



# ngọc triệu

*she/her*

hanoi/berlin

design researcher

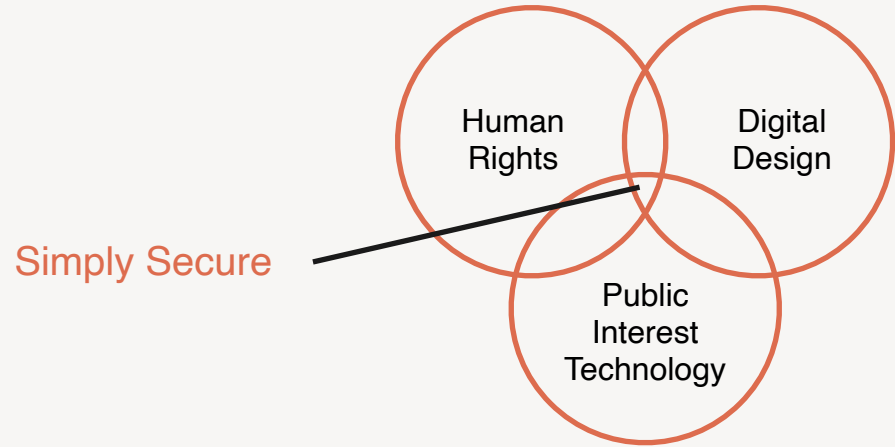
@simplysecure



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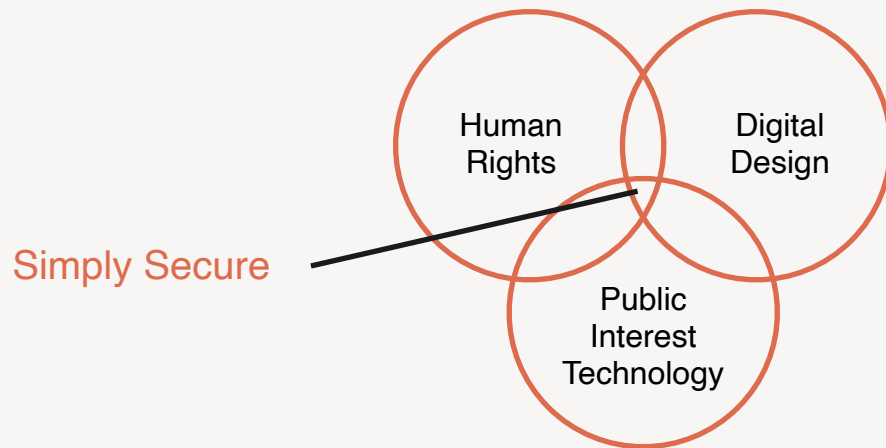
hanoi/berlin  
design researcher  
@simplysecure



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hanoi/berlin  
design researcher  
@simplysecure



How can decentralisation contribute to the making of the Pluriverse and a new world-order?

# eastbound

on designing one's  
decolonial project

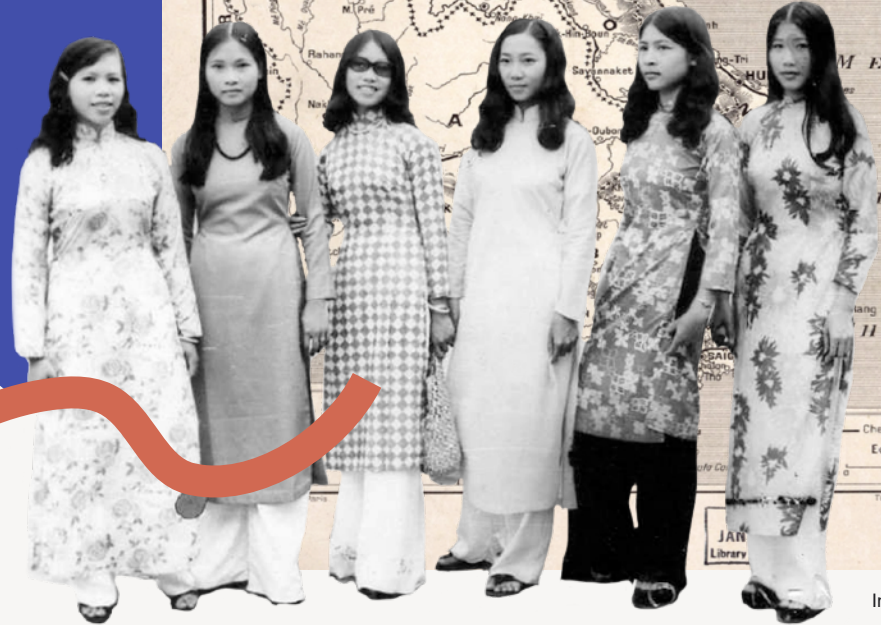
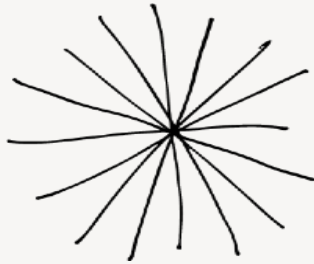


Image source: Corbis

# Here are three things I'll talk about today.

## PART 1

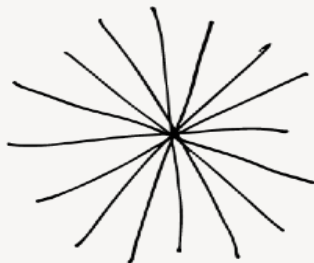


### **My eastbound journey**

Exploring and revealing the  
coloniality of knowledge in  
design in Vietnam

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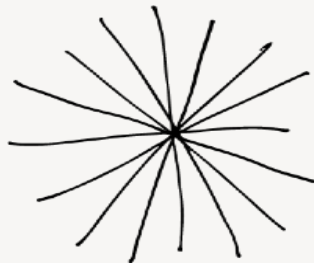
## PART 1



### **My eastbound journey**

Exploring and revealing the  
coloniality of knowledge in  
design in Vietnam

## PART 2

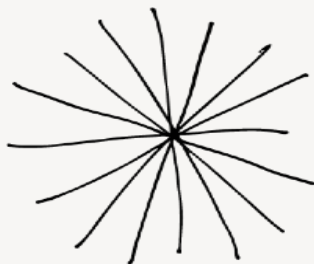


### **Designing a decolonial project**

Sharing from personal  
experience and approach

# Here are three things I'll talk about today.

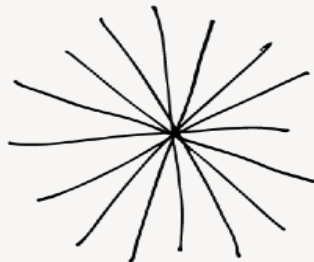
## PART 1



### **My eastbound journey**

Exploring and revealing the  
coloniality of knowledge in  
design in Vietnam

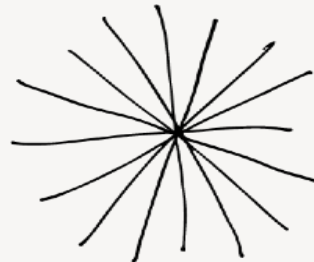
## PART 2



### **Designing a decolonial project**

Sharing from personal  
experience and approach

## PART 3



### **Decolonial approach in practice**

How Simply Secure applies the  
decolonial approach as a design  
non-profit organisation







# My Eastbound Journey

*>> Exploring and revealing the coloniality of  
knowledge in design in Vietnam <<*

“

***It's us against the West***

”

## ***xenophilia:***

an attraction to *and* admiration of foreign people, manners, or cultures





# ***Where is [\_\_\_\_\_] design history?***

*My*

*Your*

*The Vietnamese*

What we know about design is the product of subjugated knowledge.







coloniality is constitutive of modernity— —**there is no  
modernity without coloniality.**

—Walter Mignolo, 2011

Our desire to move on from the aftermath and further away from poverty by means of economic development and education is constantly exploited.



Saigon 1974  
Image: Corbis



COOP Design Research Studenten  
auf der Brüstung der Mensa-  
Terrasse // Bauhaus Dessau 2020.

Decolonising is **not** about tracing down one's roots and originality.

The history of design should never be examined and seen through the lens of binary logic.



# Designing One's Decolonial Project

*>> Sharing from personal experience and approach <<*



## Step 1. Finding your positionality\*

***Positionality:*** a process of obtaining an understanding of where you have come from, your civilised history & cultural background, and where you are now in order to recognise the power you have, and how you can shift this power as an agent (of design)

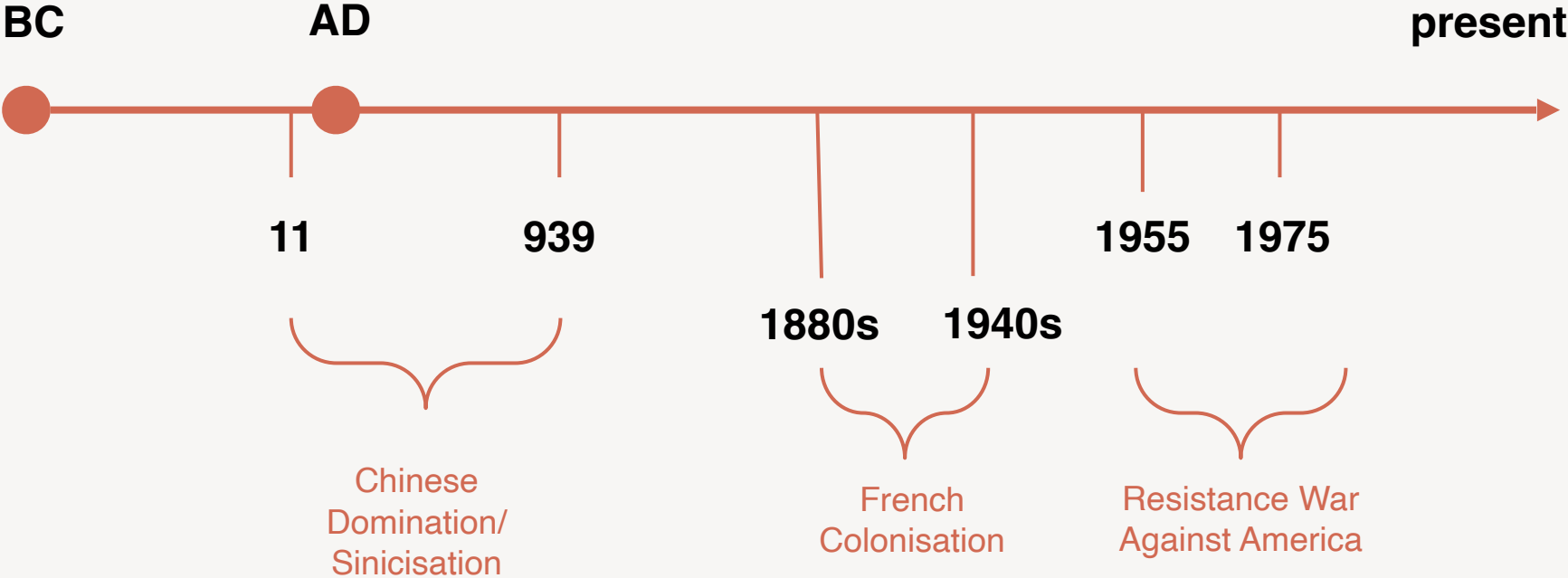
There is no one Vietnam, no single design history, nor a universal, standardised way of knowledge production.

**eastbound**



## Step 2. Tracing civilised history

# Timeline of Vietnamese colonial history



# French Indochina

Tonkin

An Nam

Cochichina

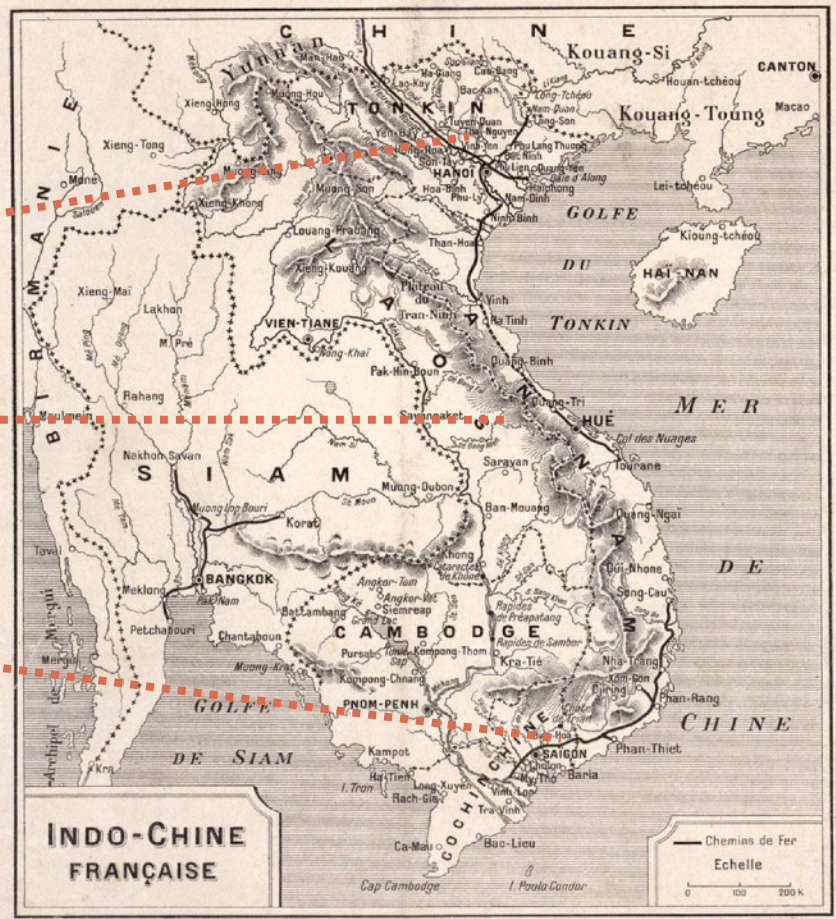


Image: Internet Archive

Map Division,  
 JAN 25 '22  
 Library of Congress

# The Annamites

Tonkin. Hanoi. Traveler on the street.  
Image: Salles, André (1896)



## Colonialist Tactic #1

The repetition of devaluing word choice in the process of historical documentation and the minimisation and disregard of intellectual evolution, including arts and technological progression

Tonkin. Bamboo mat merchants  
Image: Salles, André (1896)







## CHAPITRE II

### Évolution intellectuelle (1).

Comme dans le récit de l'histoire du pays d'Annam nous avons pu voir se dessiner les traits de caractère dominants du peuple annamite, ainsi nous pourrions, par l'étude de la langue, de la littérature, des arts, des sciences, de l'industrie de ce peuple, saisir plus intimement l'expression de sa structure mentale. Nous allons en constater de nouveau la fâcheuse infériorité.

I

C'est ainsi qu'il faut reconnaître que l'industrie annamite, en ce qui concerne, par exemple, le vêtement et l'habitation, est bien peu avancée.

Les Tonkinois pauvres portent encore, pour se garantir du froid ou de la pluie, un costume tout à fait primitif composé de feuilles de palmier cousues ensemble.

La masse de la population s'entasse sur les rives des fleuves ou des arroyos, vivant sur des radeaux ou dans de

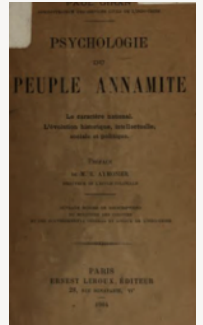
(1) Nous donnons ici aux mots : *Évolution intellectuelle*, un sens beaucoup plus large que celui qu'on leur accorde ordinairement. Nous décrivons, en effet, sous ce titre, les phases par lesquelles sont passées non seulement les diverses créations linguistiques, artistiques, scientifiques ou littéraires, mais encore toutes les productions de l'intelligence sous quelque forme qu'elle se manifeste : inventions primitives, industries, agriculture, etc...



Pilon à décrire le rizi.

[...] **'average'** is the essence of the Annamite's innovation spirit—their minds can recreate images and **'copy'**, but never are capable of **'actual thought, creativity'** or **'true art'**

— Paul Giran, 1904:2019



## Colonialist Tactic #2

The eradication of indigenous and local actors in scientific knowledge production

Tonkin. Hanoi. Sandals merchants.  
Image: Salles, André (1896)



TECHNIQUE DU PEUPLE ANNAMITE

FG 18 (1) 1912

MICROFILM  
no 4/25

ENCYCLOPÉDIE DE LA CIVILISATION MATÉRIELLE DU PAYS D'ANNAM

Henri OGER

BIBLIOTHÈQUE  
CENTRALE  
DE L'INDOCHINE  
no 77477

ADMINISTRATEUR DES SERVICES CIVILS  
EN INDOCHINE

# 駝蹠履

這履其冠皮其帶木這了便行

坑雨



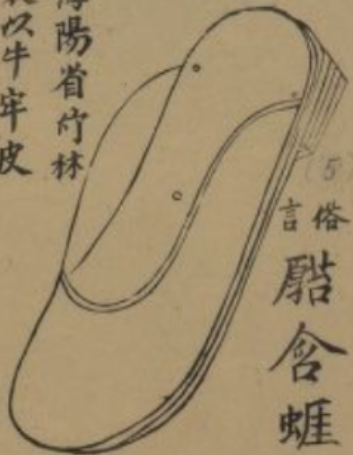
# 寫履

禦雨之履其帶木其冠皮各有等級有爵者以紅繞已之乃是男履



5 俗言駝含蛭

此履乃海陽省竹林社人修製以牛牢皮屬製之



以竹制衣

# 方錐

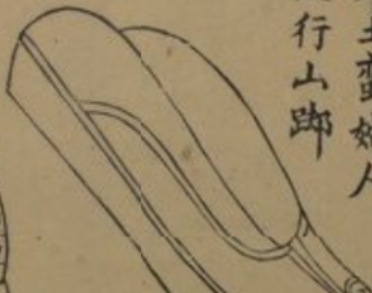


鳥籠



這履乃土蛮婦人製之便行山脚

# 駝蛮



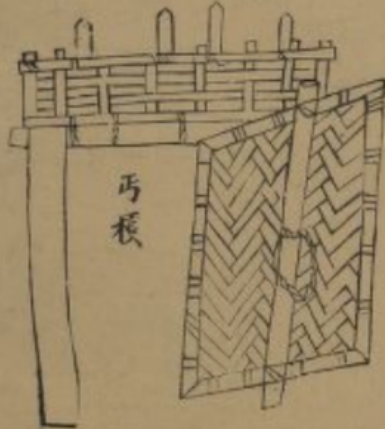
# 喪鞋

以麻繩削而結之有大喪者用行祭祀



# 田野人

此笠



巧棧

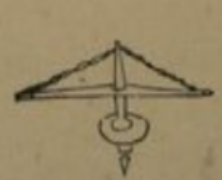
鹿兜坦



保抽烏



行培補缺





[...] the Annamite People must be entered into the class of Semi-Civilised People, who have made considerable but slow progress.

—Henri Oger, 1909:2009.

## Colonialist Tactic #2

The involvement of Annamite is rather considered as a ‘flavour’ adding to the ‘authenticity’ of the work, rather than a co-authorship.

How does colonialism in design looks  
like today?







**Xenophilia**



**Internalised  
White  
Culture**



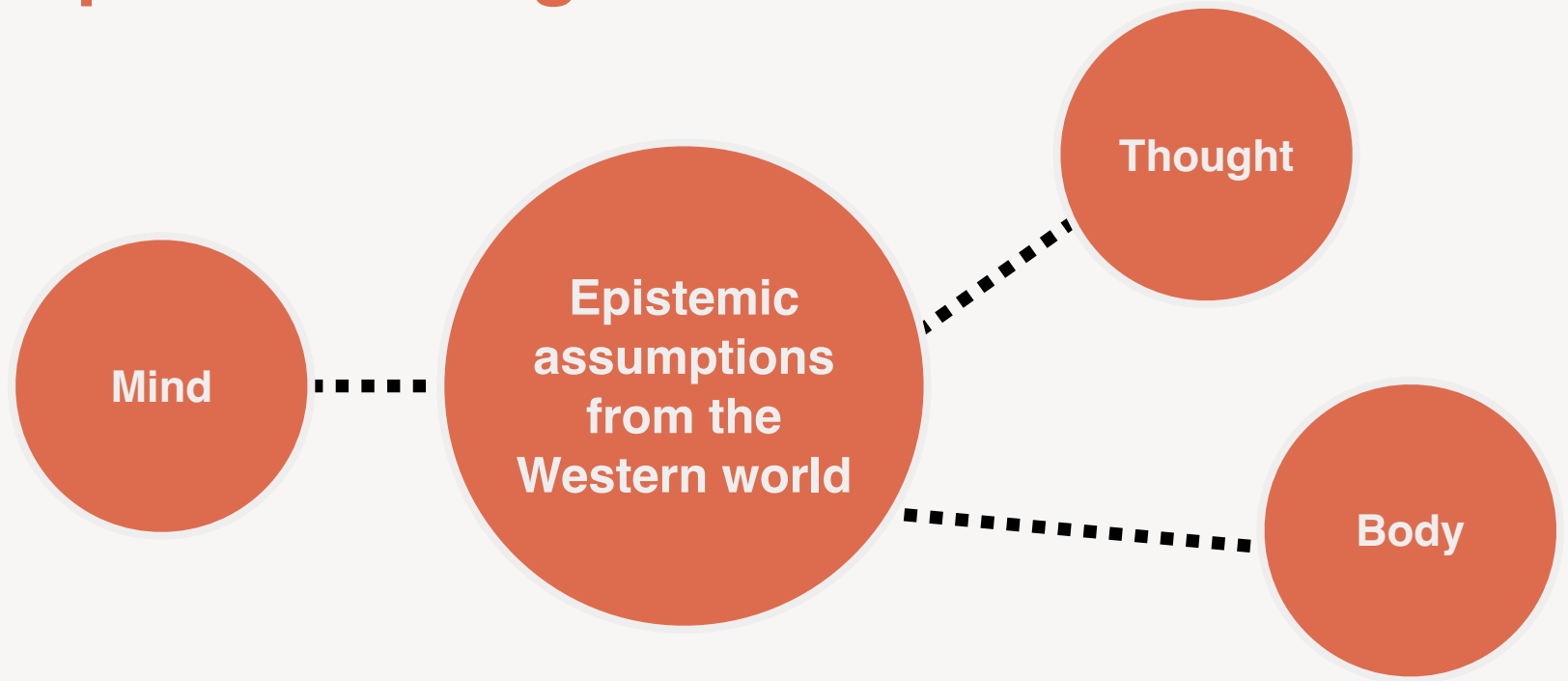
**Colonophilia**



# Decolonial Design Approach I Practice

*>> How Simply Secure applies the decolonial approach to  
changing who technology serves <<*

## Step 3. Delinking



## Building Blocks:

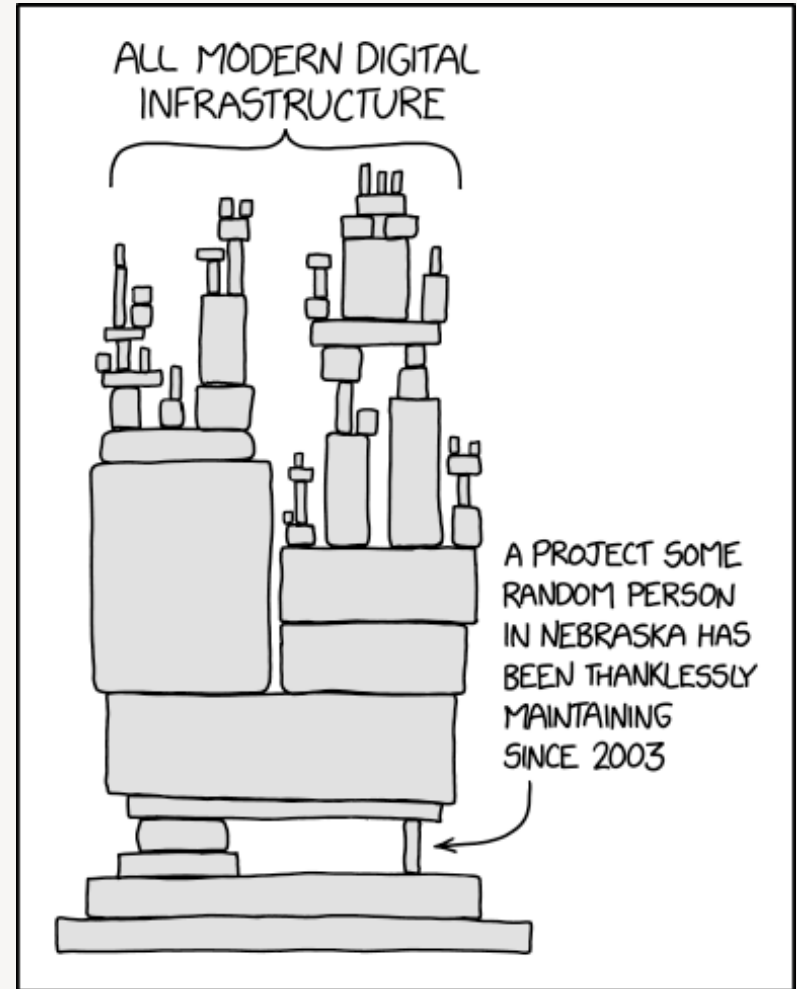
Funding Digital  
Infrastructure  
from the Ground Up



- \* 2021-2022
- \* Funded by Digital Infrastructure Fund  
*(organized by the Ford Foundation, Alfred P. Sloan Foundation, Open Society Foundations, Omidyar Network and the Mozilla Open Source Support Program in collaboration with the Open Collective Foundation)*
- \* Based off of the Roadwork Ahead research by Superr Lab

## Our goal:

To design a set of actionable resources for funders to better support digital infrastructure projects



## Challenge:

How to design a locally suitable and contextually relevant process and mechanism for a dominant funding culture, while acknowledging the many different ways that regions, languages, and governments articulate and understand “infrastructure”?





**Approach**

Human-centered design research, with a focus on the principle that funders should listen to the communities they serve



## Some projects that we've worked on:

**Trusted Design:** Designing a vision and systemic strategy to tackle deceptive design that governments, tech companies, industry partners, and designers can enact

*with* **Globaleaks:** Designing a trustworthy and secured experience for whistleblowers

*with* **Digital Democracy:** Designing for safety and security in human rights activism and indigenous land defence

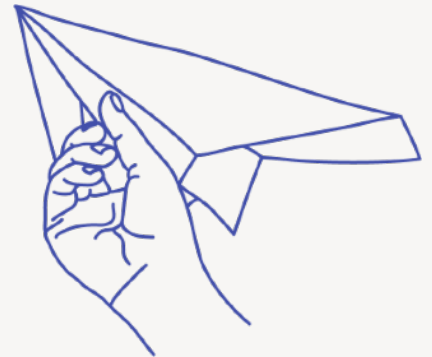
**Limits to Digital Consent** (*with New Design Congress*): Original research on the risks of ethical consent and data collection for underrepresented communities

Learn more  
about our work:



[simplysecure.org](https://simplysecure.org)

Our mission is to change who  
technology serves



1

Using design shift power

2

Democratising our expertise

3

Listening to unheard voices

4

Authenticity

## **Starting your decolonial project:**

1. Asking yourself some (difficult) questions
2. Constantly inquiring about your own work
3. Identifying the power structure within your organisation
4. Learning how to see and recognise your own power within it



Human existence, because it came into being through asking questions, is at the root of change in the world. There is a radical element to existence, which is the radical act of asking questions. [...] At root human existence involves surprise, questioning and risk. And because of all this, it involves actions and change.

– Paulo Freire

Thank you!



Vielen Dank!

Cám ơn!



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28.09.2022

design researcher  
@simply secure