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Blurring the future: AI regurgitation and the Singapore Muslim community

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Propositions

Relating to the dissertation

1. To understand AI, we must see it not only as its outputs, but as a sprawling multi-national infrastructure. Apprehending AI's multiple facets requires a composite approach which relies on a number of collaborative methods.
2. AI's epistemology is probabilistic, therefore its 'objective' outputs are deferred until more data is provided. This epistemology is aligned with the Singaporean governments approach to governance which has focused on pragmatism and economic survivalism since the 1980s.
3. MUIS (Islamic religious authority in Singapore) is an intermediary between the Singaporean state and the Muslim community. Consequently, its proclamations are seen as suspect by the community who perceive their pronouncements to come from the state. AI appeals to MUIS as it is perceived as a neutral, objective, and apolitical source of authority, which can help stem community scepticism about their pronouncements.
4. AI is not a neutral, objective, or apolitical source of authority. When seen as an archive it is possible to see how AI regurgitates the contents of its dataset. Such regurgitation replicates biased ideas which have historically excluded Muslims in Singapore.
5. Despite the proliferation of AI within Singaporean society, Singaporean Muslims imagine alternative futures beside the ones asserted by the state through and with AI systems. They do so by drawing on different pasts than the ones which appear in state narratives and regurgitated by AI.

Relating to the field of the dissertation

6. The future is contingent on the past, but this also means that it remains open and plural when people can reach for alternative histories to define the future.
7. As Digital Anthropologist have argued social media was not the new public sphere; it was the enclosure of public conversation for profit. Likewise, AI is not the democratisation of knowledge, but the consolidation of power over information. The billionaires in big tech have no incentive to make AI a public good.
8. Everyone should be a Luddite. The Luddites were a labour movement who understood that while technologies change, the motivations of those wealthy enough to own them remain the same – to undermine, underpay, and deskill workers.
9. AI systems do not liberate people from labour, but instead outsource that labour elsewhere.

Relating to societal subjects

10. Universities should refuse AI in teaching not by narrowing the means of assessment, or by penalising the use of AI technology. Instead, assessment should be broadened in order for students to find meaning in their work, and make university education more accessible to different skillsets.