

Technological Hegemony in the Global South: epistemicide, Dehumanisation and Digital Domination

Chileshe Mulenga Nicholas, David Mutemwa

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Abstract

This paper examines the dominance of Western technological systems in the Global South within an increasingly digitalised world where education, healthcare, governance, and social interaction are shaped by digital technologies. It argues that these systems reinforce epistemic inequality by privileging Western knowledge while marginalising indigenous epistemologies, thereby threatening human dignity, epistemic justice, and cultural identity. Drawing on Neil Postman's concept of technopoly alongside African philosophical perspectives on relationality and communal knowledge, the study demonstrates how Western-controlled digital platforms and infrastructures operate as hegemonic systems that erode local knowledge traditions and subordinate human agency to technological efficiency and economic utility. Methodologically, the paper adopts a qualitative research design based on documentary research and secondary data analysis, using thematic content analysis and critical discourse analysis to examine academic literature, policy documents, and empirical studies related to technological inequality, digital capitalism, and epistemic marginalisation. The study concludes that the uncritical adoption of foreign technological systems contributes to technological epistemicide and the emergence of a dehumanised society in which autonomy and indigenous knowledge are diminished. It therefore advocates an ethical, context-sensitive, and human-centred technological framework that integrates local epistemologies and promotes justice globally.

Keywords: Digital Divide, Technopoly, Inequality, Technological hegemony, technological epistemicide, Technology, digital imperialism, Human Dignity, Dehumanisation, Digital capitalism, Autonomy.

Introduction

The paper examines the effects of technological dominance in the Global South, focusing on issues such as dehumanisation, digital imperialism, technological epistemicide, and the digital divide. Guided by Neil Postman's theory of *technopoly*, a cultural condition in which technology

dominates and redefines all forms of life,¹ the paper argues that technological progress often occurs at the cost of human dignity and traditional values. This technological supremacy, pursued in the name of efficiency, results in the erosion of equity and inclusion.² Consequently, digital exclusion from essential sectors such as education, health, and employment has intensified, entrenching new forms of social and ethical inequality.

Drawing on Kant's notion of autonomy as self-legislation and moral independence,³ Heidegger's concept of *Gestell* or technological enframing that reduces humanity to a mere resource,⁴ and Mill's defense of liberty as a safeguard against societal domination,⁵ the paper calls for a re-orientation of technological relations. It proposes ethically grounded strategies such as promoting digital equality, respecting human autonomy, and developing inclusive digital infrastructures as essential steps toward a more human-centered technological future for Africa.

Methodology

This paper has adopted a qualitative research design grounded in philosophical inquiry and supported by secondary data analysis. Given the nature of the paper, which seeks to explore the ethical, cultural, and epistemological effects of technological hegemony in the Global South, the research has not relied on primary data collection but employed desk research as primary method. The desk or documentary research draws on a wide range of secondary sources, including academic publications, philosophical texts, policy reports, and empirical studies on digital inequality and technological development. Suffice to note that the collected secondary material was analysed using a combination of thematic content analysis and critical discourse analysis. Thematic Content Analysis was employed to identify, analyse, and interpret themes across the selected texts. Key themes that are explored in this paper include Digital divide and exclusion, Digital imperialism and data colonialism, Technological epistemicide, dehumanisation and loss of autonomy. To further deepen the analysis, the paper has employed critical discourse analysis to examine how narratives and representations within digital and academic spaces reinforce structures of power and dominance. This approach is particularly relevant in uncovering how Western technological frameworks and platforms shape global knowledge production while silencing the non-Western epistemologies. Since the research has been theoretical, no human participants were involved. Overall, the authors interpreted the social, cultural, and ethical dimensions of technological dominance in the Global South.

Problem Statement

In an increasingly digitised global landscape, it has become evident that nations possessing technopolic characteristics are primarily responsible for diffusing, exporting, and showcasing the dominance of their technological innovations. While technology is often celebrated as a transformative force for human development, its proliferation has simultaneously generated profound concerns that transcend national boundaries, affecting both technopolic societies themselves and the developing nations that consume their technologies. Among these concerns is the widening

1 Neil Postman, *Technopoly: The Surrender of Culture to Technology* (New York: Vintage Books, 1992), 71.

2 Jan van Dijk, *The Digital Divide* (Cambridge: Polity Press, 2020), 45.

3 Immanuel Kant, 'An Answer to the Question: What Is Enlightenment?' (1784), 54.

4 Martin Heidegger, *The Question Concerning Technology and Other Essays*, trans. William Lovitt (New York: Harper & Row, 1977), 23.

5 John Stuart Mill, *On Liberty* (London: John W. Parker and Son, 1859), 14.

digital divide and the emergence of technological epistemicide where dominant technological regimes suppress, marginalise, or erase indigenous knowledge systems. Developing nations across Africa, find themselves not only as passive recipients of foreign technological systems but also as subjects of structural inequalities embedded within these systems. This paper, therefore, seeks to delineate some of the challenges introduced by technologies in developing contexts. Furthermore, it aims to propose contextually relevant strategies through which Africa and other developing regions might reorient the adoption and application of technology. The ultimate goal is to ensure that technological advancement serves ethical ends, respects cultural identity, and promotes inclusive human development.

Purpose and Research Questions

This paper seeks to explore how digital technologies have shaped knowledge, access, autonomy and cultural practices in the Global South with a bias on Zambia. This done by first, thematically exploring the effects of technological hegemony in the Global South. Secondly, the paper tries to critically analyse how the dominance of Western technological systems contributes to the epistemicide of indigenous knowledge systems in the Global South. Finally, the paper seeks to propose contextually relevant and ethically grounded strategies for inclusive technological development in the Global South. At the core of this paper, are the following research questions. What are the effects of technological hegemony in the Global South? How does the dominance of Western technological systems contribute to the epistemicide of indigenous knowledge systems in the Global South? Lastly, what are the contextual relevant and ethically grounded strategies for inclusive technological development in the Global south?

Theoretical Background

Our thoughts in this paper are driven by the understanding that technology builds up and flourishes in a given context. The theory that best explains this technological background is called Technopoly. In his compendium entitled '*the Technopoly: The Surrender of Culture to Technology*', Postman understands *Technopoly* as 'a state of culture which consists in the deification of technology...' ⁶ Society surrenders its cultural traditions and meanings to the authority of technology. In a sense, it is the civilisational condition where technology becomes the defining source of truth, value, and order. It is for this reason that Postman observed that a technopolic society represents a culture in which technology is deified. Postman traced the development of technopoly through three stages, namely, *Tool-Using Cultures*, *Technocracies*, and finally *Technopoly*.

A *Tool-Using Cultures* is a stage where tools support but do not dominate culture because at this point the force of technology is constrained by moral/religious boundaries. ⁷ As time moves, Postman observed emerging technocratic society in which *Technocracies* begin to shape culture and values but coexist with older worldviews. He asserted that a technocracy is a society only loosely controlled by social custom and religious tradition, and driven more by technical enterprise. ⁸ The final stage is what Postman calls *Technopoly*. It is a stage where culture submits entirely to the technological dominance and loses its normative compass. It is actually for this reason that

⁶ Postman, *Technopoly: The Surrender of Culture to Technology*, 71.

⁷ Postman, *Technopoly: The Surrender of Culture to Technology*, 22-26.

⁸ Postman, *Technopoly: The Surrender of Culture to Technology*, 48.

Postman declared that technopoly is a totalitarian technocracy. Postman further observed that technopoly renders alternative worldviews invisible and therefore irrelevant. Through technology, religion, art, and family is redefined in such a way that such definitions fit its new requirements. In the context of the Global South, most countries are increasingly surrendering to the dictates and demands of technopolitic dominance. This dominance seems to have many effects on the culture, human dignity and traditional values in the Global South.

Conceptual Framework of Negative Effects of Technological Hegemony in the Global South.

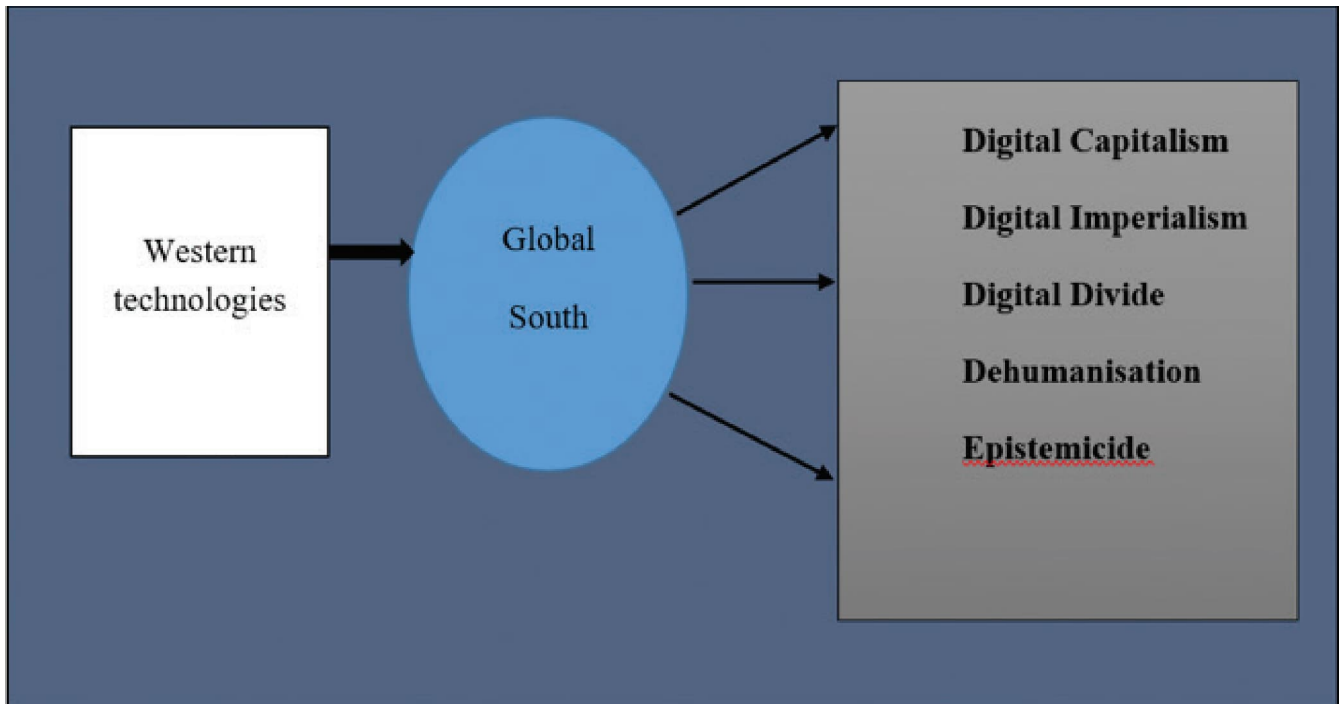


Figure 1: Conceptual framework: Negative effects of Technological Hegemony

Thematic Exploration of Negative Effects of Technologies in the Global South.

Digital Capitalism

In his famous book ‘*Age of Surveillance Capitalism*’, Zuboff argues that ‘Surveillance capitalism does not deliver on the promise of digital equality. It intensifies existing inequalities, redistributing wealth and knowledge upward while marginalising and extracting from the already powerless.’⁹ The author further observes that:

‘Surveillance capitalism has exacerbated the erosion of morality in terms of the violation of ethical principles of confidentiality and consent as much as it promoted digital alienation. Surveillance capitalism thrives in conditions where users cannot meaningfully learn, consent, or resist.’¹⁰

In short, the tech giants like Google, Facebook, and Amazon collect and monetise personal data without explicit user consent. Through technology human race is stripped of privacy as Zuboff observes ‘surveillance capitalists know everything about us, but we know almost nothing about them. Surveillance capitalism thrives on this one-way mirror of knowledge asymmetry.’¹¹ We can

⁹ Shoshana Zuboff, *The Age of Surveillance Capitalism* (New York: Public Affairs, 2019), 505.

¹⁰ Zuboff, *Surveillance Capitalism*, 379.

¹¹ Zuboff, *Surveillance Capitalism*, 11.

obviously argue with Zuboff that this situation does not constitute exchanges but surreptitious extractions from unequipped users who do not understand what is taken away from them. This is what we can term as digital alienation.

Digital Imperialism

In Africa, the domination of foreign infrastructures and technology, which frequently ignore local requirements and contexts, is slowly culminating into Digital Imperialism. This is a form of modern imperialism where foreign powers impose technological systems that reshape political, cultural, and economic life in target regions of Africa without exercising consent or local contextualisation. The Scholar, Michael Kwet calls it *digital colonialism*, where foreign powers, led by the United States, are planting infrastructure in the Global South engineered for its own needs, enabling economic and culture domination while imposing privatised forms of governance.¹² Moreover, for Couldry and Mejias, this is tantamount to '*data colonialism*'. The latter refers to a system in which human experiences are continuously extracted, commodified, and restructured to serve capital accumulation.¹³ In this framework, people are not only consumers of technology but become unwitting producers of value, contributing data without informed consent or reciprocal benefit. Further technologies from technopolic nations have brought about decentralised extraction and control of data from citizens without their explicit consent through communication networks developed and owned by Western tech companies.¹⁴ Overly, it is clearly noticeable that the implications of this phenomenon (i.e., modern digital dominance) reflects the extractive logics of historical colonialism except that this time, the colonised space is the human psyche and social relations.

Digital Divide

The Organisation for Economic and Development defines digital divide as the gap between individuals, households, businesses and geographic areas at different socio-economic levels with regard both to their opportunities to access information and communication technologies (ICTs) and to their use of the Internet for a wide variety of activities.¹⁵ In simple terms, it is a gap created by those having access to information and communication technologies and those who do not. In most developing country, this phenomenon further has raised concerns over which class of people controls and access authentic knowledge, data, and societal values. This is obviously Digital exclusion which has resulted in practical limitations on access to public services, quality education, healthcare, and job opportunities. In this same line of thought, Selwyn condemned the excessive use of technology in solving social problems by arguing that this technological approach of solving problem creates new forms of exclusion especially among the old and the poor who may not be able to afford to do with technology.¹⁶

Moreover, Van Dijk emphasises that technology has introduced what he calls second level digital divide. This is the divide in digital skills and meaningful usage which is becoming more relevant

12 Michael Kwet, 'Digital Colonialism: U.S. Empire and the New Imperialism in the Global South', *ROAR Magazine*, no. 10 (2020), <https://roarmag.org/essays/digital-colonialism-the-evolution-of-american-empire>.

13 Nick Couldry and Ulises A. Mejias, *The Costs of Connection: How Data Is Colonizing Human Life and Appropriating It for Capitalism* (Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 2019), 3.

14 Michael Kwet, 'Digital Colonialism: The 21st Century Scramble for Africa through the Extraction and Control of User Data', *Michigan Journal of Race & Law* 25 (2019): 422–23.

15 Organization for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD), *Understanding the Digital Divide* (Paris: OECD Publications, 2001), 5.

16 Neil Selwyn, *Digital Divide: A Critical Reader in Digital Inequality* (London: Routledge, 2013), 103.

than ever.¹⁷ This second level digital divide is somehow triggered by the cost of using technology. For instance, in Zambia, high data costs make internet access a luxury for many rural dwellers who cannot afford and this cost excludes them from having a meaningful use of internet. This is usually the case in most developing countries and African nations in particular.

Dehumanisation Effect of Western Technology

The digital infrastructures appears to reflect a disregard for autonomy and liberty of citizenry. This is obvious not only in nations that are technopolic but worse again in developing African States where Western technological domination tends to be both unsynchronised and insensitive to the realities and local contexts.

Technopaternalism: The Erosion of Human Autonomy in the Digital Age

In the context of digital technologies, the erosion of human autonomy often manifests through what scholars have termed technopaternalism whether in digitalised nation or non-digitalised nations. Technopaternalism is a combination of two words which are techno and paternalism. Based on the Latin word *pater* which translate into 'father', paternalism can be understood within the hierarchical model of family-life, where the father cares for his children and advises them what to do and what not to do. According to Merriam-Webster's Collegiate Dictionary, paternalism is defined as a system under which an authority undertakes to supply the needs or to regulate the conduct of those under its control in matters affecting them as individuals as well as in their relations to the authority and to each other.¹⁸ In logical terms, paternalism as a system where, given an instance A (e.g., technological gadgets or robotics in our case) which makes a decision or performs an action X which affects a subject B (e.g., citizens in non-digitalised nations) directly. In this case X is paternalistic just in case X is considered by B as limiting, punishing or in any other way cutting down on freedom of B. In this case, B takes X as one that should not be overruled or in any other way disregarded. Therefore taking into account this comprehensive meaning of paternalism, suffice then to define technopatenalism as the condition wherein technological systems assume decision-making authority on behalf of users. The users are reduced to passive recipients of choices pre-structured by opaque code and predictive analytics, thereby undermining their capacity for informed and reflective agency. In fact, this paternalistic tendency of technology becomes worse for developing countries in which context sensitivity is not embedded in technology. This obviously leads to technology making decisions that do not support our every-day lives. When technology fails to take into account local realities, especially for developing nations, it (technology) becomes more of a patronising nuisance which further affects the autonomy and liberty of the citizenry for the purpose of showing off its functionalities (or capabilities).

From a Heideggerian perspective, technopaternalism parallels the concept of *Gestell* or enframing. According to Heidegger's analysis, *Gestell* or enframing captures the instrumentalist view that technology imposes on the citizenry. Enframing is the gathering together of that setting-upon which sets upon man, (...) to reveal the real, in the mode of ordering, as standing-reserve.¹⁹ This passage underscores the fact that technology considers humans among many other entities as mere resources. That is why Heidegger would further state that everywhere everything is ordered

17 Jan van Dijk, *The Digital Divide* (Cambridge: Polity Press, 2020), 65.

18 Merriam-Webster. *Merriam-Webster's Collegiate Dictionary*. 11th ed. Springfield, MA: Merriam-Webster, 2003.

19 Heidegger, *Question Concerning Technology*, 20.

to stand by, to be immediately at hand, indeed to stand there just so that it may be on call for a further ordering.²⁰ It can be clearly construed that through enframing, Human Beings are reduced to resources but also conditions them to see themselves as mere components within a technical apparatus. This is against the moral campus dictated by the categorical imperative on humanity that we need to act in such a way that humanity both in your person and that of a neighbour ought not to be used as means but as the end in itself. The technopolic condition therefore, presents both the moral crisis. It dehumanises us by challenging the very notion of what it means to be a human capable of making its own informed decisions. To put it simple, the point which is underscored here is that when technological systems undermine human decision-making through opaque algorithms and surveillance, they violate the Kantian ideal of enlightenment and autonomy.

Algorithmic Tyranny and the Erosion of African Intellectual Autonomy

Across the African continent, digital transformation is dramatically reshaping how individuals access information, express their views, and engage with public life. Suffice to mention that the emerging technology (AI, mobile connectivity, social media platforms, etc.) has opened new spaces for civic innovation and political participation. However, these advancements are double-edged. Alongside increased connectivity comes a rising tide of algorithmic content filtering, digital surveillance, and state-imposed internet shutdowns. These developments pose a great risk to liberty, autonomy, and justice in the digital era.

According to Mill, liberty of thought and expression is foundational to human development. Every citizen requires individual liberty, particularly in the realm of opinion and expression, as a means to personal and societal progress.²¹ He famously contends that even false or unpopular views possess value, for they challenge prevailing beliefs and provoke deeper inquiry. Intellectual diversity, for Mill, is not a threat but a social necessity.

However, the importation of algorithmic logic by Western technology has now dominated African digital platforms and is slowly encouraging the tyranny of the majority. Nowadays, it is evident that algorithms prioritise content based on popularity, virality, and engagement metrics rather than intellectual or cultural richness. This suggests that there is amplification of dominant narratives while sidelining regional and indigenous knowledge systems. This state of affair undermines the sovereignty of developing countries who are the consumers of this Western technologies. In fact, John S. Mill once echoed that the worth of a state in the long run is the worth of the individuals composing it.²² This is to simply say that when the intellectual autonomy of individuals is eroded by automated systems, the democratic fabric of society is fundamentally weakened.

Moreover, suffice to note that in Africa, the dominance of Western-owned digital platforms complicates the information landscape. For instance, Facebook, YouTube, and TikTok operate using proprietary algorithms with little regard for local epistemologies or socio-political sensitivities. Nyabola argues that the very architecture of the internet is skewed against African users, privileging English-language content and urban perspectives.²³ This tendency resonates with what Santos terms the epistemicide of non-Western knowledge systems. This is what this paper tries to explore further in the next chapter.

20 Heidegger, *Question Concerning Technology*, 17.

21 John Stuart Mill, *On Liberty*, 63.

22 John Stuart Mill, *On Liberty*, 116.

23 Nanjala Nyabola, *Digital Democracy, Analogue Politics: How the Internet Era is Transforming Politics in Kenya* (London: Zed Books, 2018), 17.

The Technological Epistemicide in the Global South

When you are unaware of their silent violence, pesticides appear as harmless domestic tools; yet their use revealed concealed ecological consequences which illustrates how seemingly ordinary actions can obscure profound environmental harm. The underscored point here is that much like pesticides, whose destructive capacity remains hidden beneath their utilitarian appearance, technological systems in the global south appear to be operating in ways that are quietly reshaping human behaviour, knowledge systems, and social relations without immediate visibility. This normalisation of unexamined technological adoption in Africa is fostering a condition that is desensitising Africans to the deeper consequences of their actions thereby accepting technological outputs as authoritative and unquestionable. As Rachel Carson demonstrates in *Silent Spring*, human exposure to chemical agents is often pervasive yet invisible, embedded within everyday life and unfolding gradually through cumulative ecological effects.²⁴ This insight underscores how technologies that appear benign, but may in fact, carry latent destructive capacities that only become apparent over time. In a similar vein, Western technology is concealing its transformative power behind convenience and efficiency by ultimately subordinating human judgment, African cultural values, and ecological awareness to the logic of technological systems. This is in accordance to Neil Postman who established that technology has taken a direction, which renders alternative worldviews invisible and therefore irrelevant. In this sense foreign technology, must not be perceived as only a mere act, but as an act of epistemicide that possesses hidden power capable of slowly committing massive murder of developing nation's value system and beliefs. Santos understands epistemicide as the murder of indigenous knowledge and values systems in Africa and the immediate replacement of such knowledge by that from the (Western) dominant episteme.²⁵ Epistemicide is the phenomenon, which has become deeply entrenched across many African societies under the pretext of promoting development through the adoption of dominant foreign technologies. This is not an accidental by-product of modernisation, but a deliberate and systematic process sustained through a threefold strategy. Firstly, the active eradication of indigenous knowledge systems which according to Ngũgĩ wa Thiong'o, the domination of a people's language by the languages of the colonising nations was crucial to the domination of the mental universe of the colonised.²⁶ Secondly, the institutional silencing of local epistemic voices, and thirdly, the cultural dislocation that severs communities from their historical, intellectual, and ontological foundations. The following section seeks to substantiate further these three strategies.

System Eradication requires that digital technologies imported to Africa often displace local knowledge systems, overriding them with Western frameworks encoded in software, platforms, and algorithms. Obviously, this is a continuation of colonial logic, replacing indigenous epistemologies with dominant ones. This happening in schools where Western curricula has dominated in the African education sector. It is happening in the health sector where African traditional medicine is not given any platform or significant lab tests to prove ascertain their curative effectiveness. We can highly refer to Sondashi Formula or SF-2000, a claimed herbal cure for HIV/AIDS developed by a Zambia health prsonnel Dr Ludwig Sondashi. Despite early claims of success, there exists no credible scientific evidence substantiating its effectiveness, nor has it been recognised on reputable digital platforms or in peer-reviewed literature. Moreover, it remains unapproved

24 Rachel Carson, *Silent Spring* (Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 1962), 15–17.

25 Boaventura de Sousa Santos, *Epistemologies of the South: Justice against Epistemicide* (London: Routledge, 2014), 238.

26 Ngũgĩ wa Thiong'o, *Decolonising the mind: The politics of language in African literature* (James Currey, 1986), 16.

by leading global health authorities, including the World Health Organisation (WHO) and the United States Food and Drug Administration (U.S. FDA), underscoring the absence of rigorous evaluation and regulatory endorsement for initiatives of African origin. We could go further and reveal other broader coverage of this act of epistemicide on the African continent. Did you know that Africa's land area is over 30 million square kilometres, large enough to fit the United States, China, India, and much of Europe combined within its borders?²⁷ However, this knowledge is misrepresented by Web Mapping Technology (the Web Mercator Projection). No explicit justice will be done to correct this narrative as doing that will defeat the whole purpose of murdering knowledge. We could say, Africa, through Western technology, has been geographically, cultural-ly, etiologically and epistemologically side-lined and consequently murdered.

Silencing has become a deliberate strategy through which contemporary digital technologies assert epistemic dominance over Africa. By erasing or disregarding African context-specific knowledge, needs, and narratives, Western-owned platforms systematically marginalise indigenous wisdom, communal practices, and sustainable environmental stewardship. This is not mere oversight but it is a manifestation of structural power imbalances and epistemic injustice, whereby African ways of knowing are subordinated to foreign epistemologies and subordinated voices are rendered invisible in the digital sphere. This has resulted into what Santos terms as the 'violent erasure'. According to this concept, Santos argues that 'epistemologies of the South have been consistently delegitimised, a process that he calls epistemicide to mean the murder of knowledge.'²⁸ A case study on ecological knowledge in rural Kalomo villages of Zambia is a clear evidence of this. The researchers have documented a phenomenon called 'luzibo kusangana' (integrated knowledge) in which they highlighted how local environmental practices that have been lost, how local knowledge has been intergenerationally transferred, and how the interaction between local and 'external knowledge' (i.e., scientific and 'expert' knowledge originating from outside the community, brought in by external actors such as extension agents, NGOs, etc.) within the communities brings about a hybridisation process.²⁹ Hybridisation is not merely the adoption of foreign ideas, but the dynamic blending of knowledge systems, which can strengthen community resilience but may also involve selective loss or marginalisation of some traditional practices. In all this, external knowledge was perceived as superior and local practices were eclipsed. Additionally, Santos further observed that non-Western knowledge systems have been systematically underrepresented online or filtered through Western frameworks. For Santos, this is a pure cognitive injustice which shows the inequality in knowledge recognition and how inseparable it is from social injustice.³⁰

The third strategy by which African epistemologies is exterminated in this digital Western digital space is by exercising **cultural dislocation**. The latter underscores the destruction of indigenous knowledge which results into intellectual loss. It involves the destruction of the social practices and the disqualification of the social agents that operate according to such knowledge.³¹ In this line of thought, an African scholar has argued that the exposure to Western digital space

27 Harm J. de Blij, Erin H. Fouberg, and Alexander B. Murphy, *Human Geography: People, Place, and Culture*, 10th ed. (Hoboken, NJ: John Wiley & Sons, 2011), 327.

28 Boaventura de Sousa Santos, *Epistemologies of the South: Justice against Epistemicide* (London: Routledge, 2014), 92.

29 Kenneth Moombe, Choolwe Nkonde, and Peter E. Nkonkomalimba, 'Hybridisation, Resilience, and Loss of Local Knowledge and Natural Resource Management in Zambia', *Human Ecology* (2024), 52.

30 Boaventura de Sousa Santos, *Epistemologies of the South: Justice against Epistemicide* (London: Routledge, 2014), 189.

31 Santos, *Epistemologies of the South*, 243.

has affected our community negatively. Most information on the internet reflects western values and do not fully reflect the traditions, beliefs, values and culture upon which the African societies have been built.³² This clearly depicts of how Western epistemic dominance systematically marginalises knowledge from the Global South. Suffice to therefore conclusively say that Digital technologies imported to Africa often displace local knowledge systems, overriding them with Western frameworks encoded in software, platforms, and algorithms. As alluded to already, this is a continuation of colonial logic, replacing indigenous epistemologies with dominant ones.

Critical Observations and Recommendations

Critical Observations

This paper has argued that the contemporary digital condition of the Global South, particularly in Africa, cannot be understood merely as a story of technological progress or modernisation. Rather, when examined through the philosophical lens of Neil Postman's theory of technopoly, technological expansion reveals itself as a deeply normative force that reorders culture, knowledge, power, and human agency. In technopolitic conditions, technology ceases to function as a neutral tool and instead becomes an authoritative framework that dictates what counts as knowledge, efficiency, truth, and value. For the Global South, this submission to technologically hegemonic systems has produced a constellation of ethical and social challenges, including digital imperialism, technological epistemicide, widening digital divides, and the gradual erosion of human autonomy and dignity.

Drawing from Heidegger's notion of *Gestell*, the paper demonstrated how imported digital infrastructures reduce both human beings and indigenous knowledge systems to mere standing-reserve, valued only insofar as they can be extracted, optimised, or monitored. This enframing is intensified by surveillance capitalism, as described by Zuboff, wherein African users become sources of behavioural data rather than autonomous participants in digital life. In this context, data extraction mirrors historical colonial logics, except that the terrain of extraction has shifted from land and labour to cognition, culture, and social relations. As a result, technological dominance functions as a new modality of imperial power which is subtle, decentralised, and largely unaccountable.

Furthermore, the paper established that technological epistemicide is not an accidental by-product of digitalisation but a structural outcome of Western-dominated technological systems. Through the systematic displacement, silencing, and disqualification of indigenous African epistemologies, digital technologies reproduce what Santos describes as cognitive injustice. This epistemic marginalisation is compounded by algorithmic governance and platform monopolies that privilege Western languages, values, and narratives, thereby reinforcing asymmetries of recognition and authority in the global knowledge economy.

From a normative standpoint, the erosion of autonomy through technopaternalism and algorithmic control directly contradicts the Kantian ideal of enlightenment as self-legislation and Mill's defense of liberty as the foundation of intellectual and social progress. When technological systems pre-structure choices, filter information, and invisibly govern conduct, individuals are no longer treated as ends in themselves but as means within technical and economic systems. Such conditions threaten not only individual freedom but also the democratic and moral fabric

32 Memory Mkandawire, 'The Impact of Digital Media on Zambia's Old Storytelling Traditions', *Dear Lelo Blog*, December 1, 2012, https://dearlelo.blogspot.com/2012/12/impact-of-digital-media-on-zambias-old_1.htm.

of societies in the Global South.

Recommendations

In this article, we have established on various points, how western technology can be a nuisance more especially when it is not adapted to the African context. This section seeks to delineate a number of approaches that could be employed to facilitate the implementation of a more human-centered technology.

Inclusive Technology

A well-adjusted technology that can take into account the mechanisms of local norms, law, local market and seems to be the most promising approach. In the context of mitigating the adverse effects of Technopaternalism, consumers especially in Africa needs put in place legal obligations that can compel manufacturers to design technology that is flexible and sensitive to the consumers' diverse needs to allow individual have a diversified application according to different wishes and needs in the local contexts. In other ways, the global south needs to establish obligatory and socially accepted guidelines for designing technologies that are user-friendly. In effect, the goal is to allow for the establishment 'calm technologies' to be operational in foreign lands especially on the continent of Africa. In this line of thought, Ivan Illich would advocate for the establishment of *convivial technologies*. He observed that convivial tools are those, which give each person who uses them the greatest opportunity to enrich the environment with the fruits of his or her vision.³³ The point which is being underscored here is that African and other developing countries need responsive technologies capable of enhancing people's freedom to shape their world, supports creativity, and fosters participation without creating structural dependence. In this sense the ultimate goal envisaged here would be creating convivial African nations or societies where there are social arrangements that guarantee for each member the most ample and free access to the tools of the community and limit this freedom only in favour of another member's equal freedom.³⁴ Amartya Sen underscores the significance of genuine freedoms as essential conditions for individuals to pursue the lives they value. Building on this framework, Martha Nussbaum identifies central human capabilities such as senses, imagination, and thought, which are critical for exercising the freedom to seek, receive, and communicate information.³⁵ Another capability include *Affiliation* which facilitate the ability to participate in community life, both offline and online. Lastly, Nassbaum speaks of *control over one's environment* as another capability which should enhance political participation and protection of personal data. Suffice therefore to say that, the global south needs to factor in these capabilities in their digital policy in order to create digital justice but will allow citizens of developing countries to lead meaningful life by using technology meaningfully. In this sense, Nussbaum's inquisition is intriguing to us as she questions '*what is each person able to do and to be?*'³⁶ As we propose for an African digital policy framework, we want recapture the nussbaumian inquisitive mind as follows: '*What are African citizens actually able to do and to be with digital technologies?*' First, this question calls for the meaningful use of

33 Ivan Illich, *Tools for Conviviality* (London: Calder & Boyars, 1973), 21.

34 Ivan Illich, *Tools for Conviviality*, 24.

35 Martha C. Nussbaum, *Creating Capabilities: The Human Development Approach* (Cambridge, MA: Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, 2011), 33–34.

36 Nussbaum, *Creating Capabilities*, 18.

Western technologies by Africans. This insinuates that it is not enough that African citizens have access to technology but they must be able to use that access to improve their lives in ways they have reason to value. Secondly, the question calls for true development. In this sense, Nussbaum echoes that true development is a matter of enabling people to function in ways they have reason to value.³⁷ To this end, digital policies for developing countries must outline how imported technologies should have the ability to embrace the local reality content. Such technology will be able to provide the citizens of developing countries some real opportunities to achieve valued functionings. Technology should empower choices by allowing individuals to decide how, when, and whether to use it. It is for this reason that Nussbaum observed that capabilities protect the choice to function or not to function; they leave room for freedom.³⁸

Conclusively, the introduction of the *capabilities-based African digital policy framework* is going to allow for the alignment of Western Technologies with human dignity and true development. This alignment will ensure that citizens have the freedom to choose how to engage with technology. Additionally, technology will become a tool for expanding life possibilities rather than reinforcing inequalities. Thus, it is clear that by grounding African digital equity in Nussbaum's framework, policymakers can ensure that technology serves people, rather than people serving technology.

Inculcating Digital Responsibility in Developing Nations

As it stands, it appears that Africa's digital expansion through smart technologies, surveillance systems is by large advancing without fully considering or accounting for long-term risks such as Data sovereignty loss through foreign-controlled platforms, Algorithmic bias misrepresenting African contexts, and Cultural erosion from dominance of foreign epistemologies. In this section of our reflection, we therefore, wish to tap into the insights of Hans Jonas's concept of *The Imperative of Responsibility* to propose a durable solution to safeguard the future generations and the environment against such risks that continent of Africa is exposed to.

Hans Jonas' most celebrated moral principle is the imperative that as a person, you ought to: '*Act so that the effects of your action are compatible with the permanence of genuine human life*'.³⁹ When we reflect on the deployment and usage of technology under the spectrum of this imperative, it appears that there is a need for a moral responsibility to future generations which demands that technology be developed and deployed in ways that sustain humanity and nature over the long term. In order to realise this moral responsibility, African Nations will need to conduct a comprehensive ethical and societal impact assessments before adopting foreign technologies. In furtherance to this, African Nations will need to invest in local technological expertise to reduce long-term dependency. Finally, there is a need to establish legal protections for African control over data generated within the continent.

Additionally, Hans Jonas is calling Africans to exercise what he called the precautionary principle which states that '*In dubio pro malo*', to mean that when 'in doubt, err on the side of the worst-case scenario'. Therefore, similarly, African can adopt this principle as their *fil conducteur* to emphasise and show case their ethical caution in the face of uncertain but potentially catastrophic consequences of modern technologies. This precautionary principle can inform an African inter-generational consciousness so that we (Africans) can able acclaim: when we (African Nations)

37 Nussbaum, *Creating Capabilities*, 33.

38 Nussbaum, *Creating Capabilities*, 25.

39 Hans Jonas, *The Imperative of Responsibility: In Search of an Ethics for the Technological Age* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1984), 11.

are unsure about the long-term effects of a powerful technology, and if those effects could harm humanity or nature significantly, then we (African Nation) have a moral duty to avoid or delay deploying that technology until its safety is clear!

By institutionalising this precautionary principle and extending responsibility to future generations, African policymakers can align technological growth with sustainability, autonomy, and cultural integrity.

African Philosophy: A Normative Framework for Re-centering Technology Within Indigenous Epistemologies

Suffice to note that the reflection on technological hegemony in the Global South cannot be fully analysed without situating it within African philosophical thought. In particular, African philosophies emphasise relationality, communal knowledge production, moral responsibility, and harmony between human beings and their environment. John Mbiti, captures this in his philosophical concept of Ubuntu which is a moral and ontological framework which says whatever happens to the individual happens to the whole group, and whatever happens to the whole group happens to the individual. The individual can only say I am, because we are; and since we are, therefore I am.⁴⁰ In the same line of thought of relationality and communal interdependence, Gyekye discusses the Akan proverb as he echoes that a person is not a palm tree that he/she should be self-sufficient.⁴¹ All these African thoughts illustrate the argument that relationality, interdependence, and communal cooperation and knowledge are central to African philosophical conceptions of personhood and moral responsibility. However, the dominance of Western technological systems, which often prioritise efficiency, data extraction, and algorithmic decision-making, risks undermining this communal epistemology by privileging abstract, decontextualised forms of knowledge over lived, relational experience.

African epistemologies are historically grounded in oral traditions, experiential learning, and localised knowledge practices. However, digital infrastructures that are largely designed within Western contexts tend to validate only those forms of knowledge that conform to written, codified, and globally standardised formats which renders invisible alternative ways of knowing in Africa, thereby contributing to the erosion of epistemic diversity.

In addition, African philosophical traditions place significant emphasis on harmony with nature. As such, the uncritical adoption of extractive technological systems (like digital capitalism) in the Global South stands in direct tension with African ethical philosophy, which is grounded in relationality, balance, and ecological harmony. As Mogobe Ramose argues, the universe is a complex wholeness involving the multi-layered and incessant interaction of all entities.⁴² Within this framework, technologies that prioritise data extraction, commodification, and instrumental efficiency disrupt this ontological balance, reducing both human beings and their environments to resources, and thereby reinforcing processes of technological epistemicide and ecological dislocation. In light of the foregoing analysis, it appears that the integration of African philosophical perspectives on technology offers a more holistic and contextually grounded framework for critiquing technological hegemony. By re-centering indigenous knowledge systems, African philosophy offers a normative framework for reimagining technology in ways that promote human dignity and inclusive development.

40 Mbiti, John, *African religions and philosophy* (Heinemann: 1969) 108-109.

41 Gyekye Kwame, *Tradition and Modernity: Philosophical Reflections on the African Experience* (Oxford: University Press, 1997), 31-32.

42 Mogobe B. Ramose, *African Philosophy through Ubuntu* (Harare: Mond Books, 1999), 155.

Conclusion

In conclusion, suffice to note that the future of technology in the Global South must not be one of passive consumption or uncritical adoption, but of ethical discernment and epistemic self-determination. If technology is allowed to remain hegemonic and unchecked, it risks deepening inequality, dehumanisation, and epistemic erasure. However, if reimagined through robust philosophical and ethical frameworks, technology can be reclaimed as a tool that serves human dignity rather than subjugates it. The task before African societies, policymakers, and scholars is therefore not to reject technology, but to humanise it so that technological progress remains accountable to the moral, cultural, and epistemic values that define authentic human flourishing.

Contact

Chileshe Mulenga Nicholas, MA

Cavendish University Zambia
Faculty of Art, Education and Social Science
Corner of and Elizabeth, Great N Rd, Lusaka, Zambia
cmulenga@cavendish.co.zm

Dr. David Mutemwa

Cavendish University Zambia
Faculty of Art, Education and Social Science
Corner of and Elizabeth, Great N Rd, Lusaka, Zambia
dmutemwa@cavendish.co.zm