

Tiziana Terranova and Ravi Sundaram

Colonial Infrastructures and Techno-social Networks

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Tiziana Terranova

The techno-social hypothesis concerns the idea that, over the last three decades or so, the technological and the social have become thoroughly enmeshed with each other. It also poses the question of how this new inseparability should be understood. The techno-social hypothesis is not about how, as Bernard Stiegler claimed, social media have bypassed “the traditional networks of proximity that have defined the social since time immemorial.”¹ Neither is it about how technology has subsumed and colonized social life, and how this process might be reversed to gain access to a more authentic, embodied sociality. It is rather about the fundamental role played by “the social” in the modern age, and how contemporary digital and computational networks as technical beings do not just generate, as Gilbert Simondon suggested, a natural and technical milieu, but also a directly (techno-)social one.²

The techno-social hypothesis is thus premised on the idea that the social never possessed an intrinsic or preexisting reality, but rather what, with Michel Foucault, we might call a historical, that is a “transactional” one. Like sexuality, madness, or civil society, the social is real, although it has not always existed. It, too, was born “from the interplay of relations of power and everything which constantly eludes them at the interface ... of governors and governed.”³ As a result of this history, the social assumed its three fundamental properties: a form of abstraction, the territory of government, and a conflictual political domain.

The social thus existed inasmuch as it was a fundamental part of modern Western European epistemologies and eventually also as part of its governmentalities. As a form of abstraction, it grounded the truth claims of the social sciences, which posited that it was possible to scientifically study human societies inasmuch as they presented quantitative and qualitative determinations. As part of what Denise Ferreira da Silva has called the power of the nomos, the social entailed a distinction between transparency and affectability, between the position of observers and observed.⁴ This epistemological function of the social (that is, its accounting for human social life as a distinct, measurable, and observable sphere of reality, endowed with its own patterns and regularities) was also indispensable to the other role that the social played. As Nikolas Rose put it, from the nineteenth to the mid-twentieth century, the social constituted the “territory of government,” that is, a “novel plane of territorialization [which] existed within, across, in tension with other spatializations (such as blood and territory; race

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Los Angeles, 2001. First Street bridge at bottom, Highway 101 at center, Cesar Chavez Bridge at center rear. Library of Congress Prints and Photographs Division, Washington, DC.

and religion; town, region and nation).”⁵ At the same time, the social also had a third inflection, one that Raymond Williams defined as its “emphatic” one: one that explicitly opposed *individual* and especially *individualist* theories of societies.⁶ This is the social which, as Wendy Brown has put it, constitutes the foremost language and political domain “where subjections, abjections, and exclusions are lived, identified, protested and potentially rectified.”⁷

Inasmuch as it constituted a nexus of power/knowledge/subjectivation which functioned within both liberal and socialist governmentalities, the social was said to have come to its end in the late 1970s when a new political rationality – neoliberalism – displaced it with the more narrow notion of “community.” For postmodern philosophers such as Jean Baudrillard, the end of the social coincided with the rise of media, information, and capital coming together through the figure of the network.⁸ The circulatory logic of the Los Angeles highway system was Baudrillard’s favorite image for the end of the social in a space defined by circulation.

The end of the social, however, was far from a smooth implosion. It was a catastrophic one, involving not only the fall of socialist governments in the so-called Eastern bloc, but also the decomposition of social infrastructures, which entailed its own racialized death toll. Consider for example the centrality of the California highway system in two of Afrofuturist author Octavia Butler’s best-known novels, *The Parable of the Sower* and *The Parable of the Talents*.⁹ Written in the late 1990s and set in the 2020s/2030s, the novels can be read as a speculative depiction of the apocalypse unleashed by the end of the social as a territory of government in the last decades of the twentieth century. Butler narrates a near future world in which the breakdown of the United States government, caused by simultaneous economic, environmental, and epidemiological crises, has rendered large swathes of the population homeless. People are uprooted from their communities, pushed into nomadism, and exposed to the constant threat of the dehumanizing violence of rape, indentured servitude, and technologically enforced enslavement (as in the “shock collars” that control the newly enslaved). The protagonist Lauren Olamina attempts to compensate for the end of the social by founding a small rural community around her new belief system, Earthseed. Her effort fails. Only by constructing a planetary social network does she eventually succeed in catalyzing a movement big enough to realize her vision of an alien humanity taking roots in outer space.

The techno-social is the form of the social that comes after its end. It is neither a virtual nor a global digital community, but a component of the milieu generated by a new technical being – the digital computational network. It was triggered not so much by social media, as first assumed, but by the turn whereby social computing no longer simply *supported* social interaction but started “to process the content generated by social interaction,” making its results “usable not just by users but by the digital systems that supported their activities.”¹⁰

The techno-social thus entangles the three properties of the modern social (abstraction, the spatial plane of government, and the conflictual domain) and the two properties of the network (scientific image and technical medium).

The techno-social manifests a new mode of knowing the social as defined by the rise of data science and social analytics in relation to the older epistemic privilege of academic sociology.¹¹ The digitization of the social as an object of knowledge, tending towards what Patricia Ticineto Clough et al. have called the datalogical, has been intensified by the mass adoption of digital communication and the re-modulation of the latter by the internet industry through investment in the development and implementation of social interfaces, algorithms, and protocols.¹² As an image or model, the techno-social manifests new sociogenic modes of individuation – recursively regenerating modern social categories such as gender, race, class, sexuality, disability, ethnicity, and so on out of the circulation of flows of information which are recorded through the mediation of social ontologies coded as metadata. For example, critical race studies of technologies have argued for the ways in which racial categories inform and inflect various forms of algorithmic social categorization (from facial recognition to police databases to search engines).¹³ The techno-social is thus the condition for the emergence of machine learning as a form of “soft thought”; the re-programmability of algorithmic instructions necessitates an infinite or entropic amount of data, or social quantities that have been recorded and stored by means of digital technologies.¹⁴ As a result, gender, raciality, ethnicity, class, and ability as epistemological abstractions emerge as performative acts of more-than-human techno-social assemblages.¹⁵

The techno-social also displays the characteristics of a *milieu* or *medium*, which should not be confused with the modern notion of media as distinct devices or technologies for recording, transmitting, and storing information (as in record players, film, typewriters, desktop computers, gaming consoles, and so on).¹⁶

Indeed, the techno-social turns modern media, in Kittler's sense of the word, into components of the techno-social as medium or milieu. This milieu describes a space of circulation with no simple circularity, a space that poses the problem of the indeterminate and uncertain series (of mobile elements, accumulating units, and events) which complicates the question of causality (how and when causes become effects and vice versa) and the task of accounting for the nonlinear relation between causes and effects generated by and around individuals, groups, and populations.¹⁷ The techno-social as medium is thus characterized by an intensification of circulations whose heterogeneity is no longer disciplined by the divisions of the past, as Ravi Sundaram's studies of the post-postcolonial city clearly show.¹⁸ It is a milieu which, as Tony Sampson and Jussi Parikka have recently suggested in the wake of the Covid-19 pandemic, makes "universal virality ... a techno-social condition of proximity and distance, accident and security, communication and communication breakdown."¹⁹

Finally, the techno-social constitutes a new conflictual political milieu that operates as the double or shadow of digital governmentalities that have been designed and engineered to faithfully replicate the modern imperative of economic growth and social stability – imperatives that are shared by its two dominant versions, post-socialism and neoliberalism. The techno-social as an "agile infrastructure of possibility," as Sundaram calls it, has become visible in the various waves of twenty-first century political movements – each one of them calling for the abolition of a specific aspect of modern epistemologies and techniques of power, while also problematizing the territorial affiliation of the modern social: the end of financial capital (Occupy); the downfall of corrupt and violent regimes (the Arab revolts of 2011); the abolition of racist policing and structures (Black Lives Matter); the refusal of post-socialist authoritarianism (Hong Kong); the end of femicide (Ni Una Menos); the rejection of austerity (Gilets Jaunes), and economic inequality (Chile), amongst others. Shadow networks, however, have also emerged, fostering paranoid affects, such as those involving ethnic killings (India), white supremacy, misogynist and far-right extremism (alt-right, gamergate), and, during the current pandemic, movements against masking, vaccination, and lockdowns.

Ravi Sundaram's Response

Tiziana Terranova's essay uses the historical interfaces between calculation and sovereign power to set up the forcefields of the Western social: transparency and affectability, observers/observed, human life as distinctly

measurable in the larger context of the displacements of the world. The calculative infrastructures of government were paralleled by the governmentalization of the state, itself a product of the epistemological function of the social. Expanded onto a world stage, this transactional field can also bring in technologies of violence and extraction, a specific form of colonial governmentality driven by racial and ethnological technics – which loops back into the metropole, unleashing longer temporalities of knowledge.

As Terranova shows, the techno-social recursively regenerates modern enumerative categories of the human sciences (class, gender, race), which are now reprogrammed in contemporary data ontologies through surveillance and associational technologies. Just as the human sciences of the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries made possible the governmental management of populations, the contemporary datalogical turn is generative of the techno-social. "Soft thought" in the context of machine thinking becomes both the precondition and affordance of post-human performative assemblages as the now-encoded social categories take new directions. This recursion between the techno-social and the historic social, between histories of violence and the data ontologies of the contemporary – these clusters propel the storm of ideas that Terranova's essay has stirred up.

Tiziana's categorical insistence on the *singular* mode of the techno-social (as the enmeshing of the technological and the social) provides a connection to my own argument about the blurring of the medial and the social in the postcolonial world. The comparable trajectories of this shift are remarkable: "the end of the social" and neoliberalism in the West, globalization/mediatization in the postcolonial world. In the postcolonial world, the older partitions of politics/welfare/social became unsustainable as new forms of circulation undermined the previous designs of sovereign power. What emerged was a productive, wilder milieu of the contemporary, and the techno-social in Tiziana's sense of the term. As Tiziana shows, the milieu/medium is central to the expansive ecology of the techno-social and is a multiplication engine of new modes of circulation. Even as partitions emerge between users and platforms, the milieu and capitalist power, the circulatory quality of the techno-social-as-medium constantly sets up the conditions of both instability and association. Never has this been clearer than during the Covid-19 pandemic.

The pandemic presents us with a remarkable diagnostic of the techno-social.

While crisis is inherent in the temporality of the techno-social (Chun), the pandemic has accelerated all antinomies of the system: unprecedented platform power and collective responses to medical crisis; the crisis of neoliberal austerity and unapparelled monetary intervention by Western regimes; racial violence and global countermovements; the normalization of surveillance technologies with biomedical interventions and constantly shifting boundaries of the “normal”; the proliferation of hate speech and an extraordinary investment in scientific authority. To be sure, as Michel Foucault once suggested, pandemic time is always exceptional: boundaries between anatomo-politics and biopolitics are blurred; restrictions are placed on certain transmissions (circulating bodies); periodic biomedical interventions are normalized and accepted in order to preserve life. The coming years will show us if the present pandemic time can radicalize the third, collective dimension of the techno-social, or rather alternate between the paranoid states of speculative expansion and terror that have defined the previous two decades.

[center]**Ravi Sundaram**

In 1858, a British official in colonial Bengal named William Herschel asked Rajyadhar Konai, a local contractor, to imprint his inked hand on a contract that had already been signed. After years of experimenting with handprints, Herschel sent copies of Konai’s fingerprints to London for Francis Galton, a eugenicist and cousin of Charles Darwin. Galton went on to argue that fingerprints were an accurate marker of identity and racial difference. In their *Untold Intimacy of Digits* (2011), the Raqs Media Collective used the handprint in the Galton archive to produce an animated video on a blue background. In the video, the still image of Herschel’s original handprint record was given motion. The thumb and the fingers begin to move, suggestive of hand counting or even a secret code. Herschel’s early biometric colonial experiments intimated colonial pathologies, as he and his counterparts strained to make colonial subjects into signs of representation legible to European rulers.²⁰ In his *Mimesis and Alterity*, Michael Taussig described Herschel’s early system as one comprised of contradictions and collusions of “mimesis and alterity.” This system was conditioned by

a colonial administration dependent on writing and signatures in a largely illiterate colonial society; administrators’ fear of massive fraud by means of false signatures; British administrators unable to discern unique facial and other identifying

qualities among the masses of their Indian subjects (“they all look the same”); and last but far from least, the decisive ingredient in the discovery of fingerprinting, the use of the hand and thumb as a type of modernizing sorcery by the colonial bureaucracy.²¹

Despite the fingerprint’s mimetic quality as a seeming signature of the body, the main challenge was elsewhere. Galton struggled unsuccessfully for years to come up with a mathematical method of classifying fingerprints. In fact, it was once again in colonial Bengal that Edward Henry, along with Azizul Haque and Hem Chandra Bose, developed a mathematical method for the classification of fingerprints, which was exported to South Africa and later to metropolitan Europe. *Untold Intimacy of Digits* referenced the phantom limb of Konai, as indeed the classification system for fingerprints developed in colonial Bengal successfully separated bodies from a number-based system of classification. Allan Sekula once wrote that the central innovation of nineteenth-century police photography was not the camera but the filing cabinet.²² The fingerprint cabinet Henry pioneered in Bengal closely paralleled the Bertillon system in Europe. Under colonialism, the “bureaucratic-statistical” police regime efficiently reduced the body to a number for retrieval.

Fingerprinting emerged during a time of multiple colonial technologies aimed at developing knowledges of the colonized.²³ The colonial laboratory was the site of statistical techniques, periodic census surveys, and the introduction of photography into carceral regimes. Prominent technologies included the racially coded ethnological surveys developed by Herbert Risley, and an ambitious anthropometric rollout to develop knowledge of the colonized populations. Risley’s race technology was an assemblage of mechanical instruments, mathematical techniques, and paper infrastructures.²⁴ Anthropometry faded away in later years, but the fingerprint-linked biometric regime has remained, becoming even more widespread in the contemporary era. As Keith Breckenridge has argued, mathematical implication, statistical inference, and probability theories were a central part of biometrics, albeit fashioned within a larger map of racial difference and colonial rule.²⁵ What Breckenridge calls “biometric government” implemented technologies that shaped the colonial social: notably the efforts to bind subject populations to the sanctity of the contract, and the surveillance of criminalized social groups and individuals.²⁶ The tensions and overlap between the

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Raqs Media Collective, *Untold Intimacy of Digits*, 2011. Archival trace, single-channel video projection, 47". Photo courtesy the artists.

individuating techniques of the contract and the group logic of (racial) technologies was of course not unique to colonial biometric regimes.

In his final lecture in the Collège de France series, titled “Society Must Be Defended,” Michel Foucault spoke about how a set of political technologies called “biopower” initiated a collection of seamless medical and social technologies to optimize life and secure it. Biopower legitimizes periodic state interventions within populations to preserve the larger social body. This shift, which Foucault termed a subversion, was an infiltration of the earlier modes of sovereign power: “The right of sovereignty was the right to take life or let live. And then this new right is established: the right to make live and to let die.”²⁷ There was a shift from the disciplinary techniques focused on the individual body and its spatial partitions (anatomopolitics), to a model of multiplicity: “So after a first seizure of power over the body in an individualizing mode, we have a second seizure of power that is not individualizing but, if you like, massifying, that is directed not at man-as-body but at man-as-species.”²⁸ As catastrophic pandemic events generally gave way to the endemic, new techniques to optimize the human body were developed: statistical forecasts, enumeration, and natal technologies.²⁹ These distinctions between biopolitics and disciplinary regimes in the West become blurred in a global regime of colonial difference marked by the circulations of war-making, captive bodies, and commodities.³⁰ Slaves and bonded workers were transported from colonial possessions to plantation economies; enumerative technologies and frameworks of biometric government moved with these circulatory patterns, as did statistical knowledges and racial and ethnological schemes. This global circulatory network was spatially uneven, as colonial administrators in different regions sought to balance ideas of European political liberalism in despotic colonial systems.³¹

The return of colonial biometrics to the global security regime after September 11 frames the vast expansions of biopolitical technologies in the twenty-first century. One of the features of contemporary platform capitalism has been the way it recalls and transcends colonial biometrics while radically expanding affective landscapes without limit. This was part of the extractive and dynamic colonial surplus, where long-term circulatory patterns unleashed potentials that continue today. Today, *circulation as such* emerges as a problematic, rather than the individual/collective bodies of the population. A key stress point is between infrastructures of measurement and the transient, affective networks now widespread

under platform capitalism. The connections between infrastructures of measure and infrastructures of public affect have never been as contiguous and constitutive as in the post-pandemic moment. At the same time, they take on a particular dynamic in the Global South.

More than four decades ago, Jean Baudrillard published his sharp, almost polemical collection *In the Shadow of the Silent Majorities, Or, the End of the Social* (1978).³² In it he addressed two major sites of twentieth-century modernity: the social and the mass. The social, Baudrillard argued, revolved around “that opaque but equally translucent reality, that nothingness: the masses.” The masses had an “inertial strength,” that absorb the “electricity of the social and neutralize it forever.”³³ Lacking an empirical reference but produced through the survey, the masses act as a shadow majority, opaque, formless, dispersing meaning even while positioned as the constant addressee of political and commercial projects. In the event, there is a proliferation of representational techniques, rendering them ineffective, “burying the social beneath a simulation of the social.” As Baudrillard argued elsewhere, this could be called the “evil genius” of the masses, producing the failure of the social and representation, dispersing into networks and simulations.

In two senses this argument turned the “social question” of the European twentieth century on its head. Propelled by information and media networks, the strategies of formlessness, opacity, and disappearance implode the historic social. The end-of-the-social argument could be a 1970s update of a larger strain in European twentieth-century critical theory. In their 1944 *Dialectic of Enlightenment*, Theodor Adorno and Max Horkheimer suggested that industrial media played a key role in homogenizing diverse populations into consumers. In their now-familiar argument, mass culture produced docile subjects, framed by false needs created by media corporations. The larger implication of the culture industry thesis was that the earlier street crowd had been significantly reassembled by media infrastructures. As in all his essays, Baudrillard had a point even in his errors. While the “new masses” of platform capitalism do certainly disperse old techniques of the social, the widespread transformations of digital networks require new perspectives on the techno-social, as Tiziana Terranova argues in this dialogue.

The vast explosion of global internet culture after low-cost mobile phones has shifted the terms of the debate from earlier generations of Western critical and post-critical theorists. Across the global South, there is a vast churning of media-enabled populations. Even as media

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platforms have expanded, the techno-political aesthetic has been reprogrammed recursively. What is remarkable about this reconfiguration is the referencing of older enumerative technologies of colonial rule, even when anticipation becomes the principle of the political. Feedback now becomes a key principle of politics; instability and contingency are the drivers of the performance of power. The distinctions that Foucault made between pandemic and endemic strategies of power become increasingly blurred as platform temporality has reconfigured the timescale of the political.

The normalization of a crisis temporality (which the pandemic has made prominent) is expressive of two overlapping milieus. The first milieu was the wild, informalized pirate-video era of the 1990s and the early 2000s. Pirate video in the South was an unstable media object, with a capacity for connection and association across a broad range of phenomena. Video was also a multiplication machine, attaching itself to mediatized public theaters. This atmosphere of multiplication clearly anticipated the current digital platform economy, where the sensational live-time effect of pirate video has been normalized into a larger complex of network circulation. Today, the atmospherics of network culture generate a somatic collectivity in public events, and also quite rapidly fragment into other formations. It is this collectivity that has energized the populist political aesthetic in the last decade.³⁴ The second milieu is the rapid expansion of platform capitalism and social networks in the South from 2008 onwards, dynamized by mobile phone proliferation. This laid the ground for networks of affective measure driven by media platforms and governmental enumeration technologies, including biometric systems. While platforms have pushed anticipatory and “feed-forward” modes of calculation, governmental enumeration seeks to connect populations to security, welfare, and financial networks. Both the affective and governmental transact on a daily basis; the relationship is productive and parasitic. This is a remarkable remodulation of colonial and postcolonial arrangements. As discussed earlier, colonial enumeration technologies were a careful orchestration of disciplinary technologies of policing, contract enforcement, racial superiority, and global circulation. In the postcolonial period, in India at least, the social and cultural spheres were separated: while the social was expressive of politics and welfare, culture was managed by regulation and control. These careful partitions exploded in the video era of the 1990s, when informal networks of circulation bypassed control mechanisms of

censorship and copyright.

In contemporary right-wing nationalist regimes like India, governmental enumeration has introduced stringent technical checkpoints even as it has created new spheres of value. The older enumerative infrastructures were defined by a productive ambiguity that served both rulers and the enumerated. For example, paper systems were generative of multiple writing strategies and permeable boundaries. Populations could have an electricity bill and not a legal home, no legal identity but access to welfare regimes via a ration card. The move to digital enumeration has generated a range of political technologies to stabilize informal populations: biometric identification cards, direct cash transfers, phone-based code verification. In line with neoliberal audit models that distrust porosity, what has emerged is the primacy of participation in governmental digital infrastructures.³⁵ In effect, older welfare systems have been substantially disturbed, with disastrous consequences for millions – as has been visible during the pandemic.³⁶ Conceived as an always-on model of optimization, governmental information infrastructures make network connections a condition of public support for the working poor.³⁷ In terms of information design fantasies, populations become capacities, as data streams are harnessed for future projects of government.

There is an ongoing tension between this calculated management of life, as Foucault called it, and the political aesthetics of right-wing nationalism. Hindu nationalism in India, for example, has weaponized the proliferation of value across affective infrastructures, stimulating micro-events to produce a crisis temporality.³⁸ In turn, the “enthrallment” of affective measure captures the political. Affective measure, as Patricia Ticineto Clough writes, integrates “words, numbers, images, and diagrams to turn measure into alluring evidence of an already present future.”³⁹ Even as data streams inform formal politics, a crisis temporality feeds right-wing populist action, overflowing and disturbing existing political technologies of governance. In the context of a transformed and mutating techno-social, we need to ask the familiar old question again: What is the political?

Tiziana Terranova’s Response

As Ravi Sundaram points out, all genealogies of the techno-social must take into account the essential role played by the colonial techne and the colonial social. Foregrounding the history of colonial techne disrupts accounts of surveillance capitalism as a contemporary threat originating in Silicon Valley technologies. The notion of the colonial social undoes histories

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of the social that consider the latter from the point of view of an autonomous and internal development of the West and the North whereby the social, as in Baudrillard, rises in Paris and dies in Los Angeles.⁴⁰ The colonial techno-social thus disrupts the “modern ontoepistemological pillars of separability, determinacy and sequentiality” as criteria for figuring the truth of techno-capitalist power.⁴¹

The modern colonial techno-social, as Sundaram shows, invented its own forms of abstraction (statistical knowledge, racial and ethnological schemes, biometric techniques), but entailed no coincidence between territory and population. On the contrary, it already displayed the embeddedness of territories in networks which secured and still maintain the dynamic extraction of (post)colonial surplus value.

It is not by chance then that the ongoing collapse of the social and the medial, which constitute an expression of the overall techno-social predicament, would come into such stark relief in the post-postcolonial urban milieu Sundaram described in a previous article.⁴² Baudrillard’s ur-scene of the social’s deadly journey from Western Europe to the United States is diffracted by inserting the postcolonial urban topologies of Rio, Lagos, Algiers, and Delhi. The loss of the distinction between the sphere of the social (government, welfare) and that of the medial (entertainment, cinema, TV) in the post-postcolonial setting anticipates the planetary expansion of techno-social infrastructures that recursively loop together sovereignty and government with a multiplicity of circulations (media forms, beliefs, desires, commodities, money). Platform calculation and governmental enumeration constitute the contemporary infrapolitical field for the work of the double which, as Achille Mbembe and Janet Roitman describe, characterized the colonial and post-colonial social: no law, rule, protocol, or algorithm “without techniques of avoidance, circumvention, and envelopment.”⁴³

The post-postcolonial setting foregrounds the ongoing unfolding of the techno-social as a “combination of the calculative and the expressive.” From my perspective, this constitutes an aspect of the doubling of the techno-social as medium and model – entangling the network as a technical system and as an epistemological model with the three properties of the modern social. The question that remains open, however, concerns the third historical property of the social: the one that connected the term to the experience of structural oppression and demands a more just social order. This is what is at stake in the tension between patriarchal supremacist

nationalisms and the techno-politics of abolition.

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The fingerprint was a central part of penal regimes and colonial ethnography. In India, "criminal tribes" were subject to compulsory fingerprinting as part of the penal order. See Radhika Singha, "Settle, Mobilize, Verify: Identification Practices in Colonial India," *Studies in History* 16, no. 2 (2000).

27

Michel Foucault, *Society Must Be Defended* (Picador, 2003), 263.

28

Foucault, *Society Must Be Defended*, 242–43.

29

For Foucault, the older sovereign right to kill was exercised and normalized under racism.

30

There is a rich body of literature on Foucault's work and the non-Western world, following the Collège de France lectures. The themes range from the problem of colonial difference to governmentality, race, and the economies of violence and power. See Achille Mbembe, "Necropolitics," trans. Libby Meintjes, *Public Culture* 15, no. 1 (2003); Ann Laura Stoler, "A Colonial Reading of Foucault: Bourgeois Bodies and Racial Selves," in *Biopower: Foucault and Beyond* (University of Chicago Press, 2015); and *South Asian Governmentalities: Michel Foucault and the Question of Postcolonial Orderings*, ed. Stephen Legg and Deana Heath (Cambridge University Press, 2018).

31

As Ritu Birla has argued, in India for example, European liberalism distinguished between two categories of action: public commerce and the private space of indigenous elites, a process aggravated by the revolts of 1857. This was again mapped out, says Birla, into an economy-culture distinction, where colonial legal pluralism went hand in hand with imperatives of enumeration while simultaneously politicizing these distinctions of public/native space. See Ritu Birla, "Law as Economy/Economy as Governmentality: Convention, Corporation, Currency," in *South Asian Governmentalities*.

32

Jean Baudrillard, *In the Shadow of the Silent Majorities, Or, The End of the Social* (Semiotext(e), 1993).

33

Baudrillard, *In the Shadow*, 35.

34

Nowhere is this more visible than in the rise of right-wing nationalism, which has attuned

its strategies to an atmospheric sensibility of contemporary media. Trumpism in the US, Orban in Hungary, and Bolsonaro in Brazil are all examples of this shift. Narendra Modi in India stands out as the most ambitious in this lineup.

35

Participation in these infrastructures connects populations to a direct relationship with the Leader: in India, all national welfare schemes have the tag of "Prime Minister" attached to them.

36

See Tarangini Sriraman and V Nitya, "Bearing Witness to the Covid-19 Lockdown," *The India Forum*, October 14, 2020 <https://www.theindiaforum.in/article/bearing-witness-covid-19-lockdown>.

37

To enable constant network connection, a series of patchwork hybrids and vernacular quasi-objects have emerged in India. See Sandeep Mertia, "From Computing Clerks to Androids: Two Bits on the Material Lives of Social Data in India," *Impact of Social Sciences Blog*, 2016.

38

See Ravi Sundaram, "Hindu Nationalism's Crisis Machine," *HAU: Journal of Ethnographic Theory* 10, no. 3 (2020).

39

Patricia Ticineto Clough, *The User Unconscious: On Affect, Media, and Measure* (University of Minnesota Press, 2018), 30.

40

Baudrillard, *In the Shadow*.

41

Denise Ferreira Da Silva, "Unpayable Debt: Reading Scenes of Value against the Arrow of Time," in *The Documenta 14 Reader*, ed. Quinn Latimer and Adam Szymczyk (Prestel Publishing, 2017), 88.

42

Sundaram, "Post-Postcolonial Sensory Infrastructure."

43

Quoted in Sundaram, "Post-Postcolonial Sensory Infrastructure."

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Colonial Infrastructures and Techno-social Networks