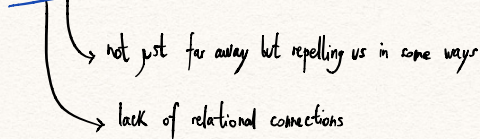


DIGITAL NARRATIVES AND WITNESSING THE ETHICS OF ENGAGING WITH PLACES AT A DISTANCE

Places at a distance



In the past we could see those places just in few selected images from the media, now they reveal themselves increasingly thanks to social media...



POWER-TOPOLOGIES → ability of actors to affect places across distance and proximities

"SEEING" PLACES IN CRISIS THROUGH DIGITAL TECHNOLOGIES

- digital technology can be seen as a proxy to aid while keeping ourselves safe in a distant place
- witnessing to mobilize passions and provoke a strong emotional response

BBC DOC on ETHIOPIA
(1984)

authenticity of images/presenter
oversimplified analysis?

CLOUDS OVER SIERA, VR
(2015)

there's no easy black & white
and no presenter is guiding us

→ VR removes the borders

- there's no more filtering on the images we see of those distant places because most of those images are sent by people present at the moment of the crisis.

→ yet those images can be easily misinterpreted and hijacked

SPATIAL ANALYSIS AND THE FORENSIC GAZE

- Analysis of images and videos in order to gain insights on those crisis using forensic methods
 1. the witness is multiplied
 2. the witness has become an expert
 3. but where is the political subject when witnessing can no more be attributed to one person?

BECOMING (IN)VISIBLE

- a place like GWADAR is **HYPERVISIBLE**
 - ↳ invisible to those outside of the country
 - ↳ very visible to those who seek economic interest (flow of oil)

DIGITAL NARRATIVES OF GWADAR

Three main narratives about Gwadar that can be found online :

- **frontier mentality** → neoliberal approach in the **exploitation of land, resources, people**
- **digital humanism** → an event that acts as a catalyst (but then things sink down again..)
 - ↳ many efforts were placed in the mapping of geographical data (**MICROMAPPERS**) after the **earthquake of 2013**
 - ↳ through tweets... but only tweets from professional journalists were recovered, probably because none spoke Balochi or Urdu
- **use of social media by a political movement** → aims to show those who have disappeared
 - ↳ "social media has helped enlighten the world about the problems and issues that Baloch people face but at the same acted as an obstacle"

THE ETHICS OF WITNESSING THROUGH THE DIGITAL

- Although there are many advantages in using digital technologies, such techniques come with limitations
↓
engagement with distant places
- Certain parts of the world are depicted as being in a permanent crisis, but are that can be influenced through a click