

# Now You See It: Decolonization, Decoloniality, AI, and the Internet

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20 September 2024 | 4:00 PM – 6:00 PM  
via Zoom



UNIVERSITY OF THE PHILIPPINES  
CENTER FOR  
INTEGRATIVE AND  
DEVELOPMENT  
STUDIES

# **Now You See It: Decolonization, Decoloniality, AI, and the Internet**



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**Telephone:** (02) 8981-8500 loc. 4266 to 4268 / (02) 8426-0955

**Email:** cidspublications@up.edu.ph

**Website:** [cids.up.edu.ph](http://cids.up.edu.ph)



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(From left to right): Mr. Sanchez, Dr. Lavides, Prof. Khan, and Atty. Bañez during the Now You See It: Decolonization, Decoloniality, AI, and the Internet roundtable discussion via Zoom

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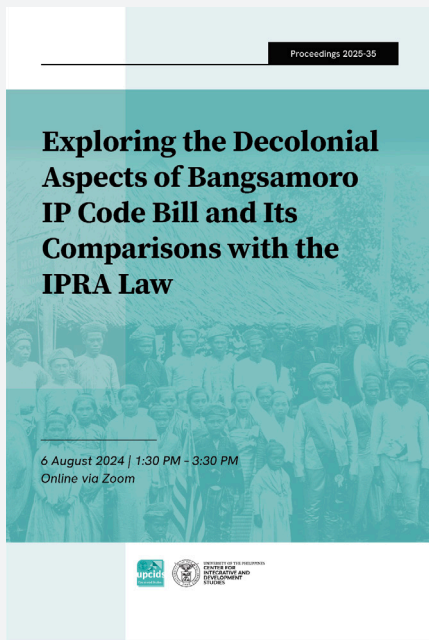
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## About the Proceedings

The University of the Philippines Center for Integrative and Development Studies (UP CIDS) Decolonial Studies Program (DSP) organized the roundtable discussion (RTD), “Now You See IT: Decolonization, Decoloniality, AI, and the Internet,” on September 20, 2024, 4:00 - 6:00 PM via Zoom.

The RTD was moderated by Asst. Prof. Francess Antoinette Cruz, the Co-Convenor of the UP CIDS DSP, and was documented by Jasmine Martinez, RL.

This discussion invited four researchers and experts to give insights on how Artificial Intelligence (AI) and the Internet serve as tools to further aggravate colonial power and systems, especially in the Global South such as in the Philippines. These four panel members were: Maria Margarita R. Lavides, PhD (UP CIDS), Rachel Khan, PhD (College of Mass Communication, UP Diliman), Atty. Emerson S. Bañez (College of Law, UP Diliman), and Ferdinand L. Sanchez (University of Canberra). The panelists discussed topics on political discourse and new technologies, AI in education, media literacy and political discourse, impacts of AI in the economy, ethical use of AI, and AI Governance in the Philippines.

The first part discussed how large technology companies are now increasingly gaining power especially regarding their market capitalization and global reach. Questions were raised as to how these companies are held accountable, i.e. to what extent they abide by ethical policies, and to what extent algorithms may be manipulated by those with malicious intent to influence public opinion through misinformation and promote certain political ideologies. This is apparent with the proliferation of trolls, bots, misinformation channels and communities, deep fakes, and influencing operations among others.

The education sector has also been one of the most affected industries when AI became more popular and accessible. Although the initial reaction to AI in schools was to ban its usage as it was seen as a threat to the learning abilities and pedagogy, there are now recent calls for it to be incorporated in the curriculum. Nevertheless, an adequate assessment of the readiness of the education system of the country is necessary as AI is already foreseen as an



inevitable part of the future. A curriculum that includes AI would inevitably feature its proper usage, benefits, and shortcomings in the classroom or other channels of learning. Before the rush to include AI however, there are ongoing concerns about schools lacking access to devices and the Internet, which only exacerbate the digital divide.

Shortly after discussing the education sector came the related field of critical media literacy, which highlighted the need for greater introspection regarding both personal and public information found online. While there may be efforts by civil service organizations and other institutions to fact check and combat disinformation, and regulatory policies by government for the online sphere, the final level of verifying information still lies on its end users, who need to be empowered and taught how to discern that not everything they see online are factual and authoritative.

The idea that AI will soon replace a lot of jobs has become a source of fear for many whose jobs may be made redundant by AI. Nevertheless, it was mentioned during the RTD how AI opens new job opportunities, although focusing on tech and training AI. It was also advised that people should pursue careers that are difficult for AI to take over, such as those jobs that do not require processes automation or those that require humanistic qualities of empathy and care. Questions were raised during the discussion on whether AI is neutral, but it was agreed that they might be, but it was instead the intentions of their creators, the trainers, and the users that make these tools either harmful or useful. After all, machine learning algorithms are developed by humans, so the input reflects the kind of objectives and purpose these systems are intended to serve. Individuals are urged not to be slaves of these technologies and to interact more with the real world, but are also urged to help train the AI for it to have good foundations and data, and therefore, be used for better and ethical purposes. There are, for example, issues involving the exploitation of workers and raw materials, such as cobalt, from the Global South by the big tech companies based on the Global North. They should be held accountable for the conflicts and further divide their motives have caused, and to not further take advantage over the needs of the Global South.

Concluding the discussion, the panel shared their current knowledge of AI governance in the Philippines and their hopes for the future. Laws and policies are only drafted to be reactive when something has already happened, so it is necessary that a policy framework should be produced to guide further policies of AI and the Internet in the country.



# Opening Remarks

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*Marie Aubrey J. Villaceran, PhD*

*Convenor, Decolonial Studies Program*

*UP Center for Integrative and Development Studies (CIDS)*

Dr. Marie Aubrey J. Villaceran, convenor of the UP CIDS Decolonial Studies Program delivered the opening remarks. In her address, she noted how social media and the other digital platforms can both reproduce and challenge hegemonic political ideologies. Thus, she emphasized the importance of assessing “how these technologies are used and what underlying power structures they actually move in force.” Dr. Villaceran expressed hoped that the RTD allows to explore the promotion of critical digital literacy that empowers individuals and communities “to recognize and resist” colonial power dynamics.



# Discussion

## INTRODUCTION OF THE PANELISTS

### 1. **Maria Margarita R. Lavides, PhD**

*Research Fellow, Data Science for Public Policy Program  
Center for Integrative and Development Studies  
University of the Philippines*

Maria Margarita R. Lavides, PhD has various involvements in a non-government organization (NGO) and is an educator in public governance in UP Clark. She is also a published author with several works on decolonization and decoloniality, in which she had experience in employing qualitative methodologies such as interviews, focus group discussions (FGD), and thematic analysis. Dr. Lavides has since embarked in using new technological tools when she led the UP CIDS Data Science Team on researching the concept of *pakikipagkapwa* (shared identity) using the *Sikolohiyang Pilipino* approach. In this study, they utilized the natural language processing (NLP) approach of artificial intelligence (AI), specifically the human-computer interaction (HCI), for the interpretation of the 600,000 data points they collected through web scraping of several social media sites such as YouTube and Twitter. Their findings, which show that colonial biases are evident in these platforms, will later on be comprehensively discussed in a public webinar they will organize after their study has been published (see Kobayashi et al 2024). She experienced how using AI, big data analytics, and Python topic modeling techniques offers more insights and dimensions on their data, in comparison to traditional analog research methods, and sees it as the future direction of research methodologies; so, she urged the audience to also use these new tools and techniques should they do research projects on decolonization or culture.

## **2. Atty. Emerson S. Bañez**

*Assistant Professor, College of Law  
University of the Philippines Diliman*

The works and expertise of Atty. Bañez lies in the intersection of law and technology, in which he recalled at a time being a programmer in ABS-CBN watching the impeachment trials on television, when he realized how law is comparable to programming and software – both with their own defined systems of rules governing them. His current research is about using different forms of AI to perform legal reasoning, touching upon how legal reasoning was deemed simple and easy in the early days of AI by its scholars, but later on proven to be more difficult than they initially thought it would be.

## **3. Ferdinand L. Sanchez**

*Research Assistant, Center for Deliberative Democracy and Global Governance  
University of Canberra*

Aside from his interests in deliberative democracy and Filipino masculinity, Sanchez is also involved in disinformation studies and parallel public sphere research through Sigla Research Center. One particular study revolved around how influence operations and disinformation aggravated the polarization of peoples of opposing political beliefs during the 2022 Philippine National Elections. They also have an upcoming book chapter entitled “When Weird Things Don’t Work: Rethinking the Five Eyes Approach to Disinformation,” which is their “critique to the state-centric and securitized approach to combating disinformation” of the Five Eyes Alliance (US, UK, Canada, Australia, and New Zealand). They argue that this approach is “ineffective” when applied in the Global South nations, such as the Philippines, since the contexts differ from the Global North or the so called WEIRD (Western, Educated, Industrialized, Rich, and Democratic) countries from where this approach arose from. In addition, their study suggested a more holistic framework that involves empowerment and voices of different members of the society, including those of the local media practitioners who play a crucial role in combating disinformation and influence operations that are expected to be in action in the upcoming 2025 elections.

#### **4. Rachel Khan, PhD**

*Professor, Department of Journalism  
University of the Philippines Diliman*

Prof. Khan is interested in the convergence of media and technology, and she showed this through her current research on harnessing the advantages of ethical usage of AI in local media, by pioneering the teaching of an online journalism course in UP College of Mass Communication (CMC) during the time when the usage of the internet was relatively new in the country, and by being active in combating disinformation when she co-founded the fact-checking site [check.ph](http://check.ph). In the upcoming 2025 elections, she mentioned how AI will be used negatively and destructively during campaigns by spreading disinformation which includes the usage of deep fakes. But AI, as other machine learning, relies with the inputs and the trainers doing the models, so as long as the people using these tools have positive intent, AI can be used in good ways such as combating disinformation, tracing influence operators, and doing investigative journalism using big data and analytics.

However, she also brought up the concern that AI widens the digital divide, and in turn, also the information divide, as these technologies are commonly developed and more accessed by richer countries. In relation to this, she is working with other people who are advocating that an 18th goal, “Communication for All,” be added to the United Nations (UN) Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) as there is a need to bridge these gaps between the Global North and Global South nations.



# POLITICAL DISCOURSE AND NEW TECHNOLOGIES

Asst. Prof. Frances Antoinette Cruz led the panel into tackling the interplay between politics and technology. She acknowledged that the Philippines have committed to the protection of human rights and data privacy appertaining to the advancements in technologies through the Bletchley Declaration in 2023 (see “The Bletchley Declaration” 2023). She mentioned the documentary, *The Great Hack* (2019), which talked about the unethical usage of AI to distort online contents with malicious intent, and briefly talked about the two opposing sides of using deep fake videos, one being seeing funny contents such as wherein certain celebrities, such as Arnold Schwarzenegger, have their faces posed in other people’s bodies, and the other being the danger of using deep fake in revenge porn. Bots and trolls have also been furthering echo chambers and political polarization as they have infiltrated social media. There is also another dimension of how “emotions are flattened” (Marlin-Bennett 2011) in these sites. She asked the speakers for a situationer on the Philippine context when it comes to law and politics in these digital spaces and the effects of some factors and actors, such as the bots and trolls, in these discussions.

Dr. Lavides argued that AI and other technologies are neutral, but the intent of those behind and using these tools are what makes these technologies either good or bad. For Dr. Lavides, technology companies are now considered the new superpowers. This was unlike before, when they were only heavily ascribed to the powerful countries such as the United States and China. Additionally, she commented how important it is that tech companies and policy makers work together as it is observable how policies are always lagging behind the advancement of technologies.

Mr. Sanchez agreed with Dr. Lavides on how tech companies are the new superpowers, especially how these institutions are not kept accountable in the way they construct the digital landscape and social media, including algorithms and targeted ads, that enables influence operations and harmful ways AI are being used. He took note that these companies prioritize financial gains over the social needs and meaningful ways the users do with their services. On the other hand, there are also instances where a “co-regulation” between the users and these companies in a platform takes place, such as in

Reddit. Sanchez urged that there is a need to delve deeper into these positive ways that new technologies are being used in a “more creative, productive life rather than in a more destructive life.”

Prof. Khan, furthermore, argued that technology cannot be neutral as long as there are users and influencers who exploit and steer these digital public spaces with bad intentions. Since people nowadays have turned to online platforms as sources of information instead of journalists and other credible authorities, they have become more vulnerable to the ways algorithms and influencers manipulate these spheres. This is even more precarious as it is apparent how some public engagements and algorithms in social media sites, i.e. YouTube, Instagram, and TikTok, are altered to make it seem like their contents are the dominating opinion of the masses. As much as it appears that regulation is the solution to this dilemma, Prof. Khan raised questions about the qualifications, policies, and ethics of who will be the assigned regulators.

Asst. Prof. Cruz added to the conversation how the comments about politics made in social media are not always targeted to a particular group of people, saying it is like “speaking into the void.”

The Bletchley Declaration, according to Atty. Bañez, is a hallmark agreement that has a desirable vision and mission. Regardless of how this declaration has a lot of “beautiful words,” its implementation and the commitment that the Philippines has signed into still rest upon how the national government and the law enforcers interpret it. He encouraged the people to watch out for the results of the current budget hearings as the resources pledged reflects the level of commitment to this declaration. Atty. Bañez agreed with Dr. Lavides’ observation that policy tends to lag behind the development of technology, and that it is questionable how those policymakers might be inadequate with the right technical knowledge to write policies on this matter.

Expanding the conversation, Asst. Prof. Cruz then asked the required level of technical knowledge for someone to have the ability to manipulate these algorithms, for example, if an institution executes or automates a task on these platforms. She also asked if there is a need for a transparency check to the services provided by these tech companies.

Responding to this question, Atty. Bañez questioned the absence of strict regulations for the software industry. As an example, he contrasted the software industry with the whole airline industry, which has to abide by a new set of rules and standards when a plane crashes. Tech companies, however, can get away from any accountability when something bad happens as they have stipulated it in their contracts and terms of agreement. The government then has the responsibility to enable a “trustworthy environment” for this industry.

There is the critique of the influence of large tech companies such as Alphabet, Microsoft, Meta, and Apple in the Global South, and the way these countries can possibly regulate these big tech companies. Asst. Prof. Cruz asked the panelists to further discuss the upcoming national elections and the political discourse in the Philippines for the audience.

Prof. Khan reported the proliferation of disinformation channels and fake news influencers on YouTube that have suspicious and anomalous overnight gains of 50,000 to 150,000 subscribers which most likely employed manipulated algorithms or buying of those subscribers to their platforms. They were able to detect these anomalies using AI. This is not isolated to YouTube, as they also surveyed that there are a lot of Facebook pages and communities that are originally business-oriented in nature that later on switched to becoming politically-inclined or promoted certain politicians. They have seen this trend before in 2016, but has intensified in 2022.

Sanchez built on this report, and gave three main points: (1) The evolution of tactics from disinformation to influence operations is apparent, as the latter offers more leeway to go around the regulations of campaign financing and digital platform policies. Common to these are videos attacking and spreading disinformation on certain political personalities to negatively influence public opinion; (2) influence operations play the long game of “cumulative, longitudinal disinformation,” just like how the Marcos family reinvented and beautified their image, which included revising and distorting their dreadful involvements in the Philippines’ history; and (3) it is true that legacy media has also lost its role as a gatekeeper to social media and influence operations trying to sway the public with their political ideologies. As a result, people are constrained to content only adhering to their already established beliefs, and it has been noticeable that there are cases of people breaking their relationships, unfriending, and canceling people on digital platforms.

## AI IN EDUCATION

Asst. Prof. Cruz quoted Maria Ressa (2019) in saying that “In my country, Facebook is essentially the internet,” and stated that the Philippines is one of the top countries with the highest usage of social media sites, including Facebook. With this information, she mentioned that all, if not most, of the members of the panel have experience teaching or working in a research educational field, and so, if they have comments or stories on critical media literacy and AI such as ChatGPT in the context of the education system in the country. Her prompt expounded to the integration of these new technologies in pedagogy and the curricula, how literacy covers not only the traditional media but also new forms of media where all sorts of political talks are freely discussed, the ideal start of teaching these technologies if it should start early on the elementary level or should it be on the college level, and if what specific courses will be it applicable to teach on.

Dr. Lavides expressed hope in AI's positive capability to improve the quality of education in the Philippines, but noted that only with the right framework in integrating AI with the education system. She also underscored the need to study more on how to effectively do it, because she has been hearing that some schools are discouraging students from using these new tools.

Prof. Khan concurred with Dr. Lavides, and stated her remark on how teachers are “a bit wary of AI or fear it.” This may be caused by a lag where some teachers might not be entirely open to AI. Prof. Khan regarded this as one of the media literacy issues that need to be addressed. As Prof. Khan summarized it, “To deny that it exists is just to be left behind.” There needs to be more focus on helping the students to be critical and responsible, and properly cite when they engage and use AI with their academic works, something that they have been practicing in CMC. Before tackling AI and other higher forms of technologies, she suggested that there should be a focus first on digital hygiene, to educate and warn people to be more careful with the information and content they upload or post online so they would not be easily targeted and manipulated by the algorithms.

Atty. Bañez added that “Law is a very conservative profession.” For Atty. Bañez, they take pride in passing down the traditional techniques they have been taught for so long. He concedes that this affects the profession's reception

of AI use. This, in turn, becomes a much bigger educational and vocational training problem since the students will be left alone to absorb these tools without the proper guidance and standards if they are not included properly in the curriculum.

As AI will be an inevitable part of the future, Mr. Sanchez agreed and reflected that demystifying, normalizing, and institutionalizing AI will be an integral step in ensuring that these technologies will be studied and utilized for its benefits and positive impacts. He also noted how the outputs of generative AI such as ChatGPT can only be as good as the inputs or prompts, thus, if people are educated properly and understand how AI and generated videos work, it can be used in meaningful ways.

## **MEDIA LITERACY AND POLITICAL DISCOURSE**

After discussing the status of media literacy, Asst Prof. Cruz directed the question of media literacy and political discourse in social media to Mr. Sanchez, on whether people believe trolls in the internet are due to poor media literacy which may also be fueled by fallacies, or is it already the views and opinions of the society and that the trolls are only amplifying what is already there.

According to Mr. Sanchez, while there are a lot of efforts being made to combat disinformation and influence operations such as fact checking, debunking, empathy building, and using art, sometimes even utilizing AI to boost these works, the root cause is deeply embedded, explaining that people who engage in these types of content are not “dumb,” but rather reflect their anxieties and hopes for the sociopolitical conditions of the country. In one of his research projects, he mentioned an article tackling the role of cultural value of the reason why some people, mostly elderly, are more prone to sharing disinformation. According to him, people share disinformation not necessarily because they believe it, but because they deem it doing good and that it is better safe to share than not share it at all. He said that media literacy is not only a matter of lacking knowledge but also in analyzing the communications and relationships between people.

Prof. Khan noted that, apart from influencing itself, there is also a “silencing of voices” in these digital platforms. Those who are trying to tell the truth or

are trying to debunk disinformation are being attacked by trolls and these influence authorities, which in effect causes them to opt to stay silent and hidden instead – something that had been apparent during the 2022 elections.

Dr. Lavides stressed Mr. Sanchez's comment on the efforts of civil society organizations in combating these problems. Although it is important to note that since this issue has since become overwhelming for the government to regulate and to solve alone, she insisted that it might be more beneficial if these institutions are urged to educate and empower the people instead.

## **IMPACTS OF AI IN THE ECONOMY**

Moving forward, Asst. Prof. Cruz pivoted the discussion to the economy and job security where she mentioned the issue on how some works of Filipino artists are being used for training AI and their Large Language Models (LLMs). There are concerns on whether they get compensation for it or if they can pull out their works. There is also a lot of anxiety on how AI can replace jobs as it can automate a lot of processes, and that it will likely lead to a higher unemployment rate. To adapt to these possible changes, it is then the question of what sorts of strategies and level of technical knowledge a person should prepare for their career where the presence of AI is everywhere in the economy.

Dr. Lavides directly and promptly stated that she believes that AI will replace a lot of jobs, but at the same time, will create new ones. She stated that the education system should be able to equip the people with the necessary skills and knowledge to take on those opportunities. Nevertheless, to ensure that the job market will not be taken over by AI, people should pursue careers that are impenetrable by AI or those that use more of “conscience, heart, empathy, and your ability to inspire.”

In addition, Prof. Khan cited how “transcribers” are now being replaced by AI, since there are now a lot of tools that make it easier and faster to transcribe. The path then is to improve language skills or one skill up in terms of editing, as these AI tools are still imperfect and there is still the need to correct spellings and misheard pieces of information. This is also applicable to other industries, needing to develop useful skills to keep up with the advancement of technologies and the migration to AI.

Atty. Bañez added that there are studies indeed indicating that AI has a significant impact on the job market, one of which is in software development as AI can generate code. As a result, institutions are hiring fewer junior developers that produce the same level of codes such as AI, and only invest on senior developers to review them. This is something that he also foresees to happen in the legal sector. However, the issue lies in that to produce senior level people, no matter the profession, those at junior level have to be trained and gain experience. Atty. Bañez is concerned how this trend is affecting the job market and the viability of the profession.

In contrast, Mr. Sanchez argued that these fears might not be fully defined and justified yet, necessitating more studies on whether AI really is taking over some job markets. He extended that AI is opening new opportunities such as in training of AI. He also critiqued how AI promotes exploitative work conditions, wherein companies based in the Global North are employing workers from the Global South due to cheaper labor and unregulated work conditions. Global North employers usually exploit workers from countries such as the Philippines (i.e. Cagayan de Oro) and Kenya, to train AI and do content regulation.

Asst. Prof. Cruz built upon the content moderation role in the Philippines, and mentioned that there was a Washington Post article that detailed its job description including looking at extremely traumatizing, violent, and disturbing images, or to analyze texts for discriminatory or hate speech. There were concerns on whether they were given hazard pay or medical support for the possible psychological trauma they encounter in their work. In addition, conflicts and further exploitation are present in economies of extraction such as in Democratic Republic of Congo and their cobalt used as raw materials of tech companies mainly based in the Global North.

Prof. Khan added that gig workers or those doing independent work (i.e. Grab drivers), are at a disadvantage as they do not have physical spaces of solidarity, unlike office workers. This lack of “community” makes it difficult for them to collectively voice out their grievances and fight for their rights.

A comment from a participant, Ianne Calica raised the following question: “With AI increasingly being used in campaign strategies, what measures can be taken to ensure that AI technologies do not exacerbate the digital divide,

especially in developing countries like the Philippines? Should international policies be enacted to create a more level playing field in political communication?”

Prof. Khan responded to the question stating how the verified check marks, which they fought for before to be designated to authentic journalists and legacy media, are now being exploited by the platforms by selling them to any users who want to have those verified checks, defeating the purpose of giving credit and distinguishing the authoritative sources of information from those who are not.

Asst. Prof. Cruz referenced an article of Michael Kwet (2019). In this article, it brought up the works being done for the digitalization of education to those technological disadvantaged in South Africa. This also includes having infrastructure to have internet and regular source of electricity. In these negotiations between the schools and tech companies, the South African government was subjected to Non-Disclosure Agreement (NDA) and were therefore not allowed to disclose any information on the contracts and its requirements. There were concerns that all data and information they input and produce using those technologies such as emails and grades might be given to Google, and used to train AI. The Philippines has also been subject to a similar infrastructure. Free Facebook, for example, enables a user to access their platform, although not seeing the images of posts, without needing to pay for a data subscription. Given the limited capabilities of this infrastructure, seemingly making Facebook a free and only form of their internet connection, there were worries on the quality of information they can only access, which has always been at the center of the issue of information and digital divide.

Atty. Bañez reflected on how corporations might have a “well-packaged smooth product” which turns out to be front of colonization works, and that it might be the same operations with AI. According to Atty. Bañez, history has shown that corporations are not trustworthy and carried out the worst forms exploitation compared to the government who will at least “publicly say that the colonial projects are for benevolent purposes.” Given that only these private companies have the capacity and resources to develop these sophisticated systems, the digital divide has now become between these corporations and the government. He added that these companies are, based upon a legal code and algorithm “to minimize their expenses and to maximize



their revenue.” It is upon this objective function that their policies, issues, and access must be evaluated.

Asst. Prof. Cruz gave attention to a comment of Fred Lubang, a PhD student working on Decolonizing Humanitarian Disarmament: “If nuclear weapons [were] the game changer in wars decades ago, AI is now a source of political/military power, mainly and dominated by (former) colonial States. Still, these States still [take] advantage of the weakness of others (a very colonial legacy). Decolonizing efforts entails a lot of change in our education system. AI [specialists] suggest to have more humanities education to those who write the codes.” She used this comment as an example on the dangers of biased data and prejudices used to train AI, which can be dangerous especially when used with weaponry systems and profiling models. One example would be using police records to make a certain correlation on a specific skin color and looks and ethnicity and criminality, and therefore, making the systems biased against them. This bias not only reflects in criminality, but also in employment. She then urged the panelists to address concerns of unethical uses of AI and the possible replication of racial, sexist, gendered, and biased categorization in its processes.

## **ETHICAL USE OF AI**

Dr. Lavides reiterated her previous point that she believed AI is neutral, and further clarified that the technology itself is politically neutral, but it is upon the utilization of their “creators” and its users that make AI either positive or negative. It is the human mind that creates biases. According to her, it is when these biases are included in the algorithm design of AI, which in its core is neutral, that makes technology harmful.

Asst. Prof. Cruz mentioned another study which indicated how these biases are replicated in the code and the development of AI, and the objectives of corporations in building these models. It can be critiqued how the motivations of actors who have the power (i.e. companies or government) affect the development of AI. At the same time, AI is something anyone that has the technical skills or access can recreate. She argued that the distinction has to be made when it comes to using these new technologies at the level of individual agency.

Closing the discussion on ethical use of AI, Asst. Prof. Cruz asked the following: what are the things that could be done to equip and urge individuals to be aware of and make a better use of AI? Similarly, she raised a point on the concept of ethics itself and how its interpretation may differ from different countries.

Dr. Lavides appealed to the audience to vote for the right leaders today, at a time when this advancement of technologies is still emerging and while it is in a critical time and opportunity to make policies and to influence the future direction of AI, at least in the Philippines.

Atty. Bañez mentioned that there is now the dark forest theory of the internet, and that the online space is more hostile, dangerous and populated by people with ill-intent. He recommended people to go out of their virtual worlds and experience real world social interactions and revitalize what is outside of the internet sphere.

Dr. Khan agreed that people should not develop dependency on technology and AI. Nonetheless, as AI is still a form of machine learning, she considered that people should use and train AI in good ways rather than let those with malicious intentions to populate its training and languages. If the data are not biased and the foundations of AI is good, people are able to help to improve systems instead. They saw its application during the early days of ChatGPT in 2022 with democrat trainers, causing some negative inclinations towards republicans. If Filipinos also engage with it using our own language, it can also improve the usage and interpretation of Filipino language.

Asst. Prof. Cruz added that AI can only give what it is given, citing the *Atlas of AI* of the Yale University Press where it was stated that “AI is neither artificial nor intelligent” (Crawford 2021, 8). This work mentioned how there was a horse that was seemingly intelligent because it can respond positively to a lot of their tests and act like a human in many tasks, but turns out that the horse was only responding to the inputs of its trainer. Comparably, AI is only manifesting its inputs, so in terms of political discourse, it is important to put out more of the voices of the marginalized people there and not let it be populated and dominated by trolls and bots. In this way, the parameters of AI and these technologies will be improved.

Mr. Sanchez agreed that there is still a need to learn more about AI and its impacts. Although he raised the question of what else to do after knowing AI, the big tech companies running them, their LLMs, decolonization, biases, and policies. He pondered that there is a need to think systematically about AI.

## **AI GOVERNANCE IN THE PHILIPPINES**

To wrap up the roundtable, Asst. Prof. Cruz prompted on the prospects of AI governance in the Philippines and what the panelists know so far when it comes to AI legislation and policy.

Mr. Sanchez mentioned that the Philippines already has a blueprint in AI but have not fully read it yet. The Commission on Elections (COMELEC) has also recently issued Resolution 11064 containing terms on usage of social media and bots in political campaign strategies. Here, it included that an account should be registered to promote a certain politician, and Mr. Sanchez is curious how it will turn out in the upcoming elections.

Atty. Bañez criticized the creation of policies that tend to be reactive on labor impacts and labor-related legislation, rather than being based upon an overarching philosophy or framework. This is in addition to what has been said that policy is lagging behind the advancement of technologies and only acts upon certain symptoms or factors, such as the electoral campaign and AI. There is a need to draft a framework to govern policies relating to the usage of these new technologies.

Dr. Lavides divulged a pending comprehensive Anti-Discrimination Bill in the Senate. This bill focused on what makes up discrimination and their corresponding penalties, but did not expound on the “mitigating factors that would promote discrimination.” In relation to this, she referred to their research on the Filipino concept of *pakikipagkapwa*, which in itself is a practice of non-discrimination. Through AI, they were able to discover what institutions insinuate these discriminatory beliefs. Their team is drafting a policy brief to improve the bill so that it focuses on the factors of discrimination than penalizing them.

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