

The New Apartheid

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Precis

Futurology is the study of future probabilities. Scientists involved in futurology analyze patterns and trends so as to come up with a set of different scenarios, each of which has a different probability of occurring. Out of these studies, the hope is that policy makers might be able to make decisions that encourage positive future scenarios and discourage negative ones.

This chapter is not quite futurology, but it shares many of the ambitions of that science. The chapter is a fictional story set around 10 years in the future. It's not a prediction of how a new apartheid is going to shape global governance by mid-century. Rather, it's a story that rests upon the structures, tendencies and trends of racial ordering that exist right now across a set of different scales - city, state and global. The story gives these tendencies and trends ten years' worth of play, that is, it accelerates their movements.

So, when you read this story, don't read it as a prediction. This is a story about our here and now, and about how some futures might be birthed in the apartheid structures we currently live in and through. These racist structures are to be found in geographies of segregation, new information technology, neoliberal economics, public health and global development, and the way in which these structures articulate – that is, fold into each other.

Don't read this story as a dystopian one either. There's a lot of worrisome and alarming details. But these details exist already. What's more, so also exists the capacity and will of human beings to always find creative ways to ameliorate, resist and perhaps even overcome inequality and repression. At least, that is what I tend to put my trust in.

The story

Imagine your whole life as just one straight line. You'd only be able to stick to one groove. Your wheels would jar and shudder if you tried to change course. Life would be unsurprising: you'd know where you'd end up from where you started. Your senses would be attuned to one direction. You'd develop a certain tunnel vision. The sides of your life would be a constant motion, a kind of static streak.

All that Michelle Delany knew of the elite college in Baltimore was a static streak. For years her mother had driven up Charles Street passing Johns Hopkins' Homewood campus to turn right at 39th street towards Ednor Gardens, a median income, owner-occupied, and Black north-east neighborhood. Michelle's parents were socially aspirational. Or at least, they hoped to preserve and pass on their lower-middle-class status to their children. That's why they were committed to a college education for their eldest daughter – and a prestigious college, at that.

The best laid plans. It's funny how Michelle never imagined that there could be a campus behind Charles that had green and idyllic depth. All she knew was the sign by the east gate streaking past. Her mother's micro-directed timetable, full of purpose, and contoured to the grid of the city, had

paradoxically begun to unravel the family's painfully crafted Master-Plan. If you can't even imagine the site of your future, how could you ever inhabit it?

Straight lines come from somewhere. Maleficent or careless designs of colonial rule that last an age. Strict concerns for heredity and inheritance: only my children/race shall inherit the earth. Concretized boundaries that demarcate communities and separate the good and normal folk from bad and abnormal populations. (The harder to reach the latter, the better.) Straight lines are fundamental to racial constellations.

Consider the origins of the term *la raza*. Fourteenth century meanings include: a coarseness in fine cloth; a defect in poetic speech. Come late fifteenth century, with the reconquest of Iberia from the Muslim Moors and then the conquest of the Americas, *la raza* predominantly referred to the branding of purebred horses and the various religious lineages that made humans human. Jews, Muslims and heathens had degraded or sinful lineages compared to the Catholic who had been born into a Catholic family - no conversion, or diversion.

Limpieza de sangre - purity of blood - established the straight line as the basic cosmological feature of global order, 500 years long and counting. You had one irremovable root and you extended out from there. For the few whose root was virtuous and close to god, all for the better; for the rest, undoubtedly for the worst. The expectation of straight lines disciplined a motley humanity the world over. Michelle's mother sought to graft her daughter's life course onto a different branch of destiny. Education, she gambled, could bend straight lines, shift constellations.

Fate came knocking one day in the form of a charity devoted to the "public good". Michelle could never figure out what that term meant. Was it like a Sunday service, she once asked her mother, who assured her that at one time government had indeed administered to the public. Her father suggested she imagine praying to god for water and then asking the congregation to all pitch in with the utility bill. That was what government did when it was serving the "public". Still, try as she might, Michelle couldn't comprehend doing any of those things without using Transactional.

And Transactional was the app that she was on right now, as she slouched in the living room, trying to complete her college admission forms, with a small AC humming desperately through the window in the quiet outside heat. A year ago, Michelle's high school had received a visit from a charity that connected neighborhood schools to elite colleges. She had put her name into a lottery and was selected for a "campus tour" of Hopkins – just a couple of miles west and south.

Michelle had jumped out of the charity's minibus, dizziness instantly hitting her because Charles Street should have been moving and she wasn't. At the checkpoint on the east entrance, endless scans and affidavits micro-targeted her profile (costs paid for by the charity). Finally processed, Michelle stepped past the side streak into green depth. And blue air. And a differently dizzying sense of unguided, haphazard strolling alongside students only a year or two older than her but a lifetime distant.

Between Michelle and a future of expanded space and 360-degree motion lay that app. Transactional was the most prominent of a suite of apps belonging to data management companies that, in a short time span, had been effectively delegated governance functions by most administrations in the G18. (Brazil and South Africa were ejected from the G20 following their disastrous response to Covid19. The UK and US remained in the grouping of the world's richest economies due to "the

irreplaceable heritage of these countries within the fabric of the international community”, as the Australian representative pontificated at the time.)

Of course, the whole relational database industry had begun long before Covid19, and digital risk management was common amongst medium and large companies of all kinds. But it was between 19 and 21 that apps such as Transactional had really come into their own as platforms for administering the risk that came with the provision of public goods. Now, in the era of Covid30, public and private risk had effectively morphed into one. Some academics labelled this a shift from “public administration / digital risk management” to “digital risk administration”. Michelle’s father tried to keep up with the more cerebral current affairs podcasts and seemed to be aware of the terminology, occasionally pronouncing the phrase as if it explained his whole world.

Actually, it had begun at Johns Hopkins itself, and its Covid Dashboard. An electrical engineer called Ajeet Kumar used the freely available data from Hopkins to create a virus checker app called Symptomatic. Modelled on apps that reported crime levels in neighborhoods, Symptomatic initially assessed Covid cases at the street level, giving red or green indicators. One evening at dinner, Michelle’s father pushed a youtube video in front of her featuring an academic at Morgan State University who proceeded to wax lyrical on “digital redlining”, declaring Symptomatic to be an “apartheid app”. Michelle had heard of Apartheid in high school. But that was something very peculiar and particular to a country called South Africa, right?

Baltimore’s Roland Park Company was one of the first urban developers in the US to exclude Black peoples from owning property in their planned communities, a practice that came to be known as “redlining”. As the 20th century progressed, redlining took on different modalities. For instance, those who lived in predominantly Black neighborhoods were often denied civic and financial services on account of their zipcode, or made to pay over the odds. It was an open secret that the “redlining” of neighborhoods was homologous to Apartheid rule in South Africa. Indeed, racialized segregation in South Africa shared with the Americas a root in slavery, especially around Cape Colony. The “separateness” that the Afrikaans word “Apartheid” invoked referred to the racialization of people into White, Black, Indian and Colored races. Apartheid rule formalized redlining. The Population Registration Act of 1950 introduced identity cards for all adults, professing their assigned plot in the constellation of race. Meanwhile, the Group Areas Act of the same year segregated settlements along the lines of race by forced removal.

Around the time that Kumar was developing Symptomatic, Apple and Samsung updated their operating systems to include a non-optional Covid tracker that recorded the AGPS movements of the handset. (Huawei did the same in the separate Sino-network). This data was blue-toothed to official government agencies on the assumption that movements would be anonymized and used only to build large-scale predictive models. However, beginning in those G18 states whose populist leaders had not only mishandled 19, but had simultaneously gutted any capacity for public health initiatives, phone AGPS data was progressively franchised to private interests and de-anonymized, so long as a “public health” case could be made.

Symptomatic was one of those companies that made the shift from Hopkins to government data and in doing so converted a public good into a function of assessing risk for predominantly private interests. Put another way, Symptomatic turned medical diagnosis into racialized risk management. The pharmaceutical industry had for some time used race as a category to determine biological differences

in the testing of drugs. Many historians, sociologists and biologists repeatedly pointed out that racial categories were created way before genes were discovered, and that these categories could never provide a meaningful measure of biological or genetic differences between humans. Regardless, the bio-industry launched genes in a straight line of racial inheritance that cut right through the humans it sought to improve. Still, by treating race as a kind of shared fate, the descriptive reality that the bio-industry presented had some fidelity; it was just that the determinants of that fate were cumulatively historical, social, economic, political, psychical and spiritual rather than biological pure and simply. In a way, then, Symptomatic was just coding medical convention.

Across the G18 – and no doubt beyond too – indigenous, Black, Latino, Muslim, and other ostensibly non-white communities were variously but disproportionately affected by 19 all the way up to the latest, Covid30. Genes were nothing much to do with it. Not only had environmental and social factors contributed to a greater prevalence of some diseases amongst non-white communities. But the kind of jobs that, for example, Black peoples predominantly held, when combined with the tasks that their bosses tended to give them, meant that they spent much of their day undertaking dysgenic and contaminative labor even during pandemics.

“Essential workers” might have been the front line. However, there was a darker front line within the front line. The financial cost of illness and unemployment fell disproportionately on the front-of-the-front-line peoples, which in turn depressed house prices in their areas and thus neighbourhood desirability, ultimately intensifying the segregating tendencies that were already evident at the local and municipal level. When Michelle was ten, she remembered occasionally playing with a couple of white children down the road. But it was a long time now since even she, still in her youth, had seen anybody but Black in Ednor-Gardens.

Symptomatic intuitively short-circuited biology with race and space. Its algorithm scaled up street level data so as to reference a vast array of zipcodes, each becoming associated with one race, perhaps two non-white races, but never a mix of white and non-white races. Effectively, the app parsed the consequences of race segregation as the cause of racial difference and the numerator of risk. Practically, Symptomatic used AGPS data to determine where you spent the most amount of time, and that location provided your risk score for disease. Numbers ranged from 1-5: 1 being no risk at all; 5 being the highest risk. In all her days so far, Michelle had never seen a green number ping up on her family or her friends’ phone. The red numbers started at 4.

But Symptomatic also talked to other apps, and in doing so, laid the groundwork for digital risk administration. While Symptomatic provided the score, the Transactional app provided the indemnity to undertake a range of public (such as still existed) and (mostly) private actions. Almost all contracts of association, whether to do with work, business, civics, culture, municipality or religion, ran through Transactional. Associative activities took place in a locale, and Transactional used Symptomatic to parse the difference between the Covid score of that locale and the Covid score of the locale that the contracting individual predominantly spent time in. If the latter was larger than the former, then an indemnity was required to cover the cost of insuring against litigation for introducing disease into an area. The larger the difference between the two scores, the heftier the indemnity required to contract.

Transactional was the brainchild of Rex Coetzee. A South African born white man, naturalized as a Canadian citizen in his late teens, Coetzee had at college sculpted a utopic vision of a tech-full future for humanity. He ardently held to the claim that technological innovation solved political conundrums

and so the means of advance were ethically unimportant – only the ends mattered. Coetzee’s big innovation, he liked to believe, was the concept of a “life drive”. The “social”, Coetzee argued, flipping Freud on his head, was constituted through creatively aggressive actions. While the means of these actions might be violent or unsavory, the actions themselves cut through existing practical and ethical barriers to greatly extend systems of accumulation and production, thus prolonging human life. Transactional, Coetzee claimed, sought to extend lives by opening them up to any opportunity that might be said to mark an associational “life moment”, whether that be voting, employment, charity, church, health care, property acquisition, credit or education.

Now, it was entirely possible to register for a 19-30 blood test to determine genetically and accurately whether you were infected. Yet the cost of that test had to be paid up-front, in full, and was simply prohibitive even to those aspirational families living in Ednor-Gardens. The only practical alternative was to pay the monthly insurance to indemnify against private litigation for spreading Coronavirus outside of your zipcode.

And that was the sticking point. Frequenting a 1 or 2Covid zipcode – for work, study or any other organized activity - basically placed the indemnity option way beyond the means of Michelle’s family – and pretty much every other family she knew. True, Ednor-Gardens was not 5 territory, which came in about a mile south. And a 4Covid, the score for her neighborhood, could be doable for contracting to a 1 or 2Covid zipcode so long as the activity or membership being applied for and contracted to was a one-off or extremely short term. But the four-year stint that came with an elite college degree in a 1Covid zipcode made 4Covid indemnity costs entirely unaffordable to Michelle’s family.

Activists and intellectuals regularly challenged Coetzee with a tranche of questions: which lives were sufficiently counted as human so as to be prolonged; if some peoples’ lives were shortened in the course of “extension” did it mean that they were insufficiently human; wasn’t this life energy driven by the pursuit of racialized genocide? Coetzee never provided a counter-argument. But he did react unfailingly to the South African connection his critics often made. “I am a Canadian citizen”, Coetzee would bluster; (some people could, it seemed, convert their inheritance); “is there anything less Canadian than racism and genocide?” Symptomatic PR provided a far blander response to such challenges: the app was not racist but merely described reality, all the better to deal with it.

Nonetheless, it was an open secret. Everyone who felt the effect knew that Symptomatic and Transactional worked to render digital risk administration as an apartheid mode of distributed governance. Everyday-slang drew together the connections between wealth, location and race. In hair salons and barber shops, 1Covid was known as “1white1wealth”, 4Covid – “4black4sure” – 5Covid – “blackasred”, attenuated before long to “blackass”.

If you listen carefully enough, you’ll catch the wisdom in the creative-conventional. Take, for instance, the standard mode of categorizing race by way of phenotypes. The root of *pheno* is “to show” or “to present”. But *la raza*’s global constellations have always plotted both physical features *and* behaviors into straight lines. Who one associates with and how, how one talks, what one wears, eats, where one travels and resides etc. are as much “presentation” as skin color or hair texture. Hence: 1white1wealth, and blackass.

What those-who-felt-it knew was that, in the post-public era of digital risk administration, wealth equated to location equated to race, all of which equated to almost free access to capital,

opportunity and influence. If you were 1white1wealth then you made and remade your own heredity: you could circle, zigzag, idle and roam with pure freedom. Even if you decided to slum-it in a 5Covid neighborhood for a protracted period of time, and even if you thrived at the Symptomatic color shift from green to red on your phone, you could simply pay the Transactional indemnities and proceed as normal until the algorithm eventually returned you to your 1Covid zipcode.

That kind of freedom was a world away from Michelle. But the campus idyll still called her, just two miles south west. She had hatched a plan. It was the kind of plan that her father could not directly agree to, because to do so would be to acknowledge his digital incarceration and subservience to the Apartheid app. It was the kind of plan that her mother had sanctioned, albeit through a recitation of Psalms 121: "I will lift up mine eyes unto the hills, from where cometh my help..."

Joyce Moyo was one of an increasingly diminishing group of foreign students who came to Johns Hopkins on scholarship, in her case from Zimbabwe. Like Michelle, Joyce belonged to one of the few remaining aspirational families, with parents who still believed that an education could set you apart and launch you into a future of low-density suburb living. Joyce had studied her way into the University of Zimbabwe, navigated around the boys, the strikes, the military incursions into campus, the ET (emergency taxi) drivers, and diminished library materials to win a place on Hopkins' English literature graduate program. (By strategic acts of omission, Joyce's parents had on more than one occasion created the impression to their friends and extended family that the daughter was studying to become a medical doctor).

First, though, Joyce had to travel to Pretoria, South Africa, to conjure the magic visa from one of three US embassies left on the continent. There, she undertook a procedure that Symptomatic had made virtually obsolete in the US. Actual blood tests – one, two, three draws of blood covering all the "Black diseases" that the United States Alien Control Services (USACS) had listed on their protocols. Surprisingly, Joyce's blood confessed to no sin. On arrival at Dulles airport, Virginia, Joyce was made to take the tests again in a side room to passport control. Thirty-six hours of lying uncomfortably on the plastic chairs and she was finally admitted to the country. Fellow non-American graduate students had already advised her to stay in the US, once admitted, until the degree was finished. And now she understood why.

Joyce met Michelle on her campus visit, one year ago. Joyce had been asked to speak about "international diversity" and had provided a stream of consciousness that was all at once a harder indictment of the US system that even Malcolm X would have given *and* a diatribe about how American Blacks don't seize the incredible opportunities that the country offers them. Michelle had not really recognized herself in any of Joyce's speech, but she was enamored by the speaker's confidence.

They had kept in casual touch via messaging. One day, the conversation torqued. Joyce had had to send most of her stipend back to her folks in Kadoma, a farming town two hours' drive from Harare, the capital of Zimbabwe. A 30 outbreak had combined with a local resurgence of Anthrax poisoning. The poison had been laid long ago by the Rhodesian army in rural farming areas. Remaining dormant beneath the soils, it pushed itself up every now and then as a colonial after-death. 30 + Anthrax had devastated both the local farms and the local markets. Joyce's parents and sisters and brothers were suffering. There was no choice. But that left her in deep financial trouble states-side.

Michelle had always joked that neither security nor staff could really tell her and Joyce apart if it came down to it. All they needed to do was to harmonize their hairstyles. Michelle had a point. Most of the security personnel who manned the Hopkins checkpoints were white and from the counties that surrounded the city. Not too long ago, cleaners, cooks, grounds-people and security staff were all Black Baltimoreans, with perhaps a pinch of Latino. But then Symptomatic and Transactional came along. To be employed in a 1Covid location like the Hopkins' Homewood campus required a 3Covid score at least, else the indemnity required made the wage worthless. Black security now secured only Black property in Black areas.

And so, three months prior to submitting her application, Michelle began to meet Joyce at the bus-stop outside the Hopkins East Entrance. Joyce would give Michelle her pass and she would slide through the checkpoint onto campus. See, it wasn't sufficient to give Joyce her phone to keep overnight. Symptomatic was a little cleverer than that. The app also recorded phone use and personal mobility over a period of 24 hours, and aggregated that data into a pattern. Any unusual usage or movement would send a red flag with an automatic penalty that downgraded your Covid score by 1 point. It was simply not possible to identify each and every one of your digital and somatic habits when many of them were hidden within repetition and muscle memory. This was why Michelle had to physically occupy the space that Joyce did, on campus, while her co-conspirator shared with a graduate friend just across the road, off campus.

But the whole plan rested on a gambit. The insurrectionary information came from whatsapp. It came from high school friends and their elder siblings who had read this and that, and most of all, it came from a few people around the neighborhood – and other such neighborhoods - who had somehow managed to land a job, a deal, a scholarship that would definitely have required the out-of-reach 3Covid.

It went like this. Symptomatic averaged out a user's residency in weekly slots, for efficiency's sake. Flags would be raised if the majority of your time was spent in a different metric neighborhood, and a grinding set of documents would have to be produced to prove that you had indeed moved up to a higher location. If these documents were not forthcoming, then a red flag and a point deduction came your way instead. However, the system would not flag if you spent a minority of each week in a different metric and racial neighborhood. And that time spent elsewhere *could* factor positively into your Covid score.

Symptomatic could only be so clever. After all, app algorithms extended the straight line of race constellations. And that was the flaw in the system, namely, the extreme rigidness of theory and application that made race thinkable and effective. Digital risk administration could not imagine that you might split time across different neighborhoods. Multiplicity of abode, just like circling, zigzagging, errantry, was not a mode of existence that poor neighborhood people were supposed to be able to access. The algorithm said "null".

Five hundred bucks would be enough to live on, Joyce calculated, before the next stipend was due. Meanwhile, Michelle calculated that moonlighting in a 1white1wealth zipcode three times a week – just under half of the week days - might bump her score into 3, opening the prospect for a just-about-affordable indemnity and possible entrance into the world that she currently only inhabited under camouflage. At least, that was the gambit. In her quiet moments, Michelle conceded to herself that no one really knew.

Just then Symptomatic flashed green. 3. Michelle's body shifted in the chair. She tapped the "report" button and the screen morphed back into Transactional. Her eyes did not really want to catch the whole vista at once. She saw a blur in the corner, which approximated a Hopkins logo.

Tedros Makonnen stepped onto the speedboat at Port Andraxt. Once, the meeting would have taken place at the Raddison Blu in Addis Ababa; it had then moved to the UNDP office in New York after non-Africans refused to fly to the continent; and now it was to occur on board a super-yacht. This final shift in location was less to do with entry into the US for the likes of Tedros and much more to do with the shift in global governance towards international administration.

Palma, the capital city of Majorca, had a world-standard marina. But Tedros's location was forty-five minutes car ride to the south west tip of the island. And now, he realized, as he scanned the horizon of Port Andraxt, it was naive of him to have thought that the yacht would be moored directly in the port's bay. Instead, the chartered speedboat took him around three headlands, eventually depositing him just off the coast of Sa Dragonera - an island off an island, and uninhabited at that. This is how these people like to conduct their business, Tedros reflected. Not only away from their stakeholders, but away from humanity at large.

Tedros worked for UNDP Africa's Regional Service Center, specifically, in the area of disaster risk management. Work was chaotic. No surprise: parts of the African continent were experiencing a triple crisis of climate, covid and crops. Many African states were desperate for funding to build capacity in public health as well as nationally and regionally co-ordinated food redistribution networks. But that money was no longer forthcoming.

In some ways, Tedros and his fellow travelers had won the hardest battle yet lost the war. All of them, apparatchiks of medium-growth states of the Global South that had become regional-hubs, were now firmly in command of the offices and the orientation of the UNDP. But just as they had won such a victory, G-18 states had effectively recused themselves of any meaningful involvement in the formal institutions of global governance. As they empty-chaired, the funding dissipated. Currently, the UNDP was reduced to a bureaucratic statistics machine; there were no resources to redress problems, only to record them.

The easiest way to explain the loss of this leverage was to compare two indicators that had over the last years contended for influence in the halls of the UNDP: the Human Development Index (HDI) and Overview. HDI was designed to counter the reduction of development to economic growth by flexing education and living standards into the equation as well as paying attention to various inequalities on a national level. Overview was a very different indicator. But it was the one that the vicarious elites of the G-18 countries used to determine which states they should bilaterally invest in.

Overview was like an international version of Symptomatic and Transactional all bundled into one. It had been developed by a nameless consortium of investment companies, drawing from the calculus of political risk that had long directed their investment strategies across a rocky geopolitical terrain. Overview took the historical rates and numbers of infection in each country from UNDP data and scaled it according to GDP. The premise was that the richer the economy, the better it could deal

with Covids. To arrive at its 1-5 score, Overview did not parse quality of growth nor distribution of wealth (or illness) as HDI did.

All this resulted in Overview providing a paradoxical set of evaluations: the societies that had been most destabilized by Covids – for example, the US, the UK etc – scored well in theory due to their GDP, while in practice they had consistently performed appallingly when it came to the human cost of pandemics; whereas those that had succeeded in their public health measures despite their poverty – for example, Senegal, Botswana – had been burdened with an impossible-to-shake “shithole”. (A shithole was established slang amongst the development industry for a 5Covid score). The higher the score, the higher the interest rates on any bilateral loans. And if one suffered a shithole, to receive any loan at all one would have to put up a portfolio of natural resources as indemnity.

The initial country scores that Overview generated after Covid19 had remained the same right the way through to 30. Some developmentalists that Tedros knew had complained about the utility of Overview due to the fact that those scores never changed even as the world did. But that sounded like a weak complaint to him. It would be to mis-state Overview’s purpose, which was to act as a credentializing instrument by which financial capital and associated insurance industries could leverage what was left of the Development project.

In fact, Overview leveraged development at both the state level and the individual level. You could download the Overview app and set up a “citizen” account so long as you resided in any country outside of the G18. Overview used the same UNDP database as the HDI to parse the worthiness of individuals seeking micro-credits. (No irony was lost on the likes of Tedros that the UNDP fed the instrument of its own destruction.) This database aggregated Covid rates by reference to every country’s equivalent measure of a “zipcode”. Then the Overview app deployed the Symptomatic algorithm to parse the data. Depending on the country, data could be regionally patchy and quite coarse. But this coarseness was no less so than Overview’s evaluation of states.

The speedboat lapped up to the stern of the super-yacht. Tedros looked up. Go where you want in unrivalled luxury by tacking into whatever wind or current your whims decide (there are no tracks laid down on the ocean); anchor where you want and run your own quarantine and border guard from your deck; pay no tax to anyone; live as if you are the only human left on earth. (Servants didn’t count). Then Tedros thought of the majority of citizens from non-G-18 states. When it came to Overview, they were the state, and the state was them – and these states had heavy adjectives: “African”, “Asian”, “Pacific” etc. Their emplacement in the constellations of race were so cardinal that no trade wind could shift them.

Fortifying himself for the meeting, Tedros recalled all his career achievements, his mind tracing its way back to his MBA in International Administration at the London School of Economics. Just a year before he began the professional degree, the last Masters in Global Governance had closed. The shift from a graduate degree in social sciences to a professional qualification reflected the evolution of digital risk administration in G18 countries. Academics had finally admitted that it was no longer possible to speak of the art of governing at a global level – an art that involved ideas of trust, mutuality, public good, and judgment. “Administration” seemed to fit better the sense of transaction, instrumentalism, and private interest that now effectively shaped conduct at the highest level. A few radicals pointed out that the new name of the field invoked its early 20th century origins in imperial administration; although even empire mooted some sense of trust, good and judgment, albeit paternalistic and hierarchical.

Actually, the domestic shifts within G18 countries towards digital risk administration were even more jarring when scaled up to the global level where the idea of “publics” was already problematic. Public management, a quaint idea of the late 20th century, promoted the running of the state apparatus as if it were a business. Now, in most domestic jurisdictions, a billionaire class firmly occupied the seats of government. There was no longer an “as if” qualification to the commandment. Billionaires ran state apparatuses as direct extensions of their financial interests. The individuals might come, go and return, but the family interests remained and the effect was clear. Government figures who interacted with international organizations did so purely to find the most lucrative investment opportunities for their portfolios. USAID, for instance, had become a giant fund manager for the family cabals that rotated through government offices, with the help of Overview at both the state and individual level.

Yes, thought Tedros, the old institutional set up was racist, hierarchical; but at least it had to justify itself according to institutionalized rules and regulations that referenced a global good life. Now racism was unmediated – a direct function of private interests that were naturalized as biological inheritance: those who had the capacity to play the market were destined to inherit the earth. Yet here he was. A rare meeting, to try and sell the idea of a global fund that would not be administered via apps and racialized disease vectors. A fund that equitably addressed basic need. The justification: even markets require external stabilizing measures from time to time. An old argument. It smelt old. But it was all he had.

Tedros climbed the short ladder onto the latest superyacht built by the Chinese high-end luxury company, Bucolic. The Effulgence - that was the name painted in silver on the gunwale – was the property of Carson Colin, current US Secretary of State, and a member of the most prominent Black billionaire family on the planet. (Interestingly, each generation was becoming lighter than the previous one). Colin had loaned out the yacht to a lower functionary of USAID who thrilled at the prospect and sent the bill to the UNDP, of course. At the top of the boarding ladder, Tedros could see the red shawls of the testing station clapping in the breeze. He began the short climb and hesitated as his hand glanced over an intricate yet gaudy gold figurine of a woman riding a dolphin. The point of the detail, Tedros decided, was purposeful cruelty: to make you feel sick enough to evacuate your conscience before you stood on deck. For humanity’s sake, he said to himself.

From Harare, the Bulawayo road starts out fat, then past Norton it slims. Through one, two small towns: a burst of activity punctuating the quiet fields and occasional road-side maize or fruit seller. Come Kadoma, you can carry on, passing through the bus transit area; or you can side off into the other side of town – the commercial sector. As soon as you turn, the asphalt gorges and riverines. Local politicians have for decades siphoned off any tax money. Ironically, their imported cars are too delicate and sophisticated to handle the local roads.

A ways to go yet. After the commercial part of town, you turn right again. The Rimuka road starts fat too but slims down quickly. Past small houses that serve as a kaleidoscope of businesses: you name it, it can be repaired. Left past the police station, and a quick right to arrive at the back of the township’s shopping mall. Rimuka township suffered greatly from the combined anthrax and covid outbreak a little while ago. That fact might surprise you, given the hum of low-grade activity. But look closer and the skein of the social fabric has stretched further than anyone thought it could – almost transparent. Still, with every tightening comes opportunity for someone.

She has a name, but it's not for you. She has been waiting patiently for the entire afternoon, just outside Mr Mandara's store. He comes out with the last phone for the day; a woman called Joyce Moyo has just deposited it. This one has been coming every day for the past week. But there has been no eye contact, just straight into the car and gone. It doesn't really matter: recognition is hardly necessary, or expected.

Mr Mandara holds the money and will not release her share until the next morning, come safe return. So she leaves in a slow pace with her bag of five phones. It's a long walk down roads with ever dwindling densities of houses until they finally morph into patchwork fields. Soon, partial brick walls litter the sides of her path, overgrown, but reclaimed as homes by tarpaulin or, sometimes, nothing at all – just naked chairs and a small gas stove with smoke marking habitation. A rusted sign says "New Ngezi..." but the following words – she has always thought they originally said "growth point", but she can't be sure – have been written over with "liberated territory". She is pretty sure she knows who is the author of that palimpsest.

Now she starts to errantly navigate the partially formed maze of stunted walls. There is a whole menu of activity, if you know how to put the small offerings together. Over there, behind the bushes, where a few flags are flying, veiled figures sit in a circle, a murmuring rising just like the ubiquitous smoke haze. Vaposteries: indigenizing the Christian gospel since its first arrival. The cars and small buses nearby tell you that the congregation do not stay out here – they are day maroons.

That is to her left. To her right, she hears from somewhere the chunk-chunk-chunk of mining equipment. The sound lets her know that someone has bought into a rumor and brought a machine. Perhaps there is gold under the once arable top soil. Should greed get rewarded so relentlessly? She doesn't know. She does know that there is humanity everywhere here, the closer you look. With that thought she veers off track, down a long, winding dust path, over a bank, and through a small piece of bush. Arriving at her destination within three hours. Dusk is falling.

The small clearing has its own kind of order. Sisi Vangu is tending to the imperfect rows of dark-blue-black and green. Is that her real name? Probably not. But it's fitting: Sisi – sister – Vangu - my: she is a sister to everyone. The first night that she spent at Sisi Vangu's, she had asked why Sisi had planted the small black maize. Sisi Vangu explained that this variant was more drought resistant than the ubiquitous white maize yet also yielded a higher calorific intake. The larger white variety had been grown on white farms during Rhodesian times, and many of these farms could afford irrigation systems while small scale farmers could not. Why, Sisi Vangu had asked, is white mielie meal a sign of good-living when poor people would survive far better if they planted the black?

Bhudhi Vangu is sitting in his favorite shaded spot. He is reading a battered copy of a book – they are always battered. This one is red with a purple stroke and a title top left: "A Dying Colonialism". She remembers another book from her last visit, a thicker one. Ah yes, it's still there, top of the pile, entitled "Black Reconstruction". It looks like it is written by a French man, she guesses.

She knows without any doubt that this erudite brother-to-everyone is the author of the New Ngezi palimpsest. Because on more than one occasion, over a meal of sadza and murewo, he has explained the concept to her. "When we fought Rhodes we carved out liberated territories so that we could live the right way, without any shenanigans from the colonizing forces. We did so again, when we fought our own Apartheid under Smith, then when we fought ZANU. We still do it now" - and he would

glint at her bag of phones - “when we fight Overview”. Bhudhi Vangu loves the flourish of a rhetorical argument well made. He tells it as if he has no idea that he has told it a hundred times already. This, she knows, is the right moment to offer to them both the bond notes before they have to ask for their fee.

Bhudhi is right: it is a digitally liberated territory. Or at least, there are no phone masts anywhere nearby. If you bothered to think that the area needed surveillance you might task a satellite. You’d never bother. So instead, the AGPS on all phones in the area reports a “null”. You stay for 8 or more hours out here, and you don’t get categorized – the algorithm waits. Now, just spend a few hours a day in a 3covid spot, in a car, on the street under a tree, with some roasted maize, and yes, there are those areas around even in Kadoma, and your score picks right up. You might even be able to afford some cash from Overview. And on such slim margins, local empires have been born.

Do spirits move in a straight line, shadowing the living? Or do they free wheel above and around constricted souls? She is one of many phone runners, colloquially known as ma-mobile-mumweya – the mobile spirits. They dwell in the night time places that the phone owners abject. Null is not nothing, it is an un-calculable valuation.

Soon, Sisi Vangu takes her by the hand and she knows it is time to sleep. As they retreat into the low, warm light of the rondaval, Bhudhi Vangu starts to arrange his tarpaulin for the night, just at the circumference where the light falls on the ground outside. She prepares for bed. Silence and the monotony of routine strays her mind. Do they have children, away in Harare, or South, or London, or America, she asks? Sis Vangu pauses. Yes, they do and they work for murungu. But she doesn’t say where and the word does not reveal. Murungu means white man; but it also means boss. The term fuses race, position and power. A black Zimbabwean could be a murungu just as much as a white American. To be a boss is to become white; and to be white is to be boss.

Maybe, she offers, after they have saved the phone fees for a few months they could join their children? “And what, then?” Sisi Vangu returns the offer, value added. “Work for murungu too? Will that be your path? Or maybe you are saving to become a murungu yourself.” The words fall to the ground. “Ah no, I don’t know Sisi. I haven’t thought about it that much”. The lie hangs in the air. Starting afresh with eyes trained on her own routine, Sisi Vangu explains: “There are the black workers, there are the white workers, and then there are the murungu. But for our part, we want to see the Coming of the Lord”.

Annotated Bibliography

Technology and race

Benjamin, Ruha. 2019. *Race after Technology: Abolitionist Tools for the New Jim Code*. - Benjamin argues that algorithms are not immune from the flaws of the engineers who write them. If the code incorporates the implicit and explicit prejudices and biases of the programmer, then the algorithm will provide racist outcomes.

Weigel, Moira. 2020. “Palantir Goes to the Frankfurt School.” *B20 - the Online Community of the Boundary 2 Editorial Collective* (blog). Accessed August 22, 2020. This article examines the connection

between new digital technologies and new right-wing ideologies. Silicon valley is not necessarily "liberal".

Space and Race

Brown, Lawrence T. 2021. *The Black Butterfly: The Harmful Politics of Race and Space in America*. Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press. Brown's book demonstrates how city politics and policies can provide accumulated structured advantages for some populations and disadvantages for others. The consequences of racism are not individual but are inherited and propagated based on which neighborhoods families are able to live in.

Elliott-Cooper, Adam. 2018. "The Struggle That Cannot Be Named: Violence, Space and the Re-Articulation of Anti-Racism in Post-Duggan Britain." *Ethnic and Racial Studies* 41 (14): 2445–63. Elliott-Cooper shows how racist state violence is deployed, experienced and resisted through zipcodes rather than directly through racial categories.

Harris, Jason T. 2012. *Redlines: Baltimore 2028 : An Anthology of Speculative Fiction*. Baltimore: Redlines Publishing. This is a collection of speculative fiction, which fast-forwards the racist structures of Baltimore to the future and imagines what forms of oppression and resistance might develop out of our current conditions.

Biosciences and Race

Duster, Troy. 1990. *Backdoor to Eugenics*. New York, NY: Routledge. Duster takes issue with the way in which "race" is smuggled into the sociological and political use of new genetic technologies. There is no such thing as a "race gene" or even set of genes.

Merz, Sibille, and Ros Williams. 2018. "'We All Have a Responsibility to Each Other': Valuing Racialised Bodies in the Neoliberal Bioeconomy." *New Political Economy* 23 (5): 560–73. Sibille and Williams make the case that even though new advances in bio-medicine seek to ameliorate racial inequalities, the broader inequalities entrenched by neoliberal capitalism subvert the aim of health equality.

Histories and theories of race

Gilmore, Ruth Wilson. 2007. *Golden Gulag: Prisons, Surplus, Crisis, and Opposition in Globalizing California*. Berkeley: University of California Press. Gilmore's study of racism and the carceral system is very influential amongst those who call for "abolishing" the police.

James, C. L. R. 1993. *American Civilization*. Cambridge, MA.: Blackwell. James was one of the most famous Black Marxists of the 20th century. In this book, he tries to translate Marxist principles into the vernacular language of the American creed: life, liberty, happiness etc. He is especially concerned with associational life and the way in which racism denies freedom of association.

Lentin, Alana. 2020. *Why Race Still Matters*. Cambridge: Polity Press. Lentin argues that societies are in need of racial literacy, especially the ability to recognize race in ways other than simply individual prejudice. One might "not be a racist" yet still be complicit in reproducing racist structures.

María Elena Martínez. 2013. *Genealogical Fictions: Limpieza de Sangre, Religion, and Gender in Colonial Mexico*. Stanford: Stanford University Press. This book looks at the ways in which race was imbued in the colonization of the Americas through the religious (Catholic) ascription of "purity of blood".

Wynter, Sylvia. 2003. "Unsettling the Coloniality of Being/Power/Truth/Freedom: Towards the Human, After Man, Its Overrepresentation - An Argument." *CR: The New Centennial Review* 3 (3): 257–337. An incredibly influential scholar from the Caribbean, Wynter argues that our conceptions of humanity since 1492 are fundamentally based upon racist distinctions between who is human and who is not properly human.

McKenzie, Earl. 1993. *Against Linearity*. Kingston: Peepal Tree Press. A Caribbean poet, McKenzie intonates that those who have survived slavery do so through cultures that resist the imposition of a "straight line".

Development and Race

Engerman, Stanley L. "Slavery, Freedom and Sen." In *Amartya Sen's Work and Ideas: A Gender Perspective*, edited by B. Agarwal, J. Humphries, and I. Robeyns, 187–213. London: Routledge, 2005. Engerman provides a critical appraisal of famous development economist Amartya Sen, and his "capability approach", which came to underpin the UNDP's Human Development Index.

Moyo, Sam. 2011. "Three Decades of Agrarian Reform in Zimbabwe." *The Journal of Peasant Studies* 38 (3): 493–531. Moyo, a Zimbabwean scholar of development, provides a critical balance sheet of the land redistribution movements, especially under President Robert Mugabe.

"Zimbabwe: Lessons from Land Reform." 2013. Al Jazeera.

<https://www.aljazeera.com/programmes/south2north/2013/06/2013621124213836626.html>. This program discusses land redistribution with Sam Moyo and a commercial farmer in the Kadoma region, Charlene Mathonsi, who is involved in innovative and equitable agricultural initiatives.

Books that appear in the story

Du Bois, William Edward Burghardt. 1995. *Black Reconstruction in America*. New York: Simon & Schuster. This is the book that Bhudi Vangu has been reading. Written by an African-American scholar, it is easily one of the most influential books on the American Civil War and the fate of the subsequent "reconstruction" effort. The first chapters are titled The Black Worker, The White Worker, The Planter, The General Strike. The chapter that recounts the moment of emancipation is titled "The Coming of the Lord".

Fanon, Frantz. 1967. *A Dying Colonialism*. New York: Grove Press. Bhudi Vangu has been reading this book by famous Martiniquan anti-colonial psychiatrist Frantz Fanon. In the book, Fanon talks about "liberated territories".