Enacting decolonial digital futures in Samoa

Using digital technologies to strengthen Samoan ways of knowing and being

Dr Aimee Hourigan and the 'Digital Inclusion in Samoa' Project Team

I acknowledge the Turrbal and Yuggera as the Traditional Custodians of the lands and waters on which this research has taken place. I further acknowledge the Burramattagal People of the Darug Nation as the Custodians of the land on which I now reside and work.

I pay my respects to their lores, customs, Elders, and creation spirits and acknowledge that sovereignty has never been ceded. I extend this respect to any First Nations, Aboriginal, or Indigenous peoples here today.

Talanoa as narrative sharing and exchange

"where story is knowledge, and knowledge is gathered through story" (Tecun et al., 2018, p. 158)

The 'modernity/ coloniality' problem

- *Global standards, practices, paradigms rationalised by **Dominant** (Western) '**modernity**'*

- *Such visions of 'modernity' underpinned/justified by ongoing **colonial rhetoric and practices*** (Bhambra, 2007)

- *'Modern' norms surrounding the **inclusive use of digital technologies** (access, effective use, and literacies or skills) perpetuate colonial framework of **common, linear progress** and broad ideal of "**applying universal truths to particular places**"* (Slater, 2013, p. 172)

The Samoan context

- *Colonial logics impact social, economic, and political systems (e.g., education, sociopolitical governance structures, experiences of globalisation)*

- *'Pacific Resurgence'* (Hau'ofa, 2008; Lopesi, 2018; Thomsen et al., 2021; Matapo & McFall-McCaffery, 2022; Morrison-Young & de Bres, 2023)

- *Fa'asamoa: the Samoan way*

- *The vā: space that relates; that holds separate entities and things together and provides context and meaning to relationships between people, places, and social environments*

Decoloniality & Digital Sovereignty

- *Actions to foreground Moana resilience and autonomy and (re)establish bonds of collective cultural strength*

- *Resignify "actions, values, stories and relations grounded in kinships, landscapes, seascapes and skyscapes" (Teaiwa, 2020, p. 602)*

- *Indigenous/non-Dominant communities' inherent right to self-governance and self-determination within/through digital infrastructures, technologies, and environments*
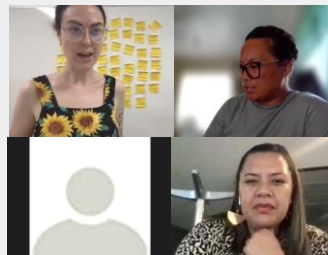 - *e.g., use of social media to express and (re)claim Indigeneity (Carlson & Frazer, 2021)*

"How do Samoans use digital technologies to reaffirm, continue, and protect the extant ways of knowing that (re)produce Samoan ways of being?"

Co-researchers: *Agapetos, Chris, Sia, Iosefa, Tina, Melani, Anne, and Kiona.*

Three co-design workshops

1 **Digital technologies support a resurgence of collective self-determination by enhancing cultural knowledge through digital connections**

Cultural continuation

The intimacy and connectedness of digital technologies augments and extends Samoan relational practices, like meeting with and learning from older aiga members.

Being 'of a place' extends from individuals' relationships with and to the "spaces within, between and outside of places, people and communities" (Koya-Vaka'uta, 2017, p. 65)

So, we've got this distance and space [.] and, like, *tradition is always about face to face and like being around each other**.*

Whereas [through the] digital now [tradition] is online and then it's *bridging that gap between us and our distant relatives, bridging that gap in space and time**.*

Because some of [our relatives] can't fly, oh, but now we can use Zoom.

– Agapetos

2 **Digital technologies can strengthen oratory and performative circulation of cultural knowledge**

Cultural continuation

Digital technologies can contribute to oratory knowledge and information sharing practices that sustain and build Samoa's collective sociocultural memory.

Creates a collective sociocultural memory that is "communally available and shared with the intent of benefitting the collective" (Enari & Matapo, 2020, p. 9)

"There's this **newfound connection again, of my culture** and just that appreciation and even growth in the knowledge as well.

Like, now there's just a **lot more exposure on social media**.

I mean, I just went back to thinking when I was primary school, in high school, it was just the only way that I could see [traditional practices] was, you know, in a book, like researching, or at like special cultural events"

– Kiona

3

Digital technologies can help challenge the false divides set up by colonial imaginings and imperial practices

Cultural continuation

Digital technologies can help Samoans to navigate the imposed binaries and boundaries established within/through colonialism.

Digital technologies augment individuals' efforts to enact a new Oceania; to "tie history and culture to empirical reality and practical action"
(Hau'ofa, 2008, p. 55)

"It's not old, it's current. Like, when they say, 'it's new' or 'it's old', it's the old and new what?

It starts with where you're at and for us, that's like walking back into the future…incorporating the past in the present and future.

– Chris

1 **The 'digital', as a minimally translatable concept, imposes Dominant values, power, and ways of thinking in any context of use**

2

The 'digital' itself is an important relational entity

E SUI FAIGA, AE TUMAU FA'AVAE

Change how it's done, but the foundations remain the same.

- *Critically reflect on and challenge the deterministic discourses embedded within digital technology use as it currently stands.*

- *Be led by the cultural richness of the knowledges and lived experiences of Samoans in framing inclusive and meaningful uses of digital technologies within/across the Moana.*

- *Recognise our own roles and responsibilities as critical and conscious researchers/practitioners/individuals.*

Fa'afetai!

E IAI NI FESILI?
(DO YOU HAVE ANY QUESTIONS?)

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