 – UMASS AMHERST

PREVIOUS EVENT

“Meet the Funders” An Afternoon with NSF and SSRC Program Officers

MARCH 29 2024, 1PM – INTEGRATIVE LEARNING CENTER N345

salamat! brigado! thank you!

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