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| **RESEARCH ARTICLE**

Leadership and Digital Gap in Post-Colonial Societies

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| **ABSTRACT**

Digital technology has altogether transformed the ways people communicate, socialize and disseminate knowledge. Traditional communication tools and outlets have been replaced by digital devices which represent a clear paradigm shift in the conception of society or more accurately, networked society. Building up virtual communities, online identities and digital cultures has become a normative practice that has been fostered by new technologies. This digital infrastructure is supposed to metaphorically eradicate geographical borders to facilitate the free flow of capital, values and technologies. From a cyberculture studies perspective, cyberspace is presumably an open, borderless and transformative space sustained by electronic interconnectedness between social networks. The ubiquity of digital devices progressively contributes to increasing the internet population and, consequently, raising questions of access, equity, infrastructure and digital leadership in post-colonial societies. The latter are experiencing a new form of colonialism and cultural imperialism, referred to as neo-colonialism and nurtured by Western-centric technological hegemony. Viewed from this lens, cyberspace is also a 'contact zone', a space of power relations, dominance, cultural supremacy and digital gap. It is a space where subaltern voices and narratives are deprived of digital leadership and equitable access to new technologies. We argue that digital leadership does not only depend on individual and professional skills, but also on the availability of and accessibility to digital infrastructure to challenge the prejudicial assumptions of geography, race and culture. As long as the technological cleavage between developed and developing nations, centre and periphery, persists, the path to digital leadership will definitely remain thwarted. Based on a cultural studies perspective, this paper seeks to problematize the issue of digital leadership in post-colonial societies by drawing on the field of digital humanities and the postcolonial concept of digital gap/divide to support the argument that digital leadership must also be examined within the context of power relations.

| **KEYWORDS**

Digital leadership, Digital Gap/Divide, Digital Humanities, Power Relations

1. Introduction: Mapping out Digital Humanities

The normalization of cyberspace and cyberculture has fostered electronic spaces for humanities to shift online and to give rise to a nascent academic field labelled Higital Humanities. The proliferation of online platforms hosting social, cultural, historical, academic, political and economic activities has drawn massive interest among scholars to engage in intensive investigation of the networked society, to raise questions about internet contents and to formulate/propound theories about digital technologies/ 'techno-culture' which partake of Digital Humanities. The ways individuals use technology to create contents, communicate, share knowledge, work collaboratively with a wider online audience and engage in digital inquiry veer towards the scope of Digital Humanities (Schreibman et al., 2016, p. 1). Digital spaces are fraught with digital agents, that is, online users who contribute to the increase of online aggregations or electronic population who inhabit « digital territories » that transcend the mainstream concepts of space, time, borders and geography, creating a symbolic stage that hinges on the metaphorical process of 'deterritorialization' or the « electronic frontier » (Rheingold, 1993).

These electronic agglomerations have, indeed, geared up virtual spaces for social networks or virtual communities where people conduct most of their online activities. Digital Humanities is concerned with these electronic platforms and how they generate new forms of culture, communication and behaviour, marking a paradigm shift in digital technology. In this context, Steven E. Jones confirms that « Where it was experienced, this shift in technology went well beyond the so-called Web 2.0, with its emphasis on web services and social software and crowdsourcing, although at the time that was one way of trying to summarize and make sense of the changes. But the shift was propelled by the popularity of social-network platforms... » (Jones, 2014, p. 4). Obviously, the increasing popularity of social media platforms has triggered academic inquiry among researchers to explore and theorize on how people manipulate digital technology, how they use their electronic devices, and how they 'live together' on virtual spaces. These increasing developments in digital technology constitute the very core of Digital Humanities and at the same time, call for new visions, theories and approaches to the ways people experience and access technology. Digital Humanities draws from a plethora of values that relate to humanities per se, including cultural heritage, libraries and networked culture (Gold, 2012). Digital Humanities scholars also examine how academic research is mediated by new technology as most libraries have shifted online « affecting both the epistemologies and ontologies that underlie a research programme (Berry, 2012), at the same time raising questions of equitable access to and affordance of digital technology infrastructure, as it will be discussed later in this paper.

However, the academic boundaries of Digital Humanities are still opaque and hotly debated among scholars. Its contours are not yet determined. Its interdisciplinary and heterogeneous aspect is related to the vast, amorphous, transformative and elusive purview of digital technology. Several scholars have endeavoured to conceptualize the field of Digital Humanities as an academic discipline. Roth identifies three sub-fields of Digital Humanities: « digitized humanities » concerned with the use and analysis of digitized resources; « numerical humanities » or « computational humanities » which deals with research questions in terms of « computational models »; « humanities of the digital » which investigates digital phenomena and online communication (Luhmann and Burghardt, 2022). Nyhan and Terras (2013) put the same focus on the computational turn of Digital Humanities, with reference to literary and linguistic computing, and Digital Humanities (Nyhan and Terras, 2013, p. 2). Schreibman et al (2004) highlight the interdisciplinary core of Digital Humanities and its intersection with the practices of computation within digital locations. The Glossary of the Digital Humanities provides a practical definition: « DH values collaboration, plurality; investigation of human culture, and the disruption of and reflection on traditional practices and is concerned with not just the use of digital technology for humanities projects but how the use of digital technology for humanities projects changes the user's experience » (Qtd. by Beecher, 2014). In his turn, Matthew Kirschenbaum (2010) considers *Wikipedia*'s definition of Digital Humanities worth noting: « The digital humanities, also known as humanities computing, is a field of study, research, teaching, and invention concerned with the intersection of computing and the disciplines of the humanities. It is methodological by nature and interdisciplinary in scope. It involves investigation, analysis, synthesis and presentation of information in electronic form. It studies how these media affect the disciplines in which they are used, and what these disciplines have to contribute to our knowledge of computing ».

Digital tools have, indeed, altered the ways we process, and distribute information on cyberspace. We believe Digital Humanities transcends the parochial scope of computational and algorithmic practices by investigating cultural and social phenomena that arise from human interaction with digital technology which provides spaces for humanities subjects to be mediated or digitalized. The multitude of digital archives and databases facilitates the task of researchers and humanities scholars to access, explore and analyse digitalized sources. In their essay on digital Humanities, Simon Burrows and Michael Falk (2021) draw our attention to the assumption that Digital Humanities « describes both a technology-empowered methodological approach (or approaches) and a self-reflective critical component». They also refer to « the technological shifts as visualization, immersive virtual reality, social media, 3-D modelling, online gaming and machine have opened new vistas for researching, exploring, curating, presenting and understanding objects, the archive, and the human condition ». Besides, technology does not only provide sources and documents for humanists, but also tools and methods as in the following quotation: « At the same time, technology has enabled the development of digital tools and software that allow researchers to access and study data. Technologies are used both as research objects and as research methods and analysis in the digital humanities. Consequently, new tools allow scholars not only to obtain information but also to analyse and visualise it in new and innovative ways. Text mining tools, for example, can identify patterns and trends in large collections of text, while data visualisation tools can create interactive graphics that help illustrate complex data sets (Transkribus, 2023). Obviously, Digital Humanities is both technical and exploratory: how to access, archive and process data, and how to explore and analyse human activities on digital platforms from humanities subjects' perspective. Using technology as tools and method to look at human digital experiences is the staple objective of Digital Humanities. The fact that technology combines visual and textual materials makes it possible for the digital humanist scholar to collect and analyse digital data that pertains to new media scholarship. In our view, the multimodal field of Digital Humanities is to be considered the kernel of contemporary media scholarship in terms of invention, research, data processing and analysis, and above all, the investigation and archiving of human condition and practices that have altogether shifted online. The digitalization of human activities and the

unabated dissemination of social media networks make it imperative to reflect on new technology as tools, practices and cultures, hence the vital role of Digital Humanities.

2. Digital Leadership: New Demands and Challenges

The exponential changes brought about by new technology have impacted the concept and practices of leadership which is undergoing a digital transformation. Digital technology has generated a new type of leadership within the expansive digital landscape and digitalization context that calls for innovation, instant access to information, intelligent analysis of databases and decision making (Wang et al, 2022). The disruptive velocity of digital technology along with the digitalization of human economic and cultural artefacts have constructed a new digital ecosystem that entails a radically transformative and innovated vision of leadership. Digitalization is a « global megatrend », a universally interconnected or networked platform that trespasses geography and locality, a virtual space that requires ingenious skills, not only mere management in its traditional meaning. Beside risk-taking and promoting team-work and collaboration, digital leadership « includes continuous awareness of diversity and cultural differences, which must be actively managed » (Tagscherer and Carbon, 2023).

True digital leadership must not be conflated with mainstream definitions of leadership. Digital leadership is conducted in cyberspace which is a virtual and computer-mediated environment, an imagined and metaphorical landscape that hinges on what Howard Rheingold calls « electronic frontier », a fluid and constantly transformative topography that demands continuous innovation and not only digital savvy, but also digital dexterity and resourcefulness. New technologies have generated new challenges and stakes for the implementation of digital leadership. From a cyberculture studies perspective, a digital leader is expected to have adequate cognizance of the social and cultural ramifications of digital technology that provides the locus/venue for digital leadership. The increasing and global dissemination of digital tools have fostered a new awareness about digital technology as being a shaping cultural force that has tremendously affected the ways we perceive humanity and the world we live in. Digital technology is also a culture on its own, born and conducted in cyberspace, culminating to the all-inclusive concept of cyberculture. In his seminal definition, Pièrre Lévy sheds light on the technical and cultural scope of cyberculture which is « a set of material and intellectual techniques: practices, attitudes, modes of thinking and values that have developed alongside cyberspace. Understood as a synonym for 'network', cyberculture offers a new medium of communication » (Qtd. in Teixeira et al. 2017).

Lévy offers here a practical framework for the management of digital leadership which necessitates material and intellectual techniques that respond to the multimodal dimension of digital technology. From an academic prism, the digital world consists of a cluster of technologies, practices, modes of thoughts, cultures and habits lived and experienced in cyberspace. Our digital tools produce new forms of behaviours, models and paradigms that engage in social, political and psychological issues. In line with this argument, David Bell (2006) asserts that digital technology has constructed new « ways of life in cyberspace, or ways of life shaped by cyberspace, where cyberspace is a matrix of embedded practices and representations."

The normalization of digital tools and spaces has generated new lifestyles, paradigms, cultures and concepts that proliferate in cyberspace and provide the gist for academic investigation. As a matter of fact, digital leadership entails full awareness of both the virtual purview of digital technology and its multidisciplinariness to master the internal and external aspects of digitalisations (Tagscherer and Carbon, 2023). An inclusive insight of digital technology can only empower digital leadership and transcend the parochial perception of new technology as means of communication only. Technology is both the medium and the message as it was prophetically claimed by Marshall Mc Luhan as early as 1964. Our digital tools provide hubs and spaces for the new/networked society to which people have shifted their activities, where we live a second life, a "life on the screen", in Sherry Turkle's words (1995).

The massive and global shift to social media networks has drawn the interest of scholars and researchers to study digital leadership, especially during the period of Covid-19 pandemic. The lockdown has forced institutions and organizations of all kinds to move from face-to-face communication to digital spaces. This abrupt technological shift is best epitomized by Tigre et al (2022):

 "The Covid-19 pandemic has affected workers in a variety of ways. The lockdown has forced an abrupt change from face-to-face and analogue interactions to the digital realm…Teleworking, dispersed teams, and remote management were new experiences for many organizations… Some types of work that previously was uncommon or unaccepted in certain organizations (i.e. virtual work) became typical to workers around the globe…"

The virtual space since the Covid-19 pandemic has become the new niche or realm

for institutions, organizations and enterprises which has, subsequently raised questions on the vital importance of digital leadership in the management of digital spaces that have engendered new experiences and need new theoretical contributions (Tigre et al., 2022). Technology has altogether changed the concept of leadership in the sense that digital leaders must focus on innovative skills that adapt to the new context of digital technology. To achieve digital effectiveness is also conditioned by the digital leader's awareness that « the concept of e-leadership is changing, moving from an electronically-mediated form of intercommunication to a broader view of digital technologies... e-leadership is no longer about only electronic tools, but mainly involves leading effectively in a digital environment » (Tigre et al., 2022). In fact, digital leadership is much broader and more inclusive than e-leadership; as pointed out above, cyberculture scholarship/studies have shifted focus from electronic tools to the digital cultures churned out by these very tools. A comprehensive understanding of digital contexts would certainly contribute to effective and ingenious leadership in a world where digital technology is a driving force towards economic, academic, social and cultural developments.

The focus on digital rather than e-leadership is of paramount significance since it upgrades the position of the digital leader. Viewed from a humanistic lens, leadership is about the human agent with intrinsic natural potential for collaboration, goal-oriented spirit, inventiveness and the exertion of influence; digital leadership is a process that involves individuals and relationships (Ehlers, 2022) in the digital world. It is, therefore, incumbent on the diligent digital leader to recognize the noteworthiness of sustaining human relationships in the digital world which is a full-length virtual space. Conducting leadership on social media networks is more challenging than offline mainstream leadership, given the insubstantial and virtual aspect of digital technology. Online navigation is in essence a disembodied experience that involves the interaction between the human mind/cognition and the digital tool, producing the most popular concept of artificial intelligence. The process of digitalization has brought new demands for digital leadership and society as a whole. « In addition to technical skills as a basis for dealing with and understanding digital technologies, digitalization demands that relevant decision-makers have a digital mind-set so that they can recognize and correctly assess the opportunities and challenges associated with digitalization » (Hensellek, 2020). The quotation clearly makes it imperative for the digital leader to cultivate a digital mind-set to exert influence on the digital landscape and concomitantly consolidate human ties in an abstract and virtual space.

In the light of what has been advanced so far, we can unambiguously confirm that digital leadership is more about digital culture rather than technological skills per se. Today's society is undergoing profound technological transformations that have yielded new forms of communication, information resources and cultures that pertain to networked society where information technologies and culture interact. Uzelac (2008) stresses the significance of considering new technologies and culture as two closely related concepts. He opines that

> "Discussion about the information society is often centred on issues related to information and communication technologies (ICT) and Internet potentials, rather than on the broader changes to our cultural (and media) ecology that are happening in the new context that new technologies have brought to the fore. Culture and communication are two closely related concepts. Understanding the close relationship between digital technology and culture is a pre-requisite for reflecting on digital leadership in its broader sense. Digital technology shapes people's practices and experiences through its virtual spaces, platforms and applications, raising new questions and discussions about digital culture and society. Digital culture is permeating all facets of the new society, challenging old concepts and paradigms, and creating multiple transformations as a result of the 'seamless flow of information'" (Firican, 2023).

Viewed from this angle, digital transformation has fostered new visions, concepts and approaches that examine this constant flux of information and propound theoretical backdrop for the new/networked society. Digital culture calls for « developments and methodological innovation in digital media studies. It invites reflection on how culture unfolds through the use of digital technology, and how it conversely influences the development of technology itself » (Reichert, 2023). Digital tools unfold digital cultures which are symbolic of a momentous paradigm shift in the interaction between humans and digital technology which has become an absolute necessity (Leal-Rodriguez et al., 2023) for digital leadership.

3. Leadership in Post-Colonial Societies: The Digital Gap/Divide

Sound reflections on digital leadership take us to the issue of context from the point of view of Digital Humanities. As it has been explained above, digital leadership requires a commensurate understanding of digital technology both as skills and culture. However, a truly adequate command of digital culture raises the issue of context especially in post-colonial and developing societies where questions of digital infrastructure, equitable access to the internet and digital gap come to the fore. Adopting a postcolonial critical stance to the world's geopolitical map will clearly reveal epistemological and technological hierarchies that define the world's relations. Powerful nations control and monopolize technology, creating a new colonial geography that finds its locus in cyberspace where « digital territories » have been constructed by the founding fathers, Bill Gates and Steve Jobs, for

example (Jandric and Kuzmanic, 2014). The powerful flow of new technology dynamics and the accelerated human expansion towards these digital territories have certainly exacerbated the digital gap and problematized the issue of connectivity, generating a new form of imperialism according to Watters: « The content and form of 'connectivity' perpetuate imperialism and not only in Africa but in all of our lives. Imperialism at the level of infrastructure – not just cultural imperialism but technological imperialism. And as always, imperialism as ideology. Empire is not simply an endeavour of the nation-state – we have empire through technology (that's not new) and now, the technology industry as empire (Qtd. in Jandric and Kuzmanic, 2014).

Admittedly, power relations existing between powerful and powerless nations have intruded digital technology to perpetuate cultural, economic and political stratifications/hegemonies. Cyberspace is a symbolic stage/arena used by imperial powers to disseminate discourses of progress and control (Bhuiyan, 2008) and to consolidate their grip over digital space. Based on this argument, it is, therefore, mandatory for the so-called third world digital leaders to be fully initiated into the multidisciplinary field of Digital Humanities that opens up critical venues for analysing and debunking digital colonialism. As it has been pointed out earlier in this paper, technology is not to be limited to a set of techniques, codes and algorithms that produce textual and visual materials; as such, technology also produces ideological and discursive practices that serve to maintain Western « positional superiority » (Said, 1978) and evidently normalize the digital gap. In line with this argument, Heather McDonald (2019) believes that « Globally digital technologies and the Internet have been increasingly normalized seeing Western states dominate cyberspace and technological developments. As such, questions have arisen regarding the prominence of Western bias at both the developmental and implementational level leading to negative implications for non-Western users". Following this argument, the claim of cyberspace as being a global space needs to be critically contested and conscientiously revised as far as technologies and digital cultures spread from Western countries and imposed on third world countries (McDonald, 2019).

The concept of neo-colonialism has already permeated the digital world, producing new forms of hegemonic discourses and practices that endeavour to give legitimacy to Western technological leadership and freeze non-Western countries in a permanent state of epistemological lethargy. In the digital territory power relations are actively at work which perspicuously reflects Michel Foucault's power knowledge theory. The West owns technological knowledge that is monopolized to disseminate his supremacist colonial doctrine and perpetuate the digital divide. The production and distribution of digital spaces are analogous with Western digital imperialism and the taken-for-granted assumption of universalism. Electronic technologies produce spaces for the globalization of Western-centric values and paradigms that are presumably supposed to civilize the non-Western other through connectivity and allegedly equitable distribution of new technologies to narrow the digital gap between developed and developing countries. This claim echoes the rhetoric of the « civilizing mission » which was the bedrock of the colonial enterprise and one of the founding premises of post-colonial studies and its multiple ramifications.

Reflecting on postcolonial media theory, Maria Fernandes (1999) explains the shift of postcolonial studies to digital media : « Postcolonial studies have been concerned primarily with European imperialism and its effect : the construction of European master discourses, resistance, identity, representation, agency, gender, and migration...By contrast in the 1980s and 1990s, electronic media theory was primarily concerned with establishing the electronic as a valid and even dominant field of practice ». The electronic space has, indeed, become the vast territory for Western colonial and discursive practices which extend from geographical and political colonialism that precedes the digital age. It is highly imperative to adopt a critical stance *vis-à-vis* new technologies and not to be deluded by their utopic, universalistic and propagandistic presumptions.

Post-colonial societies are still under a massive digital onslaught exerted by Western netnography and its discursive digital leadership. Before the rise of the electronic revolution print travel narratives, ethnographic accounts, novels and postcards were the only practical mediums for Western colonial historiography about indigenous people. With the increasing velocity of digital technology, most colonial representations of formerly colonized geographies have been transferred to the new « electronic frontier » which allows for epistemological/digital disruptions: « Nowadays, millions of people get their information from digital media. Inundating digital media with negatively-biased cultural records exponentially multiplies opportunities for misrepresentation, naturally leading to pervasive misunderstanding and a breakdown in communication. A cascade of errors ensues, first leading to a devaluing of Black and indigenous lives, then to the defunding of African-American, Americana, Black, and ethnic studies... » (Ibekwe, 2022). The digital records are infused with ethnic, racial and geographical misrepresentations that hark back to colonial rhetoric and its ethnocentric lexical repertoire. Digital cartoons, videos, graphics, online publications and electronic journalism in the West, to cite but few, are all engaged in replicating the same atavistic power-based discourse that was initiated by their Western predecessors, and seeks to sustain Western technological superiority.

The ensuing implications of Western digital hegemony call for digital sovereignty for post-colonial societies. Post-colonial studies have opened multiple opportunities, narratives and spaces for subaltern voices to challenge Western ethnocentrism and epistemological hegemony, and, above all, to entertain an intellectual and academic sovereignty. The post-colonial period has

been characterized by discourses of resistance that strive to dismantle Western-centric cultural and technological leadership. It has been incumbent on the post-colonial writer and critic to transgress colonial borders and, foster spaces and platforms for counter-narratives and consolidate the post-colonial subject position. They have been engaged in rewriting their own history, languages, cultures and identities outside Western historicism and imperialism which « consolidated the mixtures of cultures and identities on a global scale (Said, 1993). In *Culture and Imperialism*, Edward Said stresses the need for people to make their own history and cultures: «…just as human beings make their own history, they also make their cultures and ethnic identities. No one can deny the persisting continuities of long traditions, sustained habitations, national languages, and cultural geographies, but there seems no reason except fear and prejudice to keep insisting on their separation and distinctiveness… » (Said, 1993). Cultural prejudices that infuse Western narratives have actually generated discourses of separation and binarism in terms of cultures, languages and geographies between the allegedly civilized West and the so-called backward other. Writing back to these colonial practices is presumably an ontological procedure that endeavours to shift the peripheral subject to a position of visibility, leadership and cultural sovereignty. A position that enables him to regain his agency and chart new spaces for cultural and technological leadership that transcends the presumably globalized, but Western-oriented spaces.

Viewed from this perspective, leadership in post-colonial societies entails the liberation of cultural geographies from the enforced colonial/hegemonic practices that have extended to digital spaces. Informed post-colonial scholars have disrupted the fundamental tenets of neo-colonialism that permeate Western narratives and seep through digital/'techno-culture'. The claim of global democratic Internet is now subjected to profound scrutiny and revision in the digital age targeting the issue of Internet sovereignty, digital divide and their political and cultural implications for post-colonial states. The debate on digital sovereignty imposes itself as a logical outcome of Western electronic hegemony which vests a certain legitimacy on post-colonial claim for digital sovereignty. David Fischer's argument on digital sovereignty, although tinged with an aura of scepticism, is worth noting: « the fact that digital sovereignty is simultaneously vague and elusive and at the same time charged with idealist imaginaries of political autonomy repurposes the theoretical term into a vessel that governments and other actors attempt to fill with meaning according to their needs » (Qtd. in Cagliardone, 2023). Although Fischer overlooks the implications of digital sovereignty for post-colonial nations, he draws attention to the theoretical scope of digital autonomy which evokes different meanings for people. Commenting on Fischer's argument, Cagliardone (2023) rightly observes that « [O]ne meaning, however, has been absent from the debate on digital sovereignty is its implications for post-colonial states. Or, put differently, what is the place of digital sovereignty in the long history of liberation from colonial rule and other forms of external interference in the politics and economics of post-colonial states? »

For this, digital leadership in post-colonial societies, and since the emergence of the field of Digital Humanities, has been seriously investigated. The politics, distribution and democratizing of knowledge, openness and Internet access, raise issues of digital inequalities and digital leadership that are related to post-colonial questions of race, gender, geography and nation (Risam, 2018). Post-colonial digital humanists seek to decentre digital territories where power relations intervene in the distribution of digital spaces to perpetuate the digital gap with and within post-colonial societies. Their aim is to contribute to the production of knowledge on digital platforms and to build up venues for the practice of digital leadership to resist « the colonialist dimensions of global organizations… by emphasizing the local practices… » (Risam, 2018). Post-colonial digital humanists attempt to develop an epistemological resistance to colonialism that has pervaded social networks which replicate social and technological inequalities that exist in the digital age and promote/celebrate the superiority of the West. The equitable spread and acquisition of knowledge on digital spaces is a human endeavour that surpasses questions of race, ethnicity and language which often come the fore in colonial discourse. New technologies have heralded a global and borderless virtual world that announces the end of geography and proclaims the democratizing and the free flow of information. The big promise of internet democracy is, however, a far-fetched commitment given the fact that colonial and Western hegemonic practices have migrated online, gaining a « digital afterlife ». Viewed from this lens, it is legitimate to question whether digital forms reproduce colonialist knowledge: « the reification of the canon in digital form is a function of not only *what's* there- what gets digitized and thus gets represented in the digital cultural record- but also *how* it's there- how those who have created this project have presented these subjects. Namely, are they presenting them in ways that rehearse colonialist knowledge production? Or are they recognizing the role of colonialism in actively constructing the digital cultural record, and quite directly, seeking to push back against it » (Risam, 2017).

From here comes the fundamental role of the post-colonial digital humanist. On the one hand, he is supposed to spot out colonialist digital record; on the other hand, he is expected to provide a counter narrative to push back against it. Contesting spaces of power in the digital world is sine qua non for the practice of digital leadership in post-colonial societies. As it has been argued, digital leadership in post-colonial societies does not rest only on the mastery and deft manipulation of technological skills, but also intellectual/critical capacity to decipher spaces of power, inequalities and hierarchies that breed colonial knowledge. If post-colonial writers were engaged in epistemological and cultural decolonization, post-colonial digital humanists are engaged in the same process, but in cyberspace.

5. Conclusion

The unprecedented rate of the technological revolution, especially at the turn of the third millennium, relocated leadership from the real to the virtual world. The digital turn ushers in a new conceptualization of leadership. While the latter demands new skills and strategies to fit in the requirements and challenges of a rapidly-changing reality, it by no means erodes the old bases of pre-digital skills. The penchant towards human relationships, networking, collaboration, creativity, and exertion of influence are indispensable to a better engagement with leadership in the virtual world. To master technology and digital navigation without boosting it by inherent human requirements of leadership is certainly a failure to live up to the complex transformations of the world and the emergent demands of digitalization. The disembodied nature of social media further problematizes and complicates the entire process of conducting 'fieldwork' as '*net*work' on leadership. The interconnectedness of the virtual and the real, the online and offline worlds requires a holistic and undivided approach to leadership.

More importantly, digital leadership and Digital Humanities raise serious questions about what we would like to call "the right to the digital city," borrowing Henry Lefebvre's "the right to the city." People outside of the West do not have equal and equitable access to the virtual world. Besides, the 'digital city' is premised on territorial injustice whereby the postcolonial condition reproduces the colonial relations of power based on hierarchy and the superiority of Western values, institutions, and grand-narratives. The West's monopoly of technology and structures of power passes off Western life-styles and values as universal and human, just as they undermine the principles of democracy and 'pluriversalism.' It is therefore imperative that the non-West rethink, subvert, and resist the foundations of Western Digital Humanities by shaking digital injustice and combatting the monolithic and hegemonic reproduction of imperial, digital and territorial injustice. Digital Humanities is not a mere technological ideology-free human activity; it is a carrier of Western 'universal' 'humanist' discourses. The concept of leadership should equally be redefined and revisited to incorporate non-Western cultural and symbolic significations outside of the exclusive trajectories of Western history and reality. Cyberspace needs to be decolonized and de-Westernized; the non-West should claim its place and position in a world of contested and negotiated forms of presence and absence, visibility and invisibility, agency and subordination.

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