IAB **BIAS** Workshop: **B**asic **I**nternet **A**nd **S**quirrels
~~ Vesna Manojlović, BECHA@xs4all.nl (24 November 2023)

Instead of the excessive connectivity for the rich, let's have basic, modest, green connectivity for all (within planetary boundaries & harmless for squirrels, too)!

Beyond the **I**nternet of **A**ffluence and **S**urveillance

For me, the digital divide is illustrated by the UNEP's [1] choice of "seven digital technologies that directly influence 103 SDG targets: **digital access**, ~~fast internet, cloud, IoT, artificial intelligence, extended reality and blockchain.~~"

Only one of them - digital access - is necessary. The other six, and similar "advanced digital technologies" (~~quantum communication, 5G, 6G, HD video, online gaming, etc~~), is what I call the "**Luxury Internet**".

Luxury Internet for the rich is what creates barriers to basic access for the poor!

Here are some of the causes & effects of Luxury Internet:
- **capitalism** (competition; centralisation of influence & wealth in the hands of a few corporations; growth);
- **digital colonialism** (urge to conquer territories for extractivism, exploitation of labour for short-term profit, usage of amassed data for surveillance and disinformation);
- (fallacy of) **technological progress** in service of capitalism & colonialism (innovation, gadgeteering, marketing; manufacturing desires for bigger, better, faster, newer…) [2]

Antidotes to Luxury Internet are **DeGrowth, Decolonising, Empathy.**

Luxury Internet has to be discouraged, de-growth-ed and limited, for multiple reasons:
- to free up resources for increasing digital access of the unconnected
- to make reparations to those exploited and oppressed by the maintenance of the Luxury Internet till now
- to reduce the environmental impact of digital technologies

Other possible names for Luxury Internet: Internet of Affluence; Gargantuan Internet; Gilded Internet.

Basic **I**nternet **A**nd **S**ociety

"Basic Internet" is an answer to "what are the minimum requirements for access?" workshop-question. If we only look at the "technology", then the minimum is SDG #7,8,12: electricity, labour/work & production/consumption. However, we can not ignore survival needs: SDG #2,3,6,13,14,15 (food, health, water, shelter, cooling/heating, & biodiversity) which all have to be met for humans to be able to use "internet". [3]

Only societies able to satisfy subsistence needs can provide minimum requirements for the "Basic Internet".

> *"imagine… a society with a modest standard of living, conservative of natural resources, with a low constant fertility rate and a political life based upon consent, a society that has made a successful adaptation to its environment, and has learned to live without destroying itself or the people next door." ~~ Ursula K. LeGuin [4]*

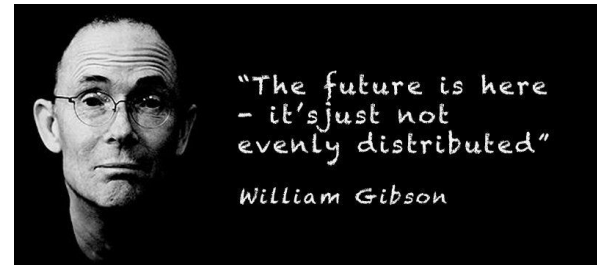Here are some ideas on how to re-imagine such a society and such an Internet:
- APC's technologies for environmental justice
- Data Feminism & Feminist Internet https://feministinternet.org
- Bits & Bäume: "Digitisation within the planetary boundaries" (etc)
- Climate Action Tech https://climateaction.tech/
- Permacomputing https://permacomputing.net/
- Computing Within Limits https://computingwithinlimits.org/

Bracing for the Internet of Armageddon and Squirrels

According to climate scientists, the next 100 years of our planet & societies, including Internet, will be very different from the previous 100 years. I am imagining a disaster scenario, a polycrisis: a war-thorn country, a refugee camp, an aftermath of a hurricane, a flooding, raging forrest fire… **_Meaningful connections_** in that case are: ability to make emergency calls; finding the loved ones and letting them know you are alive; looking up the direction to a shelter… As for the networking: the equipment must be able to function with little electricity & intermittent connectivity, within a broken supply chain for parts, no way to pay for licenses, relying on "old tech"… Best illustration from the past is "ZaMir" [5]: a network of BBSes in the ex-Yugoslavia, connecting anti-war activists, and using low-tech to pass on the messages about lost family members to the neighbours.

Examples of collapse-preparation tech:
- What could post-collapse computing be?
- Towards the Development of an Anti-Colonial Critique of Climate and Disaster Risk Models
- Swarmpunk & Decentralized Infrastructures
- https://wiki.collapsible.systems/

"The future is here – it's just not evenly distributed"

William Gibson

On the other hand, the Armageddon is not going to be waiting to happen in the future: **the collapse is already here**, it is only not evenly distributed.
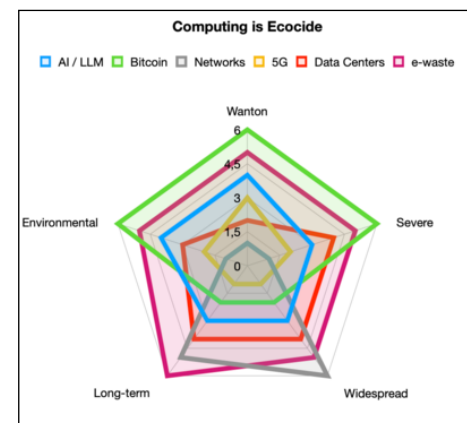
"Indigenous communities have been living in these crises for hundreds of years. Yet, despite facing the most challenging forces of colonialism, they are still here, still persisting with resilient cultures… traditional values present the best hope for a sustainable future and continuing to survive the triple crisis of U.S. imperialism, nuclear testing, and the climate crisis." [6]

"Luxury Internet" is damaging for the environment, to the levels of ecocide [7]: burning fossil fuels; slurping up water, rare metals, land, energy; externalising pollution (damaging habitats, dumping e-waste).

Explicitly environmentally-friendly digital solutions:
- off-the-grid Internet & Low Tech Internet
- "Towards a Fossil Free Internet", Chris Adams, RIPE84, 2021
- "Twinning Green and Digital" , SEEDIG, 2021

There are contradicting needs: for growing the connections between people, and for limiting the damage that even the most ideal Basic Internet might be doing to the environment. This is why I would like us to **consider the squirrels** when designing the "accessible Internet". For me, the squirrels represent a symbol for all the non-humans: the ecosystems, the species, the planet.

What is the Internet that would at least NOT HARM squirrels, and hopefully bring them benefits?

Here are some ways that squirrels can be involved:
- Timothy Morton: "… humanity (must) give up some of its core beliefs, from the fantasy that we can control the planet to the notion that we are 'above' other beings." [8]
- Starhawk: include "the Voices who spoke for the Four Sacred Things: Deer, Hawk, Salmon, Coyote" [9]
- Donna Haraway and EcoFeminism: https://wiki.techinc.nl/Hackers_tribes#Ecofeminism

To end as I started, with an UNEP quote: _"The world needs to lift the needle out of the groove of insufficient action and begin setting new records on cutting emissions, green and just transitions and climate finance – starting now. ~~ Inger Andersen, 20. November 2023 [10]_

References:

[1]: UNEP = United Nations Environment Programme : Digitalization for Sustainability https://www.unep.org/topics/digital-transformations/digitalization-sustainability

[2] Daft Punk: https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Harder,_Better,_Faster,_Stronger

[3] SDG = Sustainable Development Goals https://sdgs.un.org/goals

[4] Ursula K. Le Guin: https://web.archive.org/web/20180628075056/http://theanarchistlibrary.org/library/ursula-k-le-guin-a-non-euclidean-view-of-california-as-a-cold-place-to-be

[5] ZaMir https://wiki.techinc.nl/TacticalMediaRoom#ZaMir

[6] Navigating Multiple Crises https://www.resilience.org/stories/2023-11-21/holding-the-fire-episode-8-alson-kelena/

[7] "Computing as Ecocide", by Rob Comber and Elina Eriksson: https://limits.pubpub.org/pub/a8h46wqy/release/1 & https://www.theguardian.com/environment/2023/nov/17/eu-criminalises-environmental-damage-comparable-to-ecocide & https://wiki.techinc.nl/User:Becha/AI_is_ecocide

[8] 'A reckoning for our species': the philosopher prophet of the Anthropocene https://www.theguardian.com/world/2017/jun/15/timothy-morton-anthropocene-philosopher

[9] The Fifth Sacred Thing: https://starhawk.org/writing/books/the-fifth-sacred-thing/

[10] Call for new records in climate action https://www.unep.org/news-and-stories/speech/call-new-records-climate-action & https://www.unep.org/resources/emissions-gap-report-2023

My work about Internet & Society:
- 2012: "Participatory, Peer-to-peer, Utopian networks": https://becha.home.xs4all.nl/hackers-philosophers-utopian-network-dec-2012-becha.pdf
- 2021: RIPE Community Resilience: Every Society Has the Internet they Deserve https://labs.ripe.net/author/becha/ripe-community-resilience-every-society-has-the-internet-they-deserve/
- 2022: A Plea For Climate Justice: Solidarity, Limitations, Reparations: https://labs.ripe.net/author/becha/a-plea-for-climate-justice-report-from-the-iab-workshop-on-e-impact/
- 2023: Environmental Impact of Internet: Urgency, De-Growth, Rebellion https://labs.ripe.net/author/becha/environmental-impact-of-internet-urgency-de-growth-rebellion/

My work about Internet & Nature:
- 2023: AI is Ecocide https://wiki.techinc.nl/User:Becha/AI_is_ecocide
- 2021: Nature is Healing https://labs.ripe.net/author/becha/ripe-community-resilience-nature-is-healing/
- 2016: Speaker For Squirrels, Post-Singularity Symposium, GogBot https://becha.home.xs4all.nl/Speaker_for_Squirrels-GogBot-2016.pdf
- 2014: Nature will have the last word, RIPE69 https://wiki.techinc.nl/index.php/File:Nature-speaking-on-future_of_the_internet-RIPE69.pdf

DeGrowth links:
- 2024 CFP: "a society beyond growth must learn how to articulate new imaginaries and redefine the relationship between society and the institutions of science, technology and innovation." https://esee-degrowth2024.uvigo.gal/en/the-conference/program/call-for-abstracts/
- Academic Journal on Degrowth (May 2023) : https://www.degrowthjournal.org/issues/2023-volume-1/
- Recentering Decoloniality, Roland Ngam at odrast.hr in Zagreb: https://www.youtube.com/live/PeVt_cQwkTw?si=bkO2U21ekzJ3druV&t=709
- Kohei Saito: Marx meets Degrowth: On the Origin of Degrowth Communism https://zagreb.degrowth.net/en/9_int_dg_conf/public/events/397
- "involvement of citizens and participatory democracy can overcome political divisions and create strong shared visions " https://communitiesforfuture.org/launch-of-the-time-for-collective-action-manifesto-ecolises-main-policy-event-2023/
- MENA Women's & Girls' Demands for COP28 and Beyond https://womengenderclimate.org/wp-content/uploads/2023/11/WGC-MENADemands-ExecSumm.pdf

Embedded Links, as Text:
- DeGrowth https://wiki.techinc.nl/Sustainability#DeGrowth
- Decolonising Internet https://wiki.techinc.nl/Hackers_tribes#Decolonising_Internet
- Empathy: https://ripe85.ripe.net/wp-content/uploads/Ethics-Environment-Equity-Empathy_Vesna.pdf
- APC's technologies for environmental justice https://www.apc.org/en/project/technology-environmental-justice-and-sustainability
- Data Feminism https://data-feminism.mitpress.mit.edu
- Feminist Internet https://feministinternet.org
- Bits & Bäume: "Digitisation within the planetary boundaries" https://bits-und-baeume.org/konferenz-2022/ forderungen/#heading
- What could post-collapse computing be? https://msteenhagen.medium.com/what-could-post-collapse-computing-be-5711a9aa6111
- Towards the Development of an Anti-Colonial Critique of Climate and Disaster Risk Models https://limits.pubpub.org/pub/cgxo9mrd/release/2
- Swarmpunk & Decentralized Infrastructures https://jon-e.net/dissertation/
- Climate Action Tech https://climateaction.tech/
- off-the-grid Internet: https://open.substack.com/pub/anarchosolarpunk/p/offgridinternet
- Low Tech Internet: https://solar.lowtechmagazine.com/about/the-solar-website/
- "Towards a Fossil Free Internet", Chris Adams (May 2022) https://ripe84.ripe.net/archives/video/751/
- "Twinning Green and Digital" (September 2021) https://seedig.net/seedig7-sustainable-future/
- +
- https://wiki.techinc.nl/MeshNet#Disaster_Recovery_Communications
- https://wiki.techinc.nl/Sustainability#Alternative_Computings
- **https://wiki.techinc.nl/Hackers_tribes#Consider_the_Squirrels.21**