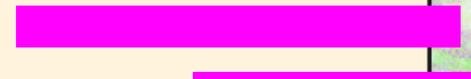


Decentralization: Sovereignty, Power, and Critical Practice in Dweb

Ayana Zaire Cotton
ngoc trieu



WELCOME
TO
PREP
WORK

BY
JONATHAN
HARVEY

AGENDA

5
min

n

10:30 - 10:45 PST	Introduction: Co-Defining Terms & Expectation Setting
10:45 - 11:15 PST	Background: Decolonial Positionality & Praxis
11:15 - 11:20 PST	Present: The Toolkit for Cooperative, Collective and Collaborative Cultural Work
11:20 - 11:30 PST	BREAK
11:30 - 11:35 PST	Exercise Introduction: Collective Compass for Decolonial Decentralization
11:35 - 12:10 PST	Exercise Round 1: Ground Work
12:10 - 12:45 PST	Review: Collective Compass for Decolonial Decentralization
12:45 - 1:00 PST	Closing Questions & Resources

**CLASS
ENGAGEMENT
REMINDER**

n



Ask clarifying questions at any time; save open questions for the discussions



Write your opinion freely on silent individual activities



Mute yourself during silent individual actions; and in general if your background is noisy



Write in the chat when you take a break (no need to announce it)



Say your opinion freely in group activities but be mindful of how much space you are taking



Embrace awkward silence



Prioritize the comfort and safety of BIPOC students



We follow the Gray Area's Code of Conduct

We also
add stick
feel t
oppo
addition
and

Honoring Your Embodied Wisdom

THE
EXPERIMENT

A

This entire workshop will happen in Miro. Acknowledging you are not an empty vessel to dump information into, we invite you to add your own reflections anywhere you see an empty sticky. Allow us to learn alongside you and from you!



COLLECTIVE DEFINITIONS

10 min

n A

What does [...] mean to you?

Collectively define a few popular terms we'll be using in this session so we can sync up on what we mean when we say certain words. We'll set a 5 min. timer to warm up by co-defining these terms!

NOTE OF CONTRADICTION:

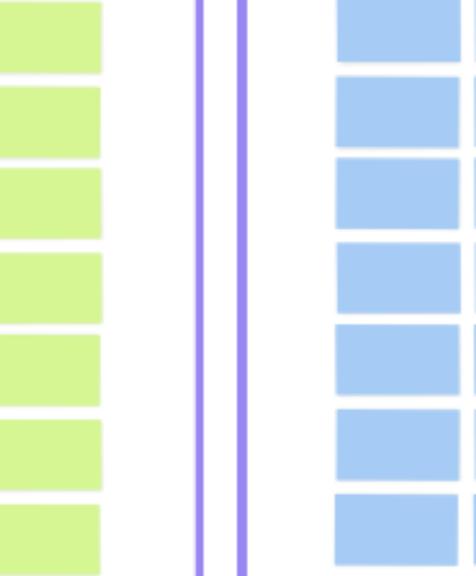
We understand language can be a technology of colonization (categorization, taxonomy, definition, etc). With that said, be as expansive as you wish in your reflective "definitions".

DECENTRALIZATION

Not a monopoly of companies	Distributing data through a p2p network instead of having larger single databases	Distribution of ownership	Decentralized decision-making
A redistribution of power on the Internet	Community	A self-organized order of decentralized entities that are interconnected through their own different strengths and diversity.	Centers around the environment and human needs
Many nodes not being processed in a center processor.	de-centralize removing itself from centralization	Participation vs consumption	
co-creation	Consensus verification	clearly defined purpose	
Redistribution of power / ownership	true peer to peer networks	Fractal	accurate info and archive
In broad terms it means letting go	resistance to status quo		

1 DECOLONIZATION

What does DECOLONIZATION mean to you?



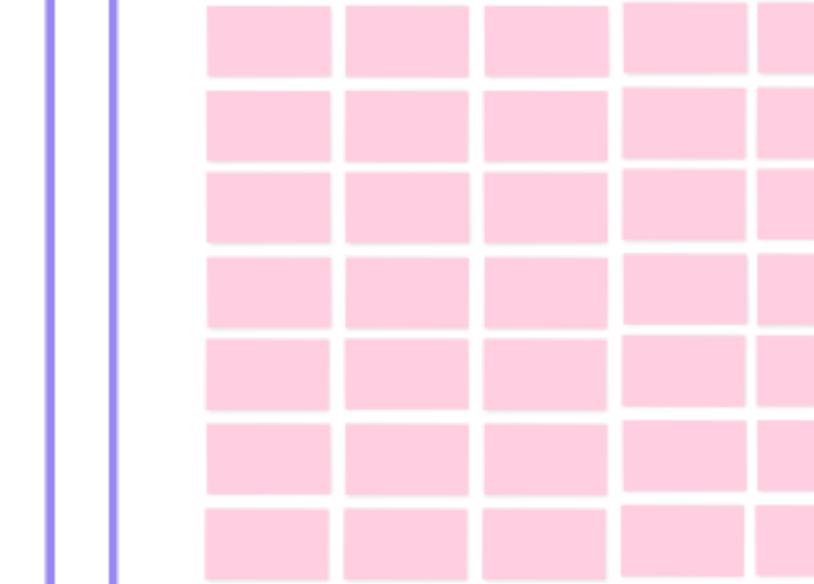
2 SOVEREIGNTY

When you think about SOVEREIGNTY, what comes to mind?



3 POWER

In your opinion, what is POWER?



**SETTING THE
STAGE**

5
min

WHAT WE WILL BE DOING

n



WHAT WE WILL NOT BE DOING

A



GOAL: Collectively produce a compass for navigating how to create and steward decolonial, decentralized projects and technologies.



"Hold tight, the way to go mad without losing your mind is sometimes unruly. It might send you staggering across asylum hallways, heckled by disembodied voices—or shimmying over spotlit stages, greeted by loving applause. It might find you freewheeling through fever dreams, then marching toward freedom dreams, then scrambling from sleep, with blood and stars in your eyes, the whole world a waking dream."

— La Marr Jurelle Bruce, [How to Go Mad without Losing Your Mind: Madness and Black Radical Creativity](#) (2021), "Chapter 1: Mad Is A Place" pg. 1

THE
ECONOMIC
POLITICAL
WEEKLY

APRIL
1990

APRIL
1990

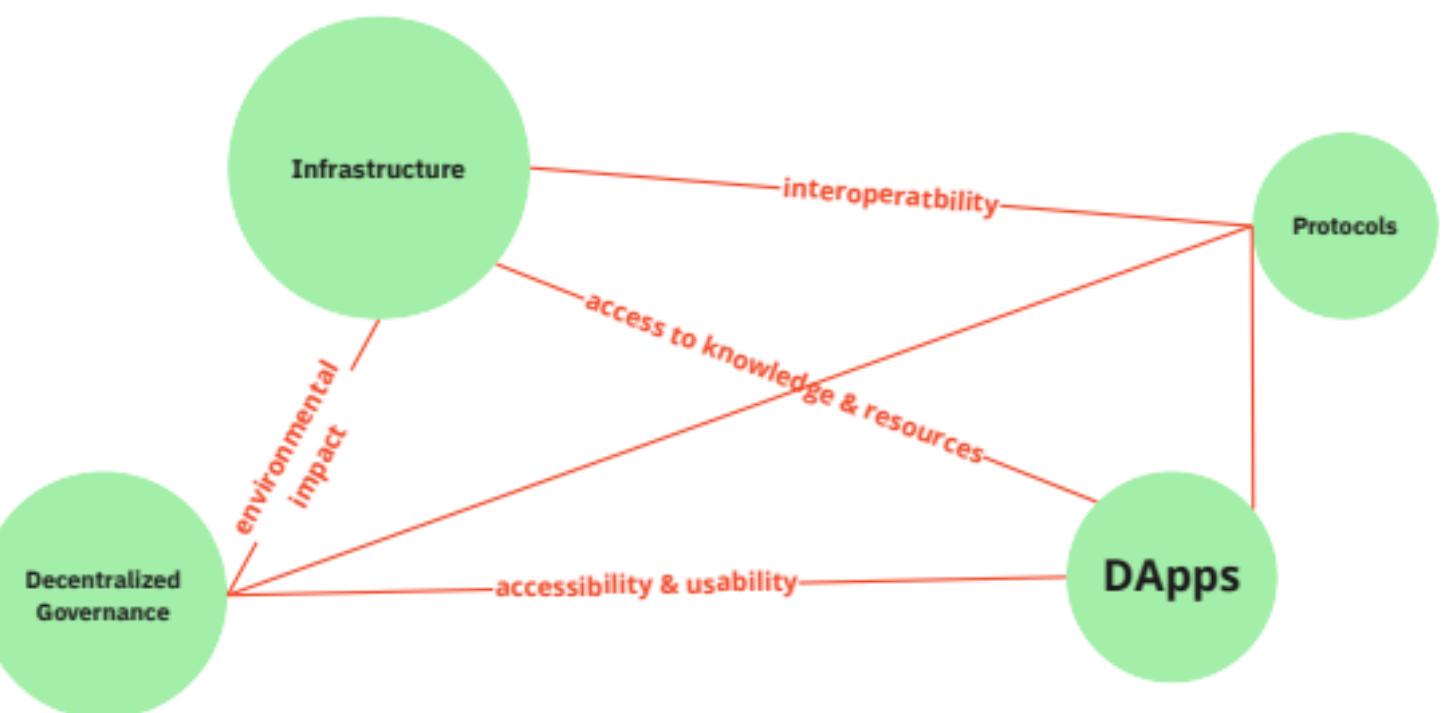


PROMISES OF DWEB

What are the promises of DWeb? How do we hold ourselves accountable to them? DWeb aspires to the aesthetics of the commons and decolonial distribution of power and sovereignty. It's up to us to steward these possibilities. But how?



CHALLENGES:





POSITIONALITY

A process of obtaining an understanding of where you have come from, your (un)civilised history & cultural background, and where you are now in order to recognise the power you have, and how you can shift this power as an agent of change.

THE DECOLONIAL APPROACH

n

5
min

NGOC'S POSITIONALITY



Vietnamese
Design
Researcher



decolonial thinking

Relocating Vietnamese Design History



The Trung sisters ride elephants into battle, folk painting. Date & artist unknown.



Hanoi exposition, Clémentine Hélène Dufau (French, 1869–1937)

"To dispel the myth that there are global needs but only one (diverse) centre where knowledge is produced to solve the problem of everybody, and to contribute to breaking the Western code, I began to argue [...] that the anchor of decolonial epistemologies shall be 'I am where I think'."
— Walter D. Mignolo

delinking



"There is no single history, there is no single Vietnam"

decolonial being



Citizen soldiers during the Kháng chiến chống Mỹ (lit. 'Resistance War against America'). Photo: Mâu Hoàng Thiết, 1967

Hanoi-Tràng Tiền Street, Opera House.
Photo: Stokvis, A. 1979

1000+ years of colonial history

SAVE
INTERNET
FREEDOM
TECH

decolonial doing

Contributing to the Free & Open Source Software and Decentralized Web ecosystem

Community Organizer

DWeb Fellows gathering at DWeb Camp.
Photo: Brad Shirakawa, 2023





BUILDING & USING CRITICAL TOOLS & PLATFORMS

Decentralized Data Preservation

Mapen (Digital Democracy)

An easy-to-use FOSS set of tools for collecting and mapping information. Mapen is resilient during censorship, blackout, and with limited or no connectivity, as data can be shared offline between devices. The local-first database does not require any setup and is embedded in mobile and desktop apps.

OFFLINE FIRST | PEER-TO-PEER | FOSS
PRIVACY & SECURITY | DATA SOVEREIGNTY

Learn more: [Mapen](#)

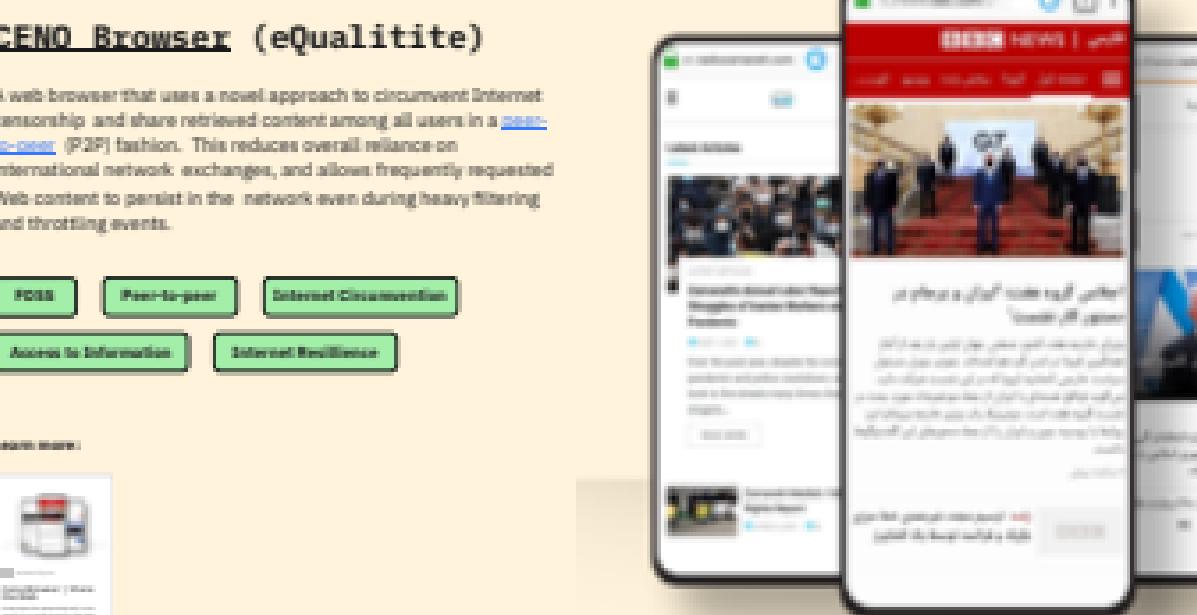


Photo credit: Digital Democracy

Internet Freedom

Usable Security & Knowledge Sharing

CEND Browser (eQualit.ie)

A web browser that uses a novel approach to circumvent Internet censorship and share retrieved content among all users in a peer-to-peer (P2P) fashion. This reduces overall reliance on international network exchanges, and allows frequently requested Web content to persist in the network even during heavy filtering and throttling events.

DECENTRALIZED WEB | PEER-TO-PEER | INTERNET CIRCUMVENTION
ACCESS TO INFORMATION | INTERNET RESILIENCE

Learn more: [CEND Browser](#)

Decent Patterns

A library of tried-and-tested [design patterns](#), along with a glossary of terms and a [research report](#) detailing the needs and gaps we see in the current ecosystem.

DECENTRALIZED WEB | PEER-TO-PEER | INTERNET CIRCUMVENTION
ACCESS TO INFORMATION | INTERNET RESILIENCE

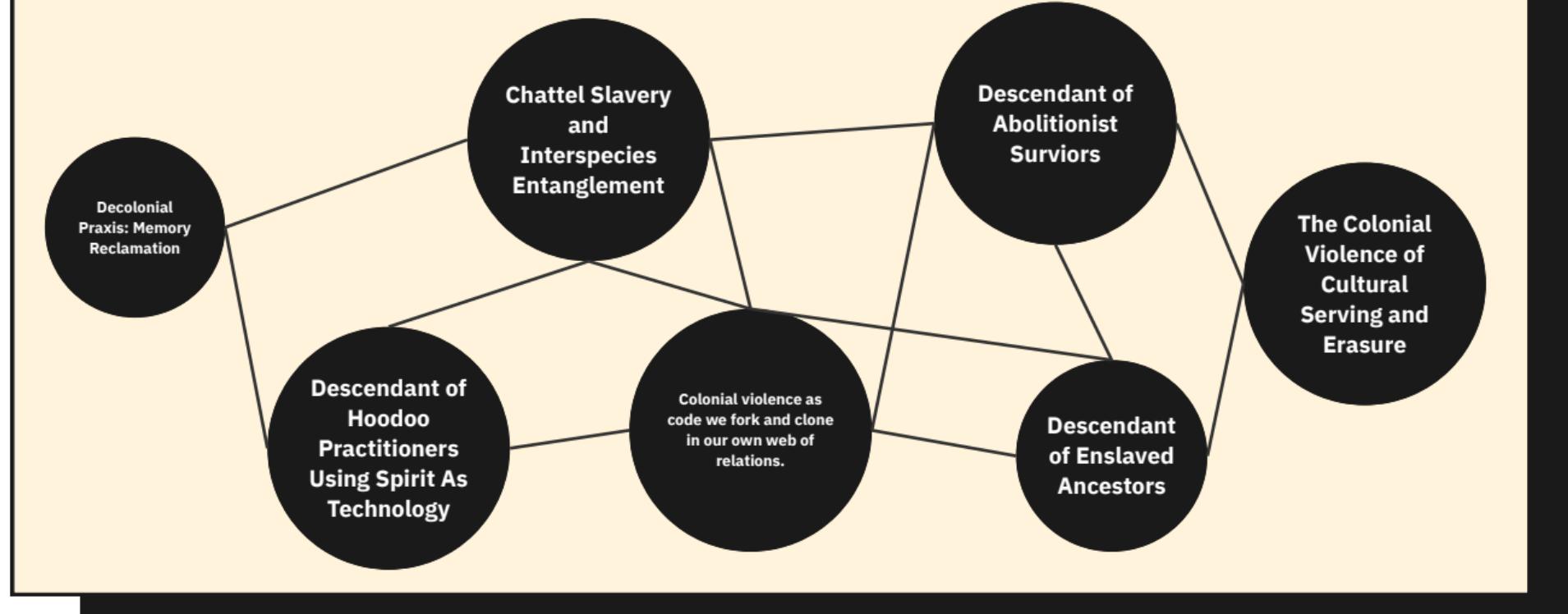
Learn more: [Decent Patterns](#)

10
min

THE DECOLONIAL APPROACH

A

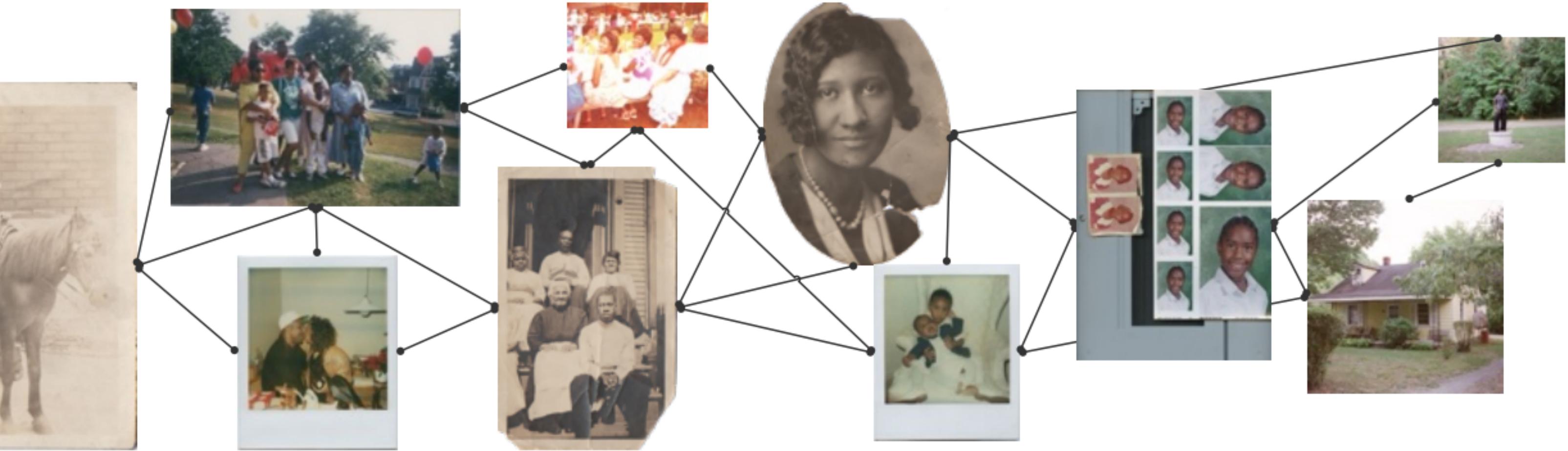
AYANA'S POSITIONALITY



ANOTHER KIND OF NETWORK INFRASTRUCTURE

THE WEB OF RELATION AND BELONGING

Databases of memory,
proof of all that was
lost. Proof not all
was forgotten. We are
all networked nodes in
the web of ancestry
and ecology.

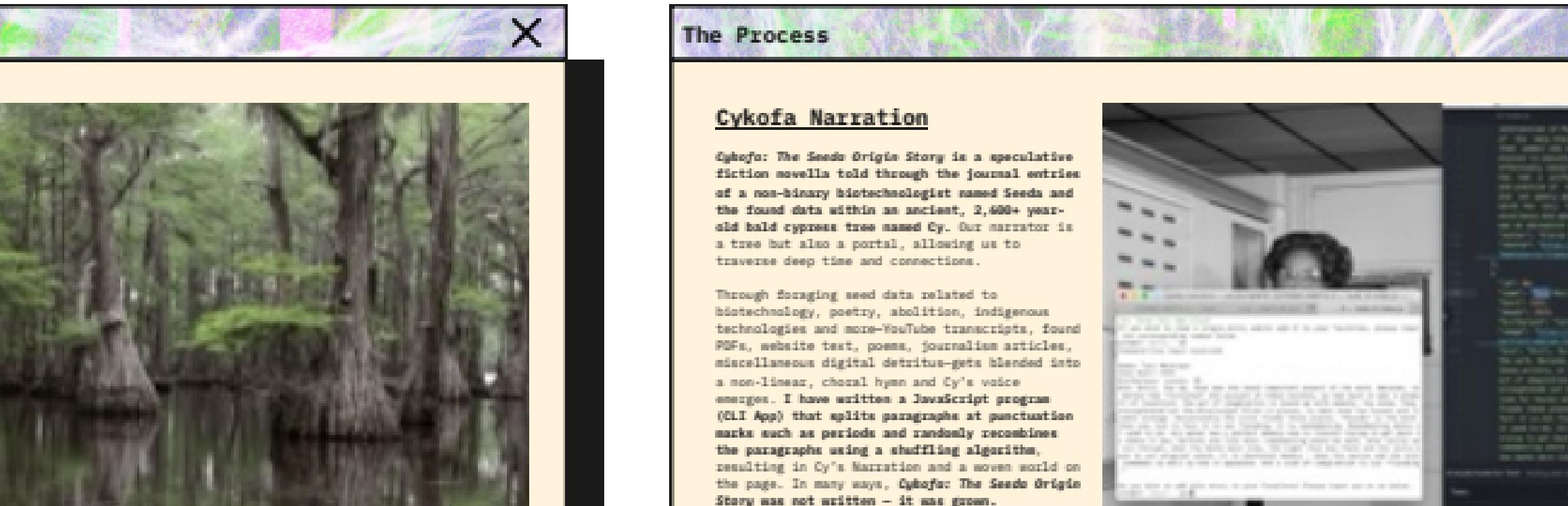


CYKOFA: THE SEEDA ORIGIN STORY

**CRITICAL
PRACTICE**

Told through the journal entries of a non-binary biotechnologist named Seeda and the found data within an ancient, 2,600+ year-old bald cypress tree named Cy.

The Story

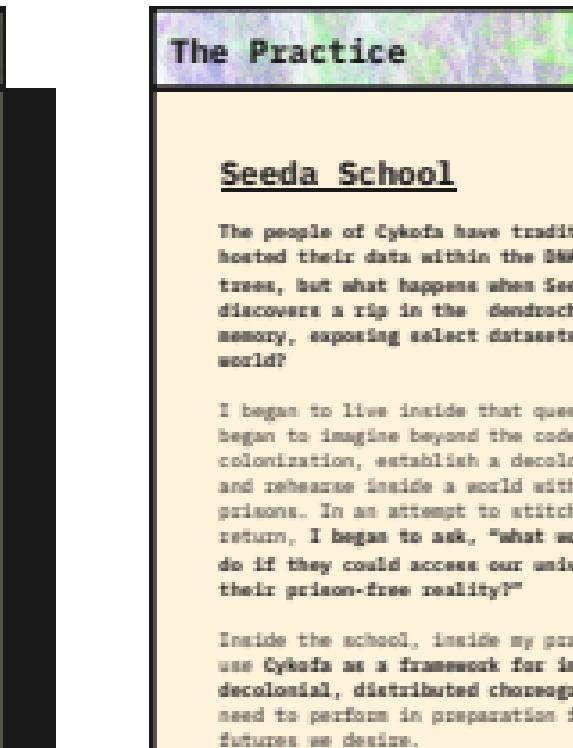


Where is Cykofa?

We know this place as the North Carolina Black River, they know it as Cykofa. A parallel universe suspended among past and future - where corpuses are cryptography keys, data farms are data forests, cotton is encoded with freedom dreams, the weaving loom is a computer, a cloth is a document, and chain link fencing from demolished prisons are used as architectural membranes moves with plant life. In Cykofa the trees are networked and have learned how to communicate with Cykadians using the data they have encoded in the tree's DNA and tree ring memory.

Photo credit: © Kathryn E./Getty Images

The Practice



Cykofa Narration

Seeda School

Cykofa: The Seeda Origin Story is a speculative fiction novella told through the journal entries of a non-binary biotechnologist named Seeda and the found data within an ancient, 2,600+ year-old bald cypress tree named Cy. Our narrator is a tree but also a portal, allowing us to traverse deep time and connections.

I began to live inside that question as I began to imagine beyond the codes of biotechnology, poetry, abolition, indigenous technologies and more—YouTube transcripts, found PDFs, website text, poems, journalism articles, miscellaneous digital detritus—gets blended into a non-linear, choral hymn and Cy's voice emerges. I have written a JavaScript program (CLI App) that splits paragraphs at punctuation marks such as periods and randomly recombines the paragraphs using a shuffling algorithm, resulting in Cy's narration and a screen world on the page. In many ways, Cykofa: The Seeda Origin Story was not written – it was grown.

The Practice



A skill building platform for learning how to worldbuild through a black feminist lens.

COMPTACOS

FOR

EDUCATION

RESEARCH

TECHNOLOGY

n

OUR GOAL: AN OVERVIEW

5 min

CO-CREATE A COMPASS FOR DECOLONIAL PRACTICE

1

OUR GOAL

To develop a Collective Compass for Decolonial DWeb Stewardship.

2

OUR WHY

Decentralization is not neutral and can be encoded with the same value systems of colonization.

3

OUR TOOLS

Cykofoa: The Seeda Origin Story, Toolkit for Cooperative, Collective, Collaborative Cultural Work..and our decolonial imagination/memory!

4

OUR PROCESS

We're going collectively develop the compass in breakout rooms using a combination of our tools.

But first quick overview of the tools



A FRAMEWORK FOR DECOLONIAL DECENTRALIZATION

A

OUR TOOLS: AN OVERVIEW

How will we use Cykofa as a framework for decolonial worldbuilding through the aesthetic of decentralization?

Imagine Cykofa is a landscape as a social network with the following features:

A weaving loom is a computer.
There are no screens.

Cloth is a document/interface.

DNA sequencing is a somatic technology

A Cykofian is referred to as a "node".
There are no humans.

Dance is how Cykofians communicate
with other nodes and plant life.

This networked social landscape asks us to consider how we might practice stewardship and care if the land and the nodes that inhabit it are hosting centuries worth of data and collective memory.

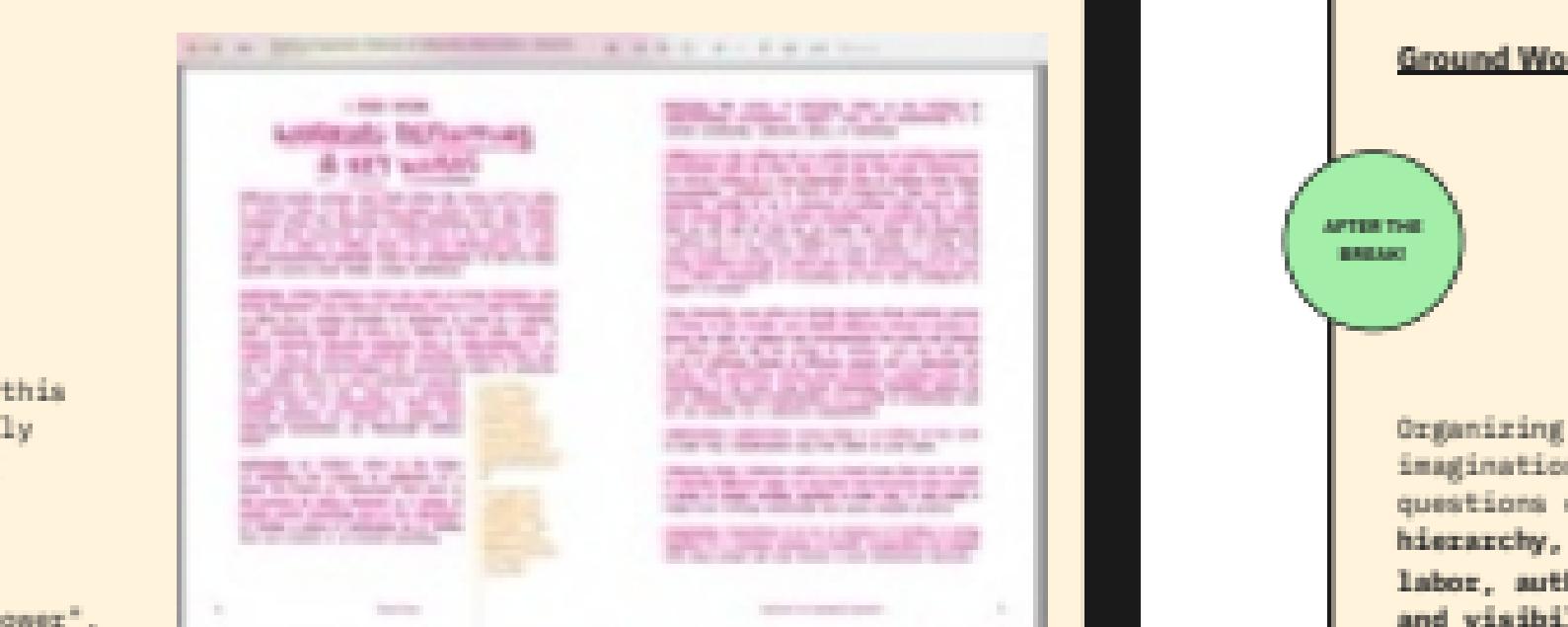
TOOLKIT FOR COOPERATIVE, COLLECTIVE & COLLABORATIVE CULTURAL WORK

OUR TOOLS: AN OVERVIEW

Cykofo is a spacious creative prompt so let's use the toolkit to provide supportive structures! We will use the questions provided in this toolkit to facilitate our discussion, giving shape to our compass.

Introduction

Who created this Toolkit?

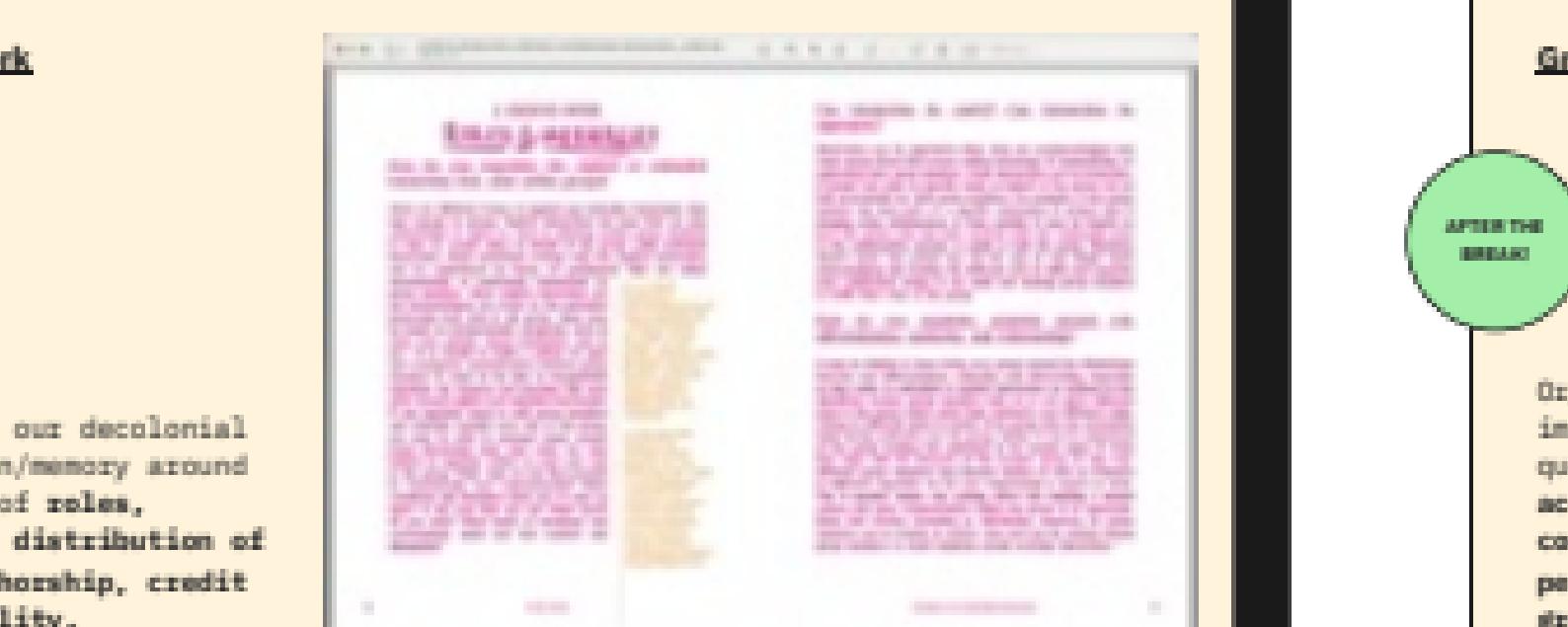


The cover page features the title "Toolkit for Cooperative, Collective, & Collaborative Cultural Work" in large, bold, pink font. Below the title, there is a short paragraph about the toolkit's purpose and creators, followed by the text "Design: Rosemarie Pérez" and "Source: Rosemarie Pérez".

The main content area contains a large green circle labeled "ARTE NOUVEAU" and a text box that reads: "We've already done this part! We collectively defined our working definitions for 'decentralization', 'hierarchy', 'distribution of labor', 'authorship', 'credit' and 'visibility'." Below this text is another "Design: Rosemarie Pérez" and "Source: Rosemarie Pérez" attribution.

Introduction

Prep Work

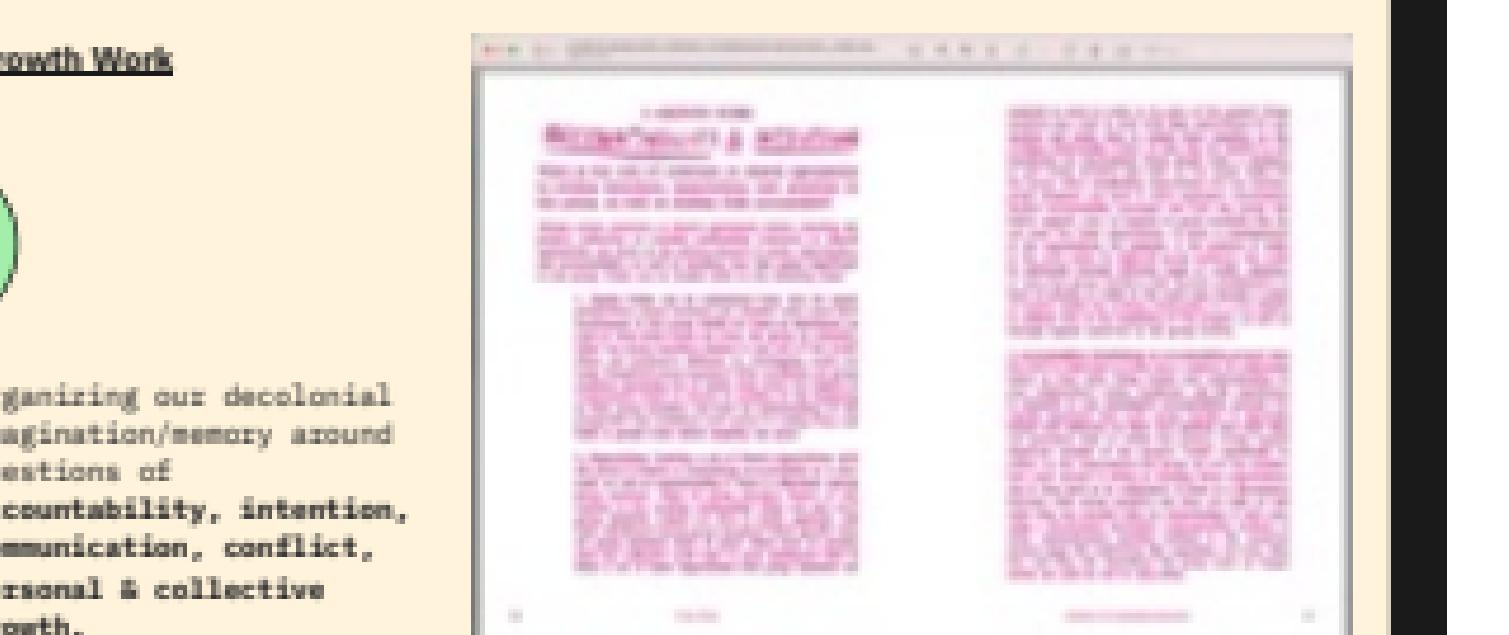


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The main content area contains a large green circle labeled "ARTE NOUVEAU" and a text box that reads: "Organizing our decolonial imagination/memory around questions of roles, accountability, intention, communication, conflict, personal & collective sovereignty" and "power". Below this text is another "Design: Rosemarie Pérez" and "Source: Rosemarie Pérez" attribution.

Introduction

Growth Work



The cover page features the title "Toolkit for Cooperative, Collective, & Collaborative Cultural Work" in large, bold, pink font. Below the title, there is a short paragraph about the toolkit's purpose and creators, followed by the text "Design: Rosemarie Pérez" and "Source: Rosemarie Pérez".

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APPENDIX

CO-IMAGINE EXERCISE

A n
DESIGNING
YOUR
DECOLONIAL
PROJECTS

Collectively
develop a compass
for seeding and
stewarding for
decolonial
decentralization
projects.

We will use the parallel
universe of Cykofa as a
decolonial framework for
collectively imagining
guidelines for creating
and stewarding
decentralized projects
and technologies.

5
min

GOALS

1

DISCUSS

The goal of the discussion exercise is to bring up questions of relation, power, sovereignty, ownership and labor. Consider how data and land/community stewardship are two sides of the same coin.

2

REFLECT

Reflect on your positionality and relationship to decolonial practice through speculative decentralization rooted in care instead of capital.

3

SYNTHESIZE

To rehearse the choreographies of being an "unincorporated collective", actively practicing building consensus, asking difficult questions and engaging in generative conflict (disagreeing without violence).

"How can we apply collective grief and healing practices toward technology to "bridge the bitsphere and biosphere", as Ursula M. Franklin urges? How can we learn from queer, migrant, crip, and anti-colonial solidarity movements across translocal sites of struggle to re-imagine the networked infrastructures we deserve?"

— Alice Yuan Zhang, [Decomodifying Infrastructure](#)

IMAGINE: WE JUST RECEIVED A DISPATCH FROM SEEDA

A

Welcome to the world of Cykofa, an interspecies social network. Join us in embodying this ancient future. This is your induction ceremony into the Memory Stewardship Guild.

WELCOME TO THE WORLD OF CYKOFIA!

MEET YOUR COMMUNITY

Meet our community, the concept of "human" as separate from "nature" doesn't exist here. We refer to each other as "nodes", sharing an ecological network with rivers, trees, insects and creatures as community members.

LEARN ABOUT YOUR CULTURE

Learn about our culture, in this somatic social network there are no police, prisons, or hardware made with coltan. Our bodies are interfaces and we communicate through movement, touch, intuition and textiles.

HERE'S YOUR MISSION

Here's your mission as nodes of the Memory Stewardship Guild. We had a few scenarios arise in Cykofa and we need your input! As you'll find out, Cykofa is not a utopia. As newly inducted members of the Memory Stewardship Guild, we need you collectively create a compass to help us chart a way forward.

INSTRUCTIONS

n

In 6 breakout groups of 4-6 participants, we will:

GROUND WORK

BREAKOUT ROOM 1

ROLES & HIERARCHY

BREAKOUT ROOM 2

DISTRIBUTION OF LABOR

BREAKOUT ROOM 3

AUTHORSHIP, CREDIT & VISIBILITY

GROWTH WORK

BREAKOUT ROOM 4

ACCOUNTABILITY & INTENTION

BREAKOUT ROOM 5

COMMUNICATION & CONFLICT

BREAKOUT ROOM 6

PERSONAL & COLLECTIVE GROWTH

Any clarifying questions?

We're going to give ourselves permission to embrace illegibility. This compass can be poetic!

GROUNDWORK

1 DISCUSS: GROUND WORK

20 min

Decide on the following roles: Note taker (in the space for reflection), facilitator and time keeper.

Now dig into the scenario for your respective breakout room! As a Cykofian node in the Memory Stewardship Guild, what would you do? Use the questions to facilitate your discussion.

2 REFLECT: GROUND WORK NOTES

Use this reflection space to create word maps, connections or leave open questions inspired by the discussion.

BREAKOUT ROOM 1: ROLES & HIERARCHY

SCENARIO: In Cykofa, there is a data composting ritual that happens weekly. Traditionally, the elders decide what gets kept and what gets forgotten.

There is a small cluster of **anonymous dissenting nodes** that are secretly archiving data the elders deemed too dangerous to keep.

How might we honor the embodied wisdom of our youngest and oldest generations? What should happen with the dangerous/"dirty data"? We can't keep everything, **who decides what's forgotten?**

Seeds

1. How do you negotiate anxieties around role differentiation, authority and followership?
2. Can hierarchies be useful? Can hierarchies be oppressive?
3. How do you negotiate anxieties around role differentiation, authority and followership?



BREAKOUT ROOM 2: DISTRIBUTION OF LABOR

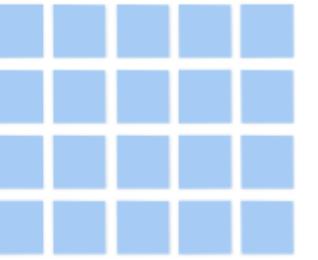
SCENARIO: In Cykofa, the **Archivist Guild** spins data encoded plant fibers into thread then uses the weaving loom computers to create cloth archiving the most significant cultural memories of the node network. This is a tremendous amount of physical labor, but it is essential labor. The guild is a cluster of nodes with various abilities, some are able-bodied, chronically ill, neurodiverse, etc.

Most nodes love foraging for the plants while fewer enjoy coding the cloth at the weaving loom.

How should the **Archivist Guild** approach distribution of labor with care?

Seeds

1. How can you distribute the workload through the lens of equity, considering how power and privilege play out in the working dynamics?
2. How do you create a dynamic where individuals can work through multiple roles and/or choose the role they want to play?
3. How do you navigate uneven distribution of labor?
4. How do you keep up with the administrative aspects of the work?



BREAKOUT ROOM 3: AUTHORSHIP, CREDIT & VISIBILITY

1. How do you negotiate how credit, recognition, and visibility are distributed internally and externally?

2. Who owns a collective project? When is it okay for members of the group to use collective work to further personal career goals through applications, public interviews, social capital, or other means?

3. What do you do if you lose yourself or your identity in the collective work or collective identity?



SYNTHESIZE

10 min

SYNTHESIZE: GROUND WORK

Create as many guidelines as you can, in 10mins, for de-colonial DWeb Stewardship based on the discussion questions and reflections of your breakout room. Start each guideline declaration with "We".

TIP: Imagine seeding your guidelines with this sentence structure, "As networked nodes of Cykofa we..."

BREAKOUT ROOM 1: ROLES & HIERARCHY



BREAKOUT ROOM 2: DISTRIBUTION OF LABOR



BREAKOUT ROOM 3: AUTHORSHIP, CREDIT & VISIBILITY



38 min

GROWTH WORK

1 DISCUSS: GROWTH WORK

Decide on the following roles: Note taker (in the space for reflection), facilitator and time keeper.

Now dig into the scenario for your respective breakout room! As a Cykofian node in the Memory Stewardship Guild, what would you do?

Use the questions to facilitate your discussion.

BREAKOUT ROOM 4: ACCOUNTABILITY & INTENTION

SCENARIO: In Cykofa, the Governance Guild organizes a consensus rituals around the seasonal solstices and equinoxes which take place at the Black River. Although the nodes are connected, presence is required to contribute to the evolving Community Agreements.

How should we gather consensus when the entire community is unable to gather at the same time? How do we hold nodes accountable to contracts they didn't agree to?

Seeds

1. What is the role of contracts or shared agreements in setting intentions, expectations, and priorities in the group, as well as holding folks accountable to them?
2. How do you negate the negative association with contracts?



BREAKOUT ROOM 5: COMMUNICATION & CONFLICT

SCENARIO: In Cykofa, the longest standing agreement is the "Consent Agreement". There is an individual or cluster of nodes (we're unsure), hacking into private memories of our node network without the consent of the individual nodes.

How should we approach communication & conflict in a world without police and prisons? The Governance Guild and elder nodes are at a stalemate. What would the Memory Stewardship Guild do?

Seeds

1. How can you facilitate and contribute to meaningful conversations within the group, especially when disagreements or interpersonal issues arise?
2. What do you do if you observe toxic behavior? How do you know when to call someone out and when to call someone in?
3. Can you encourage the removal of people who may be toxic to the group or project?
4. Sometimes it's harder to hold close friends accountable than people you only have professional relationships with. How do you address this with care?
5. How do you navigate unwanted romantic advances with people you work with, especially if you don't want to end the working relationship?
6. .



2 REFLECT: GROWTH WORK NOTES

Individually (or collectively) reflect on the brainstrom/discussion and reflect on the key themes that arose.

BREAKOUT ROOM 6: PERSONAL & COLLECTIVE GROWTH

SCENARIO: In Cykofa, the Poetry Guild is the most cherished, although nodes are careful not to admit it in order to be mindful of seeding hierarchy amongst the guilds. The Poetry Guild are stewards of the beauty and evolving choreographic codes that unlock new ways of communicating ideas, desire and grief. There is a clearing in the south of the forest that has traditionally been a dance floor for incubating new language.

There is one node petitioning for more space. Their argument: They have had the highest adoption rate of new moves and communication choreography promoting positive change in recent history, contributing to the increasing popularity and adoration of the Poetry Guild.

How should we nurture the growth of each individual node without infringing on the resources of the collective network of nodes?

Seeds

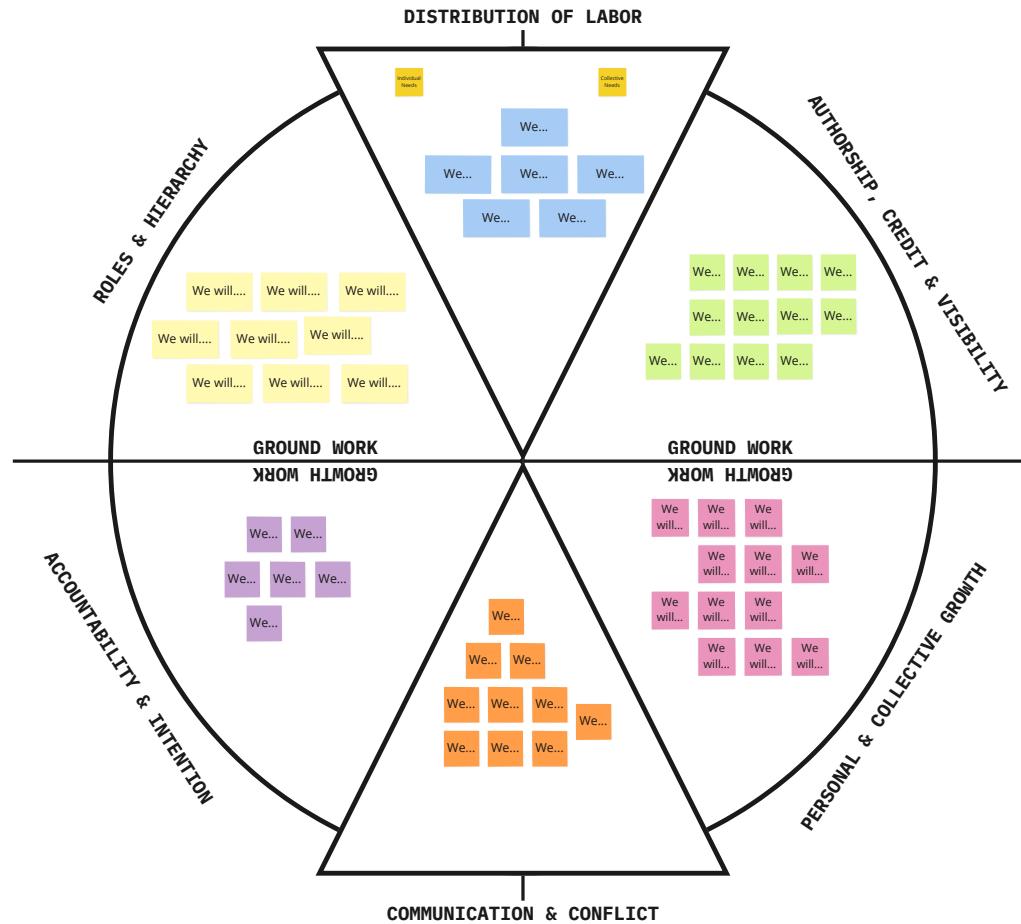
1. How do you build a shared culture in the group?
2. How does the group treat the personal growth of its members?
3. How do you balance life and work in the group?
4. How do you invite sustained participation from new collaborations or group members?
5. .





**LET'S SHARE
CO-CREATED
GUIDELINES!**

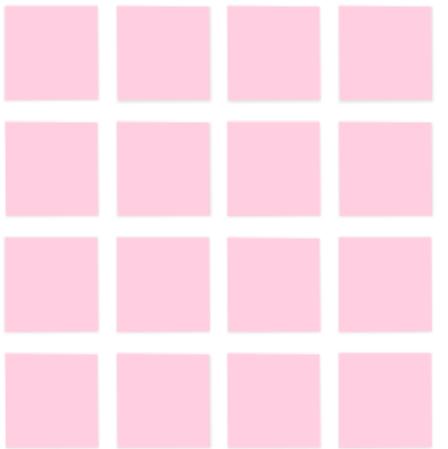
Choose someone from your breakout room to read the scenario and reflect on the discussion and co-created guidelines.



COLLECTIVE COMPASS FOR DECOLONIAL DWEB STEWARDSHIP

LOGO

QUESTIONS?



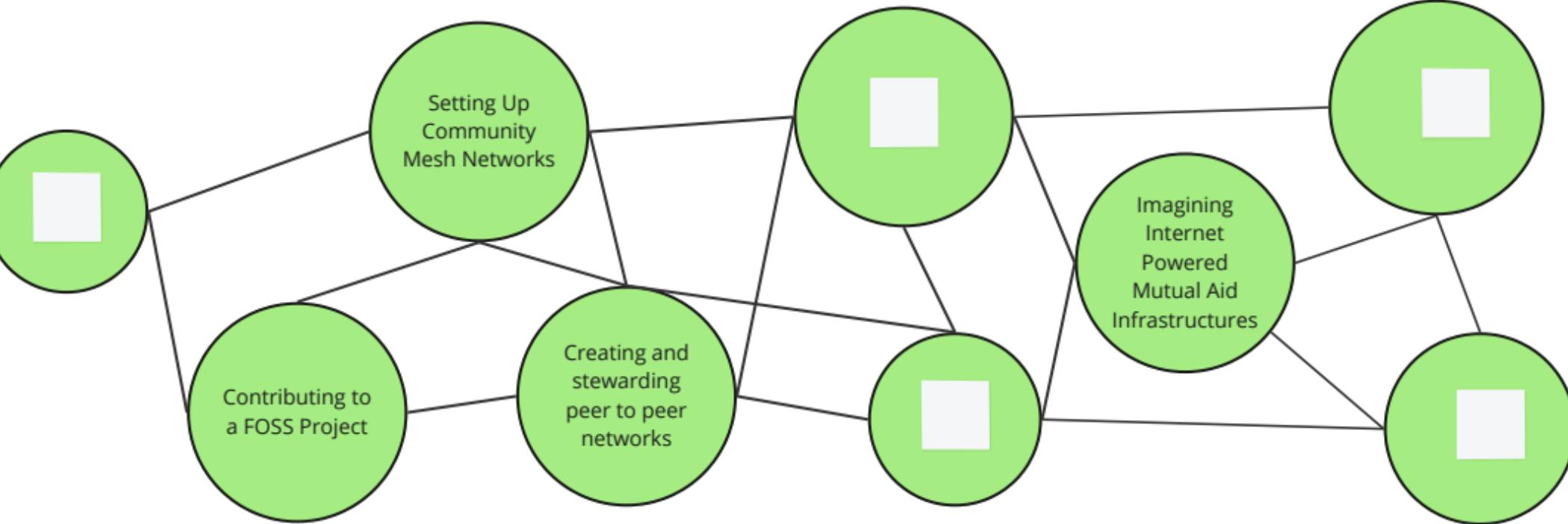
CLOSING

If you have questions feel
free to come off mute,
raise your hand or drop a
sticky here!

EXPANDED WORK

CLOSING

Use this Collective Compass
for NAVIGATING Decolonial
DWeb Stewardship projects
centering decentralization
such as...



RESOURCES

DOING(S) a collection of guidelines and toolkits

a tender talk:
tender
structures for
collaborative
work



Community curated library



LISTENING(S) in solidarity



READING(S) food for thoughts



[Alice Yuan Zhang](#) urges us to seriously engage with the failures of these tools and ask who and what we are decentralizing:

Decentralization as praxis is rooted in direct action, striving to abolish capitalistic economics and supply chains which encode mass oppression into large-scale systems with many actors and minimal accountability. To cultivate technological sovereignty is to dismantle the veil of neutrality, decolonize our imagination, learn alongside movements of food and land sovereignty, and support the collective struggle for a [Just Transition](#). If we increasingly chain our lives to the institution of capital, we are tasked with devising ever more elaborate structures to police the symptoms of individualism.

To bring about abolitionist futures, we must redirect our collective attention, skills, and energy toward a relational web:

- Address the actual needs of our situated translocal communities which often cannot be met by one-size-fits-all solutions
- Rekindle skills of deep listening, intimacy, and trust-building to facilitate care-based organizing
- Devise and maintain [Appropriate Technologies](#) (AT) that are low-cost and energy-traceable
- Center accessibility as an essential criteria and not an afterthought of ableist inconvenience
- Integrate practices of harm reduction and conflict transformation across our many modes of communication and exchange
- Uplift ancestral, colloquial, frictional, reusable and decomposable approaches to technology

It's past time for the technocratic elite to surrender the hubris of building ever more complex solutions for the entire globe over. If you dare call for decentralization, start by decentralizing your wealth and power.

SOURCE: ["Unpacking the Myth of Web3: Decentralization of What?"](#)



Why Some People Be Mad At Me Sometimes: Lucille Clifton Rebirth Broadcast #17

"The Internet is literally a network of computers speaking to other computers. The World Wide Web is the de facto information retrieval service of the Internet. The DWeb is an opportunity to build different types of protocols between networks and devices, but DWeb technologies on their own are not inherently more equitable than other technologies. We are in the early stage of DWeb and we can still shape its future. The DWeb Principles, created by some of the participants of the DWeb Summit, set "human agency, distributed benefits, mutual respect, humanity, and ecological awareness" as top priorities. [9] As new DWeb technologies become more common in the next few years, now is the time to have a conversation between technical and non-technical community members to co-create codes of conduct and that weigh racial, gender, and environmental justice as equally important elements of future technology. These explorations of technology and society may also open up space for artistic expression, cultural connection, and community relations that are also more caring."

SOURCE: "Other Networks: Taeyoon Choi on Infrastructure and Equity on the Decentralized Web"

9. DWeb Principles. <https://getdweb.net/principles/>.

How will our reflections go *beyond* virtue signaling? By collectively creating a compass for navigating continued PRACTICE!

VIRTUE SIGNALING

Virtue signaling refers to when an individual conspicuously displays their awareness of and point of view on social issues.

DEFINITION

Virtue signaling is actions that are more about posturing and impression management than actual action. In the era of social media, virtue signaling has become commonplace. Liking photos or posting comments on social is convenient for political positioning but lacks actual substantive action.

EXAMPLES

- Celebrity hypocrisy on Twitter
- Corporate environmentalism
- Vain political t-shirts
- College student paraphernalia
- Social media 'likes'
- Changing your profile picture for the latest cause

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But first a little bit about how we approach decentralization and decolonialization in our practice...

