Title: Reading Response 2

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About: This piece is a discussion post of 640 words that looks at “Reprogramming the Invisible” by Erin Rose Glass.

In "Reprogramming the Invisible", Erin Rose Glass talks about the different ways in which seemingly innocuous digital platforms like social media and ed-tech are structuring epistemologies of knowledge through their manipulation of digital platforms for user-data driven capitalistic gain. In keeping the processes of development of these digital internet-based platforms away from general public consciousness, these corporations are keeping the users unaware of the different risks to data-privacy they are signing up for, as well as the knowledge of how these systems work and to what goal, so as to keep them unaware of the hierarchical affective relationality that we truly have with these platforms.

The text looks into the university's unique position in the digital world. Firstly the University in context of digital platforms, can serve as a space where the indoctrination of students into a particular platform that they may possibly use throughout the rest of their career takes place through corporation-state coalitions where big tech companies like google and Microsoft are given free rein to incorporate within the university their entire platform, making the methods of sharing of digital information, methods of pedagogy, and writing and research practices dependent on their particular digital platform, making themselves privy to all the information shared and at the same time shaping an entire institution's methodological approach towards academics, knowledge formation and sharing. Glass analyzes these as methods of oppression along the lines of Paulo Freire's understanding of oppression as a way for the ruling class to keep from the general public the knowledge of the methods and forms of subjugation and domination that they are subject to, so as they can never comprehend the ways in which the structures (political, economic, educational, etc.) they are subjected to, work and to what purpose. This reminds me of the conversation in class about how several higher educational institutions including UNL are pushing specific cloud storage platforms like OneDrive, without making those most affected by it aware of the "surveillance capitalism" business model most of these platforms operate according to. It is akin to colonial methods of information and knowledge gathering about people and communities, so as to know ways to manipulate the social practices for their colonial benefits, without considering either the need for consent or spreading awareness among the people and the effect it has on the same people or communities they are using as sources of information.

The text theorizes that the surveillance capitalists bank on the unawareness of the users so as to carry forward their predatory capitalistic schemes with minimum resistance, which the author tries to critique and analyze by talking about and breaking down 3 myths, that inform academic apathy towards the consequences of passive acceptance of digital platforms, without knowing about the inner workings of said platform. These myths are; the idea that there is nothing to worry about from the unsupervised adaption of digital platforms into all aspects of academics, the idea that the politico-economic agenda that most of these tech companies work under is irrelevant to one's academic vocation, and that most academics are incapable of responding these issues. All these myths work as ways to stigmatize digital awareness and democracy as something unimportant, irrelevant or unchangeable with no alternatives. The text looks at the University also as a potential space for fostering digital awareness among budding academics and scholars, with the aim of democratizing the digital environment that we are all part of. In informing academics and making them aware of the processes we are subjected to while using digital platforms, the need for democratization of digital spaces, and regulation of the policies, design and functionality implemented by these platforms can be made apparent, while at the same time it may incentivize young scholars and academics to form their own platforms and pursue democratic community and user oriented platforms as the way forward.