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MY COUNTRY IS STILL A COLONY

Exploring toxic colonial legacies in Korean digital society

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Contents

INTRODUC-TION

According to the OECD report, South Koreans work the longest hours in Asia. Employees in South Korea worked an average of 2,069 hours in 2016, compared to the OECD average of 1,763 hours (Nam, 2018). I still remember the moment in my childhood where my dad had to get up at early 6 in the morning to go to work in a neighbor city of my hometown every day. Most of the time, he came back around 8 in the evening, and I had to massage his back and hands to relieve his fatigue. While he was out working I, often, spent doing computer games called *Crazy Arcade*, doing Korean social media *Cyworld* (the equivalent of Facebook in Korea, but five years older), and chatting with friends via messenger called *SayClub*. For me, using a computer and accessing the Internet came as naturally as playing since I was young.

Among countries that have high speed Internet, Korea has become one of the fastest and most prevalent Internet distributors in the world (Kim, 2017). During its development, lots of Korean companies started making use of the Internet as a profitable space by strategically taking data from user's online activities. These online activities can be defined as simply browsing the Internet, being active in social networking sites, microblogs or content sharing sites related to leisure activities. In this way, users automatically contribute to the profitability of companies in the digital space. In other words, digital labour. This type of labour has the potential to produce a lucrative outcome in the form of data that can be unwittingly extracted for someone else's business. Users become digital workers of companies who use their labour to extract data. This relationship between companies and users is inequitable, feels exploitative and unfair. Interestingly, all of this show similarities to historical Japanese colonialism in Korea.

As a Korean millennial who experienced the Korean working culture and the digital society, I emphasized on what has been inherited in Korean working culture from Japanese colonialism in Korea and discovered how this has been transformed to Korean digital space. Through this essay, part 1 expands on why Koreans work overtime by highlighting the history of South Korea. The extend of the history, part 2 examines which aspects of working culture in Korean colonial times have been inherited into the digital sphere. With unpacking the aforementioned parts, free digital labour is produced based on the digital colonialism, I will suggest how we can make it palpable on part 3. By making it palpable, this essay attempts to scrutinize the different modes of historical and modern colonialism and create a sense of urgency that everyone can be palpably aware of free digital labour.

PART 1 HOW DID FREE LABOUR ARISE IN ITS CULTURAL CONTEXT?

Why do Koreans work overtime, even young kids? In order to understand why, we need to consider looking at working culture customs in Korea. What are the working customs in the specific context in S. Korea? And more specifically, how does that affect the creation of free digital labour in Korean working culture?

1.1 KOREAN WORK ETHICS

OLD TRADITIONAL WAY OF WORKING

In the past, there was the oldest communal laboring custom in the Korean agricultural society called *Pumasi(품앗이)*, a combination of the words pum which means 'working', and asi means 'repayment'.

Fig 1. Pumasi in Korea.

It consisted of working together for the benefit of the community, without taking into account the value of each other's labour contribution (Kim, 1995). This form of voluntary work makes neighbors gather together to achieve a common goal (Kim, 1992). It emphasizes on the positive side of a give and take relationship where they don't make an official contract to precisely define a 50:50 relationship. Here we can also refer to a Korean human affection concept called *Jeong(정)*, an emotional and psychological bond that joins Koreans. Jeong is considered as a kind of unique love, you can help someone without asking for compensation, giving something extra than you promised, because you are emotionally attached to the person you are helping (Samson, 2018). Additionally, a piece of music was sung while conducting a task to make work effectively, this gesture is called No-*Dong-Yo(노동요)*. The concept of *No-Dong-Yo* is to work together with a certain rhythm of labour and work together with a little effort (Kang, 2005). It is sung in order to keep the unity of working behavior and to work efficiently. In this sense, the old working culture in Korea was about helping each other, working together productively.

THE REALITY OF MODERN WORKING CULTURE

In contrast to the traditional working culture where hard-work was a positive activity to help each other, the modern Korean working culture is a negative issue in modern society. According to the Korea Herald, South Koreans are known to be among the world's second worst workaholics, ranking second in the OECD in terms of working hours in 2014 (OECD, 2014). The average South Korean worked 2,163 hours in 2014, 271 days per year on the average of 8 hours a day. However, many companies encourage to start working from 8:30 to 19:30, therefore the actual working hours a day are comparably longer than in other countries.

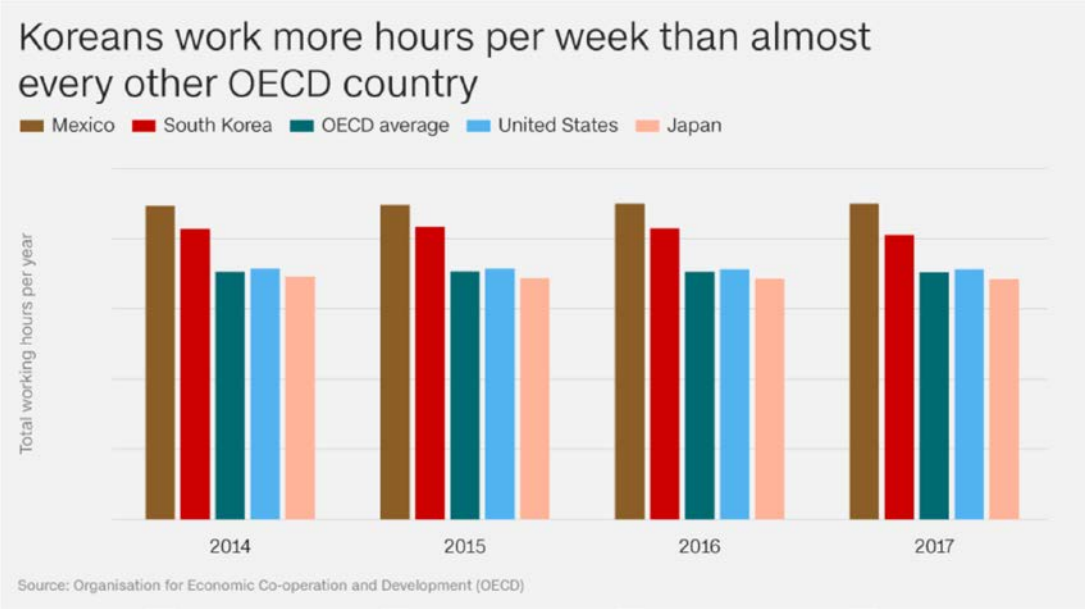

Fig 2. A graph – Koreans work more hours per week than almost evey other OECD country.

Plus, many workers work over-hours in the evening, so that they tend to stay at work till early in the morning. Nonetheless, they earn less-than-average wages compared to other nations in the same job group. It applies as well to young Korean kids, who have to perform by studying long hours. Based on The Programme for International Student Assessment (PISA) research in OECD, Korean students study more than 60 hours per week, being the longest amount of hours in OECD rating (Kim, 2017). From an age of 7 till high school, students attend school from 8:30 to 18:00. Then they join extra private courses, called *Hag-Won(학원)*, until approximately 22:00 (Kasulis, 2017).

CONFUCIANISM, AGE HIERARCHY, FORCEFUL CULTURE

There are a few reasons why Koreans work so hard at school and work. In general, Korean society stems from the culture of the age hierarchy in which older people get more respect, are treated better, earn more money and get fame. There is *The Five Relationships(오륜)* as important parts of Confucianism in Korea, which are the basic moral guideline of how to treat people around you. Among the five relationships, there is a relationship that is related to Korean age hierarchy culture: *Jang-Yu-Yu-Seo(장유유서)* — Old and young have an order. This relationship stresses that there should be an order between younger and older because the older ones might have more wisdom throughout their experiences.

Based on the confucianism in Korea, It is true that age matters much more than skill if two people have similar skills and experiences. If you've freshly started working in a company and you are the youngest one in the group, you become the one who always serves morning coffees to the team members. It is shown between family members as well through 'Filial Piety' which is a virtue of respect for one's parents, elders, and ancestors. Through this concept, a young person needs to be good to an old one, and they can't answer back to the older individuals.

Another reason why Koreans work hard is derived from a forceful working culture. There are several cases of forcing workers to work in Korea, one of them is a Korean drinking culture called *Hoe-Sik(회식)*. It literally means "A dinner with co-workers", the gatherings often associate heavy drinking as well as stays at karaoke bars where colleagues were expected to entertain those higher positioned colleagues, such as your seniors. Employees pour So-Ju, a Korean vodka, into a big beer cup and pressure their subordinates to drink (Park, 2017). This working and drinking culture tend to bring a *Gwa-Ro-Sa(과로사)*, death by overworking for a company. In 2019, 457 people dead because of *Gwa-Ro-Sa*, which means one person per day passed away from the overtime working and stress from work (Ryu, 2019). This concludes that South Korea's work culture is notorious for its rigid hierarchy, forceful demand, obedience, loyalty, and extreme working hours (Park, 2017).

Fig 3. Hoe-Sik culture in South Korea.

Through the timeline of Korean working culture from the past, the traditional way of working based on the Korean concepts *Jeong(정)* and *No-Dong-Yo(노동요)* was about helping each other, working together to reduce the overload of work in a productive way. In contrast, age hierarchy and forceful culture in Korea make workers work longer hours in modern society, this brings detrimental factors on their life related to some mental issues like depression and suicide which I am going to explain on the next part.

1.2 OVER-WORKING CULTURE IN JAPANESE COLONIAL TIMES AND MILITARY REGIME PERIOD

Where does the hierarchical and forceful culture, that makes Korean hard workers, originate from? To understand, we need to go back to the history of S. Korea in the early 20th century. The period between 1905 and 1945, Korea was colonized by Japan, after the colonization there was a period of military regime in 1961. In this part, I will present an overview of what culture has been inherited from this part of Korean history that affected modern Korean working culture during this time.

JAPANESE COLONIAL TIMES

There was *National Mobilization Laws(국가총동원법)* on how Japanese constructed Korean labour for free, which are *Labour mobilization(노동유통), Conscription(군징병)* and *Military comfort women(군위안부)* (Lee, 2017). The labour mobilization refers to the allocation of manpower to industrial sites such as mines, ports, construction sites, military factories, and farms.
In the mid 1920s, more than 120,000 to 180,000 Koreans were being forcefully tranfered to Japan every year, as slaves. The range of their work was dierse from railway construction, land expansion to coal mining, and their average working hours were over 17 hours a day with physical violence and without breaktime.

Conscription was a compulsory enlistment for armed forces, a huge group of forced Korean armies had to participate the *Asia-Pacific War(태평양전쟁)* during World War 2 to support Japan. During the war, more than 75% of the forced conscription were from the Koreans (Jung, 2019). According to a survivor who appeared in a TV program in 2015, he said: “I thought there was a coal mine, but I lived in a prison without bars” (Lee, 2017).

Fig 4. Young people in Hong-Seong, where they were forced to work for Japan in 1934.

Next to the labour mobilization and conscription, Military comfort women showed as an extreme example of forced women labour. It represents a huge gender hierarchy to Korean women who performed their physical labour by force. The *Comfort Women* were females forced into being sex

slaves by the Japanese army before and during World War 2. (Argibay, 2003) During this period, women were in the lowest hierarchical level, which caused over 100,000 and 200,000 Korean girls and women got recuited by frauds, and some of them were coerced or the others were kidnapped. Japanese recruited all the married, single women or even young girls by deceiving them that they would receive a new job that might be supportive for them. According to Lee Ok-seon, in a shelter for former sex slaves near Seoul said "It was not a place for humans, they had sex with me every minute." in Deutsche Welle in 2013.

Fig 5. A group of comfort women surviving at the Songsan comfort station in September 1944.

Labourers refer to those who are paid and working. At that time, the majority of the laborers who were mobilized were taken by force, and suffered heavy labor or sexually abused day and night, suffering from severe malnutrition. All things considered, it was apparent that the majority of Koreans lost their lives in harsh environments due to the harsh circumstances. The Japanese labor mobilization was "forced free labour" based upon the hierarchical and forceful culture.

MILITARY REGIME PERIOD

After few years of independence since 1945, there was a second president named Park Chung-Hee who carried out the May 16 military coup d'état in 1961 and ruled as a dictator from 1963 for 16 years in South Korea. He showed his power through the military regime and the hierarchical dictatorship in politics, which has contributed a lot in a manipulative manner. During the post colonial times, he controlled the whole architecture of the broadcasting system and ads. If any of the broadcasts or advertisements contained opposition towards the military regime, he forcibly shut down the ads and not letting exposed to the public. Later on, he also proceeded *October Restoration(유신체제)* where he came to power during his government in 1972. It was a highly oppressive system to more effectively crush the resistance. It began with the purpose of establishing a military government

by eliminating the Democratic forces to incapacitate the opposite regime. If there was a party against his will, he eliminated the whole member of the party, and give that position to a group with his followers (Seo, 2007). Then the followers work for the one party who got the biggest support from the president. Military culture was at high pressure in S. Korea under the influence of an authoritarian government (The Korean Herald, 2015), he, as a post Japanese collaborator, planned to create a military uprising for the establishment of a new regime with competent generals and core members.

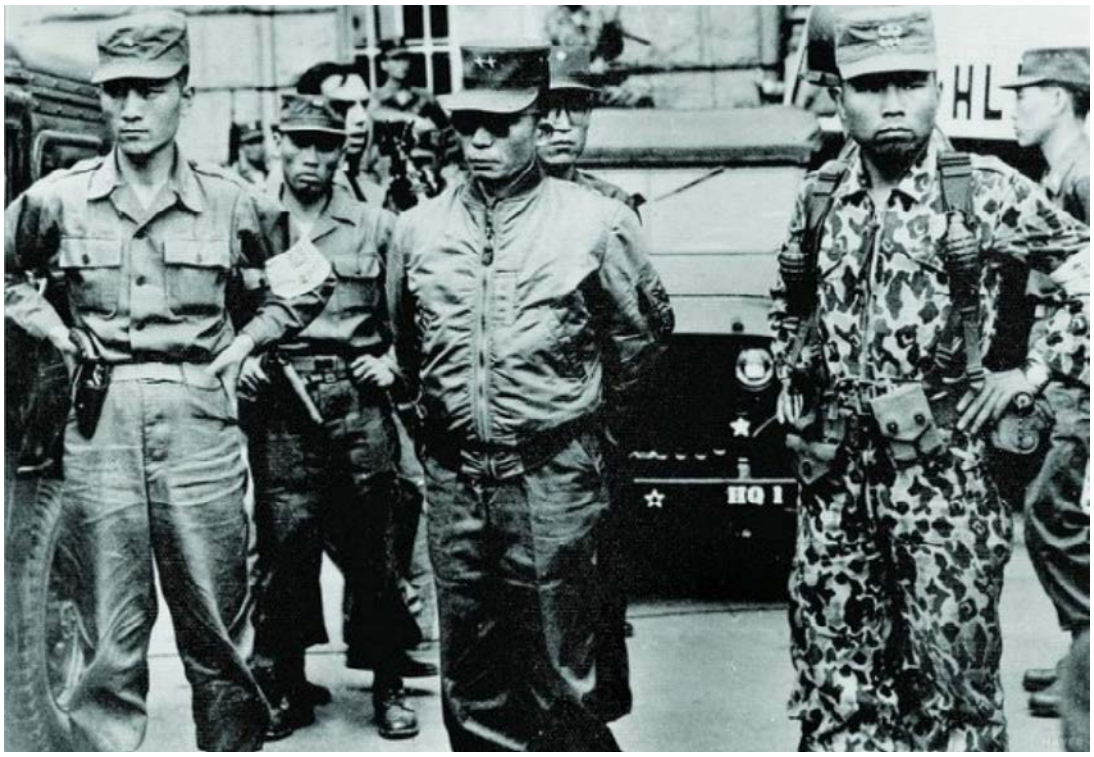

Fig 6. Korea's second president Park Chung-Hee in his millitary suits.

President Park's ruling system remained as a toxic legacy on the Korean modern working culture. Especially, all members of the department collectively suffer the hardships together to bond the fellowship. If any of the members against the team's opinions, they tend to be alienated from the rest of the team members. Korea was in a period of rapid change, this influenced the working culture of today's society. It shows in the strict hierarchy in today's working culture where the seniors make most of the decisions, and junior staffs has no voice to question to superior. Consequently, they mindlessly follow orders unconsciously. In the modern working culture in Korea, there is a saying rooted from his military culture: "You should stand on the right line", which has a similar characteristic on the military regime period. It means that you should find a strong boss who has a big voice on the company, otherwise, you will be eliminated or you won't have a successful career. As a matter of fact, the Korean working culture is a toxic legacy of colonialism and militarism from the early 20th century which brought the concept of free labour. This is a remnant of Japanese colonialism and military dictatorship that permeated in our skin, and it persisted for a long time.

PART 2 THE EXTEND OF THE HISTORY, WHICH ASPECTS OF WORKING CULTURE IN KOREAN COLONIAL TIMES HAVE BEEN INHERITED INTO THE DIGITAL SPHERE?

Korea has the fastest and widely used Internet network in the world (MSIP, 2017). According to the survey, 94% of Koreans can access the Internet through a high-speed communication network, with 43.64 million Internet users out of 51 million of the Korean population, and 88.3% of Koreans over 3 years old are using smartphones (Yoon, 2017). This is causing Koreans to perform more free labour in the digital sphere than other nationalities.

Digital labour is a concept that has become a crucial foundation of discussions within the realm of the political economy of the Internet (Burston, Dyer-Witheford and Hearn 2010; Fuchs and Dyer-Witheford 2013; Scholz 2012). By users performing digital labour via online activities, it creates data that is being monetised as a commodity to be sold by big corporations, and users don't properly get paid. These ingenious ways of extracting cheap labour from users show similar ways of exploiting natural/human resources in Japanese colonial times in Korea, I will call this phenomenon *Digital Colonialism*. Of course, this doesn't mean that the historical colonialism and modern version are fully identical. Unlike the historical Japanese colonialism in Korea that was bounded by geographical locations, digital colonialism is not. There are no physical borders, there are only IP addresses, domain names, and user's data. Therefore, digital colonialism expands by exploiting more layers of human life itself through the use of technology (Couldry, 2019).

Although it is clear that the modes, intensities, scales, and contexts of today's digital colonialism are distinctive from the historical colonialism, the underlying power structures remain the same (Couldry, 2019). To define the underlying structures, I divided this into three categories: appropriating of human life, dispossessing resources, and dominating economics by indoctrinating and monopolizing manipulation. Through these structures, the impact of the colonial period in South Korea can still be felt today, and is showing in the digital space. It is therefore meaningful to look into the specific context and history of South Korea, in order to understand how the negative impact of digital colonialism on people's lives can be fought.

2.1 APPROPRIATION OF HUMAN LIFE

During the Japanese colonialism in Korea, human right wasn't considered a fundamental principle. Japanese appropriated Korean territory, Korean labour, through extreme physical violence. This has been also showing in digital colonialism by appropriating the web and our digital-self through our physical body, digital labour, and digital life. This becomes indirect exploitation through digital territories and it gives rise to social and moral problems concerning privacy and surveillance. How did Japanese appropriate human life in their colonial times? And how does that show in modern digital life today?

COLONIZATION HAPPENED FORCIBLY IN ORDER TO CONTROL A BIG AMOUNT OF PEOPLE

In 1906, Japan decided to forcibly sign on *Eulsa Unwilling Agreement to Korea* (*을사늑약*: Eulsa Neukyak ("Neukyak" means "coerced agreement")) which was the first step to become an official moment of being a colony of Japan. While dispatching a Japanese diplomatic ambassador Ito Hirobumi to sign an agreement from Korea, the King of Joseon Gojong tried to avoid Hirobumi's forced appointment of signing Eulsa Unwilling Agreement. Instead, Hirobumi held a meeting with Joseon's ministers who are mostly Japanese collaborators. Grabbing a pencil and piece of paper on his hand, he forced ministers to agree in a coercive manner. At that time, five out of eight who were called *Five Eulsa Traitors* (Eulsa Ojeok) were semi-forced to agree on Japan's agreement. This was signed with knowing that Korea will be a colony of Japan, they had no choice but to consent. This method was enforced by a small number of people for Japanese rule to dominate the majority, the meeting proceeded in a forced structure that the ministers intentionally had to agree while knowing the results.

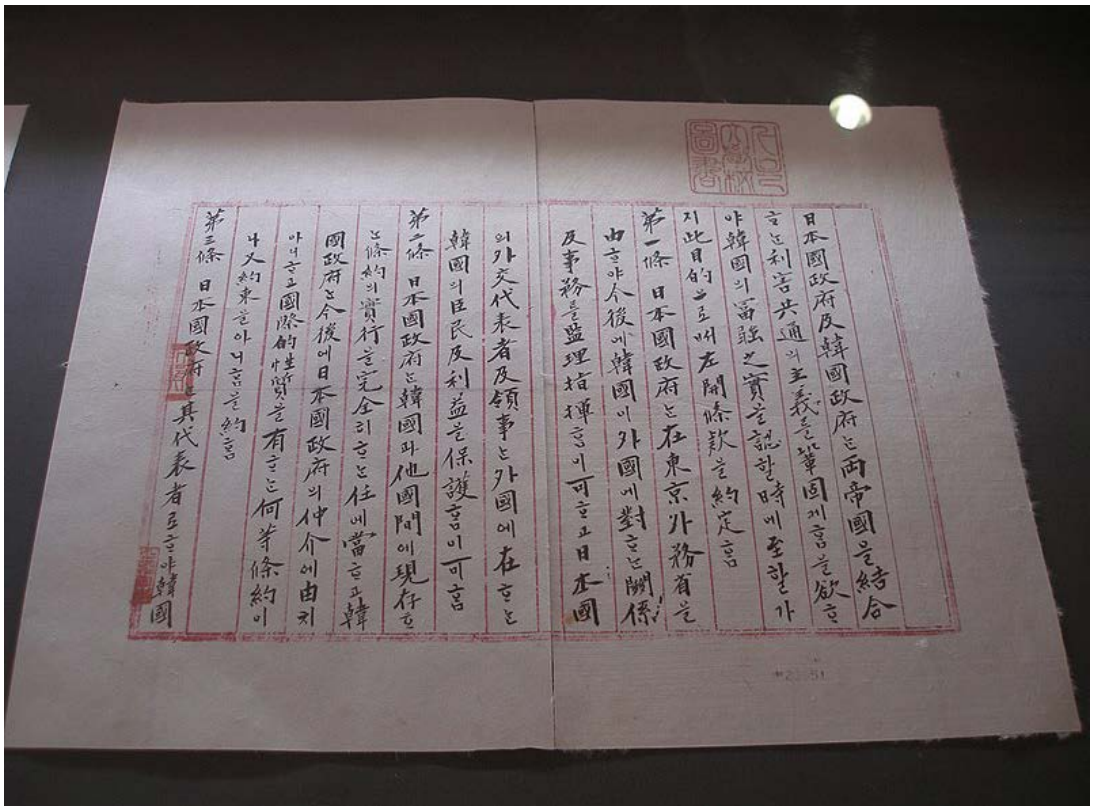

Fig 7. An original document of Eulsa Unwilling Agreement to Korea.

In the modern times, some similar fundamental structures are shared that ground how agreements are being signed. As high speed of Internet, Korean Internet users naturally more exposed to Terms of Services(ToS), privacy statements and user license agreements while using provided services on websites. To sign on the Korean websites, filling in the information is necessary including clicking checkboxes of 'Terms of Services' that count approximately 5,000 words. Unless you meet all the requirements, you can't sign in and start using the service. Eventually, users always need to sign the agreement without having any possibilities of denying it. This way of establishing an agreement is to have full control over the majority of users by putting a small function on the website. By controlling the majority of users with the agreement that is being sneakily added in the registration form, those big Korean companies can perform more free digital labour through the users. Through this instances, I conclude both colonization in the past and modern times have a similar fundamental structure which is performed forcibly to control the majority of people.

THE 24/7 WORKPLACE FOSTERS MENTAL ISSUES THAT SOMETIMES LEADS TO SUICIDE

In early 1900s, a total of 2679 Japanese workplaces kept running by more than 1 million Korean slaves. One of the most accident-prone workplaces was 'Takashima Coal Mine' which is also called 'Hell Island' (Cha, 2013). On this Island, Korean slaves were forced to work more than 12 hours every day, and working consumed their whole life. Many workers ended up being dead or commited suicide because of the workloads, accidents and mental issues (Dae Hak Nae Il, 2017).

Fig 8. Korean slaves in front of the Takashima coal mine

A 24/7 forced labour happened to 'Comfort Women' which I mentioned in part 1 too. Korean women from the age of 12 were trapped in small rooms

being abused by the Japanese soldiers. During this period, the Korean women had to serve over 70 times per day as a sex slave every day and night. This made them struggle with mental issues that led to escape from the Japanese (Shin, 2019). Unfortunately, many people got caught while escaping, eventually they commited suicide at a rail way track near the city ‘Chongjin’ in North Korea (Kyunghyang Shinmun, 2001).

This 24/7 work mentality still persists today and has fostered a culture of play in the digital realm. The relationships between working 24/7 and mental health shows in digital media use, especially in Korean gaming culture. More than half of South Korea’s population have developed a high prevalence of gaming and Internet-related problems (Koh, 2015; Ministry of Science, ICT & Future Planning, 2016), and these are increasingly recognized as a potential public health burden (Kuss & Lopez-Fernandez, 2016; Mak et al., 2014). In 2002, Kim Kyung-Jae died from playing a medieval-themed online game for 86 hours. He is believed to be the first person to die from gaming too much, but there were many more deaths to come (Conti, 2015). A pattern of increasing the risk of harmful physical or mental health, that leads to death, consequences typically related to high frequency and a long period of Internet use (King, Delfabbro, Zwaans, & Kaptsis, 2013). Obviously, slavery is a forced labor through the physical body, and people in a 24/7 internet environment are not forced. However, still, they are hooked through the addctive design in game interface and perform free labour that cause mental issues. In this sense, the history of the 24/7 working culture that cause health problems is still persisting in modern digital society.

INDIVIDUALS’ PRIVACY GOT INFRINGED

Due to the massive amount of work throughout the years in the coal-mining area, many Koreans didn’t have an individual human life. In another coal-mining region in Hokkaido, Japan, there was a special forced labour camp

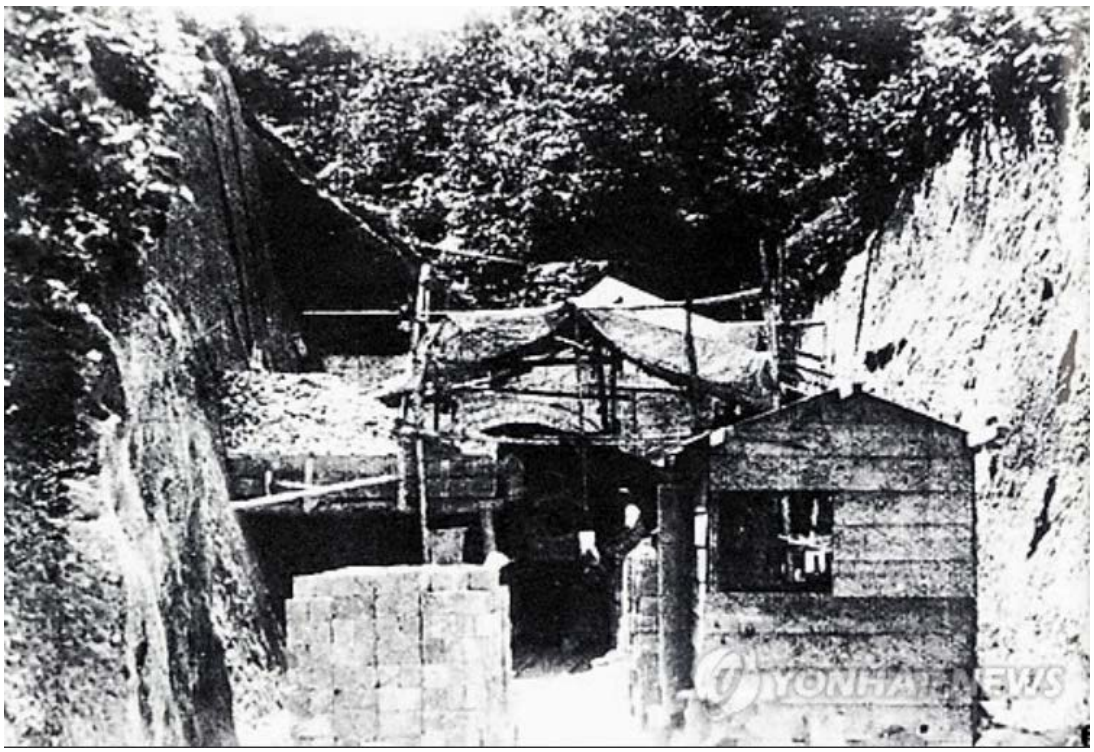

fig 9. Takobeya concentration camp, which is woven with boards betweeen rocks.

called ‘Tako-beya’ for those who had escaped or lacked to meet production quota (Dae Hak Nae Il, 2017). It means literally ‘octopus room’, which refers that once you get in, you can’t get out because it’s a trap. It was mostly for Korean labourers who had been transported to work mainly in coal mines and on construction sites (Nee, 1974). While trapped in the indentured labour system, a massive amount of innocent workers had to live in overcrowded barracks, being cruelly treated for even minor misbehaviour (Paichadze & Seaton, 2015). Workers treated like prisoners or worse (Kimura, 2015) and were being checked all the time by the Japanese rulers. They were physically abused, malnourished, and struggling with cold (KBS news, 2015), of course they couldn’t claim any compensation. In this room, there was no individual life or private lifestyle during their stay.

In today’s digital society, there are a lot of shocking news on massive data leaks from major companies that infringed Korean user’s private Internet life. It started in 2008, one of the most mind-blowing examples is a massive data leak from a South Korean web portal site Nate. At that moment, the site was famous for the fact that there is no one who doesn’t have account. In 2011, Nate got the biggest cyber accident, where a total of 35 million subscribers’ IDs, passwords, names, social security numbers, and contacts have been leaked due to malware hacking from China. Through this accident, a massive amount of innocent users’ personal information had been divulged in a short time (Etnews, 2011), there was no liability for personal information leakage (Jeon, 2018). In 2018, the malware hacking increased 4 times compared to the previous year (Gil, 2019). The innocent Korean Internet users are in a vulnerable situation where their data got harvested all the time and being sold via illegal websites for a cheap price (Hee-Kang Shin, 2019). The Korean Internet users have no more private life on the Internet and their Internet life has become public without knowing who is going to make use of the personal data.

2.2 DISPOSSESSION OF RESOURCES

THEY DISPOSSESS(ED) EVERYTHING FROM A TO Z

During the colonial period, Japan took a lot from natural resources to human resources (*물적/인적 자원의 수탈,* n.d.). From the fish markets where Japanese caught over 5,000 fishes per day (Kim, 2005), agricultural industry where about 40% of it owned by the Japanese government, forestry industry where over 50% of all forests were governed by them, to the mineral resources such as graphites that was mined over 74,879 ton every year (Korea Resources Corporation, n.d.). This was an extreme increase in digging natural resources compared with the past in Korea. Not only the aforementioned resources, they also took scrap metals, brasswares, spoons and nails that could be used to make weapons. To use as a fuel for the plane, they even forced peeling the pine trees to extract the pine resins. It was absolutely dispossession of everything that might be useful to the development of Japan. Moreover, Japan also dispossessed human labour through Labour mobilization, Conscription and Military comfort women as

mentioned in Part 1. They were a forced human labour that was absolutely considered as 'forced work'. Dispossessing the human resources have actively happened through mines, ports, construction sites, military factories, farms, and comfort women. In total, it was more than 322,644 Korean slaves per year being free labourers to produce human resources.

According to Clive Humby, who said "Data is the new oil", the data as a new resource is very valuable but easier to generate than any other resources. It doesn't require a lot of physical labour nor capital. Instead, what is now precious is human life through its conversion into data (Couldry, 2019). Data, as a raw resource, is comprised of social life of users, it can be produced in everyday life. From the book 'The Age of Surveillance Capitalism' by Shoshana Zuboff, it states that company's products and services are the "hooks" that lure users into their extractive operations in which our personal experiences are scraped and packaged (Zuboff, 2015). As data is a new profitable natural resource, many companies are trying to hook a vast amount of Korean user's data. Over 60% of South Korean population use Facebook by 2012, where it has overtaken Korean's No.1 social media platform Cyworld. The more Facebook users increase, the more personal data has been exploited. I, as one of the Korean Facebook users, looked into what data Facebook has control over me. I was surprised that they literally could access everything I did via Facebook including my personal information, ads I am interested in, advertisers who uploaded a contact list with my information, files, photos, events, location, payment, search history, even security & login information.

Besides Facebook, there are more Internet platforms that have vastly dispossessed Korean user's data.This is due to an increase in data consumption by Koreans, which can be attributed to Korea's fast Internet. Based on the statistics that show 94% of Koreans can access high-speed Internet, the life of Koreans has become 24/7 interconnected with the Internet which brings the Internet as an everyday data creating platform by users. Korea's data consumption continues to increase, 'Wireless data traffic statistics' shows that Korean's total usages of mobile phone traffic exceeded 40TB as reported by the Ministry of Science and ICT. Smartphone data usages per capita have more than doubled from 3 years ago, which has nearly 8.09GB per month. Korean customers use Netflix via smartphones increased 274% over the past year, and the number of YouTube users were 2,924, each of them watches videos 882 minutes per month (Choi, 2019). As Korean Internet users are increasingly dependent on the Internet, a massive amount of data is likely to be dispossessed than in other countries.

DISPOSSESSION OF MONETIZABLE RESOURCES

With the vast amount of resources and Korean slaves, Japan's economy had a remarkable period of rapid growth during colonial times. Japan's production indices showed increases of 24 percent in manufacturing, 46 percent in steel, 70 percent in nonferrous metals (Japanese economic takeoff after 1945, (n.d.)). Especially Japanese entrepreneurs have had a virtual monopoly of Korean trade. More than half of the total Korean imports

of $999,720 came from Japan and more than nine-tenths of the total Korean exports of $737,635 went to Japan (Augustine, 1894). Undeniably, Japan had predominant commercial interests in Korea (Betty L., 2013), they exported products to Korea with expensive prices and imported at reasonably cheap prices. In this way, Japan played Korean labour and market with own control.

In modern times, Naver is taking every single user's activities as a form of data including personal information, email, calendar, blog, location, search history, shopping lists and more to analyze and use to their marketing that brings a profit increase. This is comparably easy because the majority of Korean users use Naver. In contrast to the Google users of 13,2%, Naver users in Korea reaches up to 74.4% of the population (Kim, 2019). Same for a social media platform Kakao, one of their product is called KakaoTalk, a WhatsApp-style messaging service, which is actively used by 97% of all smartphone users in Korea and serves more than 43 million monthly active users. In this way, the user's data can be easily accumulated and used to generate their profit by making a better service. Naver's digital ads market earned 68.1% of the whole digital market in Korea, which is an increase of 26.6% than in 2018. This was the highest ever in the annual profit and sales market. Kakao's operating profit increased 93% from last year through the service, which is the largest since 2015.

Based on how they monetized user's data, it becomes apparent that the user's free digital labour that generates data brings a massive profit to the companies. Some people make the case that it is not a forced way of dispossession because it is not physically being exploited. However, means of production in the digital space are not only through the physical body but also social interactions, and this is a new form in the digital colonial era. Moreover, although Korean historical slaves were forced to produce the resources and modern data creation from Korean users is not forced, it is still important to consider as one category to discuss. They are still linked through the huge superiors who control their power that gives rise to work/data as monetizable resources. In this connection, dispossession of resources is remaining in Korean digital society.

2.3 INDOCTRINATION & MONOPOLIZATION

INDOCTRINATED MANIPULATION

The Japanese indoctrinated Koreans by spreading the word *Myeol-Sa-Bong-Gong(멸사봉공)*, to let Koreans work with a lot of passion and loyalty. This concept of *Myeol-Sa-Bong-Gong* is a vestige of Japanese imperialism that means "Destroy your personal life and devote yourself for the betterment of your community." It has often been used during the 1930s, from the Japanese instruction Minamijiro(*南次郎*), the governor-general of the Japanese government. On April 19th 1939, he taught lessons in establishing a new Japanese palace in Cheong-Nam Korea, the reinforcement of soldiers, and the enhancement of the principle of

Imperialism in order to implant the greatness of the Japanese empire (Lee, 2012). With this as a fundamental brainwashing method, Japan succeeded controling a huge forced Korean army who participated in the *Asia-Pacific War*(*태평양전쟁*) during World War II. This was called 'Conscription', a part of the National Mobilization Laws Japan pursued which I aforementioned in Part 1 too. During the war, Japan mobilized over 120,000 young Koreans including 18,594 special army supporters, 3,050 school volunteer soldiers, 1,000 navy special forces volunteered under the strict military hierarchical system. Controling this huge amount of people was possible through the indoctrination and manipulation of *Myeol-Sa-Bong-Gong*.

Today's digital culture in S. Korea certainly has traits that were influenced by this colonial history. Surprisingly or not, Korean users have been still indoctrinated decades of Myeol-Sa-Bong-Gong, which has found its way to the digital realm. It shows by normalizing users' mindsets that have altered to fit certain behaviours. In the early 1980s where Korea just started using the Internet, it wasn't normal to be online or being on the phone for long spans of time everyday. Today, it become normal to stay online on the Internet environment, everyday, 7 days a week. Being given that many people has second phone, laptop even extra digital devices like Ipad, the merge of digital social life and Korean advertising platforms such as Naver Blog has made users indoctrinated by the circumstance. Manipulation happens through interface design too. A great example of this would be infinite scrolling: Infinite scrolling is one of the manipulative ways to keep users focused on the website, which is generally used on e-commerce websites. One of these is called 'Yo-Gi-Yo', an online website for food delivery. The website shows infinite amounts of restaurants while scrolling, in this way, users are manipulated by the interface of the website. With this Internet activity, users continue to stay on the website without noticing it, which might highly be directly connected to the company's profits.

MONOPOLIZED MANIPULATION

President Park started to show his power through the military regime and his dictatorship in politics, which contributed a lot to Korean media and advertisement industries in a manipulative manner during the 1950s. Media manipulation was occuring by controlling political discourse in the media. One of the striking issues was Dong-A newspaper company's 'Blank paper advertisement' situation. In 1964, all the advertisement companies, who have signed to put their ads on the Dong-A newspaper, were canceled due to the media suppression of Park Chung-Hee's regime. As a result, the paper was filled with half blank pages with only small amounts of text. Television broadcasts also had to skip advertisements in between TV programs.
Due to the media manipulation guided by him, the newspaper company couldn't publish any advertisements for seven months, causing management difficulties. In the end, the paper's internal unrest was ended by firing employees who were protesting against President Park's military dictatorship (Hwang, 2017).

fig 10. Blank pages on Dong-A newspaper in 1964.

One of the major mobile research provider Open Survey stated in Joong-Ang newspaper that the majority of the Korean population are Naver users. This means that Naver has a dominant market share in the digital society as they hold a trementous amount of users (JoongAng Ilbo, 2019). To explain the monopolized manipulation in Korean digital society, Naver's 'Cage culture' is a perfect example of manipulation happening through a digital monopoly. Naver limits consumers' choices by manipulating search results, they are infringing on search neutrality (the principle that searchers should show fair results without any bias or consideration) by providing manipulated information. Instead of fair search results, users are exposed to the manipulated results that could cause profits to Naver. In doing so, the platform abuses its monopoly position to generate maximum profit, and mistreats its contents and users by providing nonneutral search results.

In the second chapter, I investigated how specific history of Japanese colonialism in South Korea has remained in digital corporate society. It has become evident that the history is lingering in the form of stealing resources with privacy infringement, negative impact on mental health, social media/ game addiction, and loss of time that could be used for more in a meaningful activities such as Korean traditional labour sharing method of 'Pumasi'. Although there are many evidences on what is persisting in the digital realm, users have become unwitting victims in the digital society. In the next part, I will explore how we can make this palpable in order to create a sense of urgency, and what we can do within the system by analyzing exsisting projects.

PART 3 HOW CAN WE MAKE IT PALPABLE - IN ORDER TO CREATE A SENSE OF URGENCY?

As we discovered that the free labour culture from Japanese colonialism in Korea has remained in the digital realm, the question is: what should I do? It is a good opportunity to reflect on how we can make digital free labour palpable. The original meaning of 'palpable' is 'capable of being physically touched or felt in a tangible way' (Merriam-Webster, 2020), but here the way I use palpable is, 'real experiences', 'easily perceptible', and 'easy to manifest', so it is almost tangible even though it's not physically directed at you.

Then, do we want to quit using these platforms? In theory, it seems ideal. However, quitting those platforms that forcefully make us to perform unpaid labour is not an optimal solution because, realistically, we can't quit and the problem is also on its business model. Many users, who attract customers for their business online, are unable to quit because their livelihoods are depending on the platform. In addition, as the means of communication with friends and family have drastically become digital thesedays, using platforms are almost inescapable. Furthermore, their business model is not producing products, but targeting users with online advertising and analyzing massive amounts of data. In doing so, companies can determine which users receive what sponsored links on each results page. For them, users' data results in more lucrative auctions. Therefore, they sneakily announce that they will take user's data via Terms of Services, and let us perform digital labour in ways that the companies can capture and convert into data (Zuboff, 2015).

It's no secret anymore that they collect my data when I visit websites. However, the fact is that everyone is unwitting to being hard-working, indifferent to exploitation on the profit of large corporations, and this description is too closely resembling modern colonial slavery. We're aware of big companies taking our data, but still, we are on this platform 24/7. Nobody is forcing us to work, but we're still voluntarily producing our own data and value for others in a non-reciprocal way. How do we have a discourse around this to make it palpable? As a self-aware digital worker, how can we become more aware of our own autonomy, labour, and data we produce? Can we create a sense of urgency that everyone can be palpably aware of free labour? To create a sense of urgency, what can we do within the system? In the following part, I will discuss different ways in which this sense of urgency can be achieved by analysing projects. In doing so, I aim to create awareness of the issues at hand.

3.1 KNOWING ON WHAT YOU ARE SIGNING FOR

When making a new account on any Internet platform in Korea, we have to agree on terms and conditions. As I pointed out in part 2, there are no ways to disagree terms if we want to join the community or use the system. Users are semi-forced to sign-on privacy agreements to start using services, and companies are free to do anything. My first personal activistic suggestion to create a sense of urgency is 'being aware of what I am signing up for while using platforms'. We will not know about what's happening with our data if we are unaware of the contents of the agreement they provided for us. It's important to understand what's in them and act out by reading carefully on terms of service and privacy policy (Terms of Service; Didn't Read, n.d.). It's clear that Terms of Service(ToS) are often too long to read, placed in a very obscure part of the web interface. The use of 'legalese' and difficulty in understanding language that are used to obfuscate the content makes difficult to figure out the terms I agree to.

A web-based project Terms of Service; Didn't Read (ToS;DR) is an excellent example for how users can have awareness on what they are signing. It's a community project which aims to analyze and grade the terms of service and privacy policies of major Internet sites and services. It translates the original text of ToS in a simple and direct way. This helps users to explicitly understand what is the main deal websites made with users. The website also helps us to easily understand the meaning of each sentence by filtering out the obfuscation of words, and opening up the community discussion space where everyone can freely publish their opinions. In doing so, their rating could potentially help to get informed about users' rights.

3.2 DIGITAL SELF-TRACKING

> "Every day most of us contribute to an evolving public presentation of who we are that anyone can see and that we cannot erase."
>
> - Digital Citizenship Adventures (2015)

As an Internet user, having a digital footprint is normal, yet they're very difficult to avoid. Digital footprint comprises a broad sense: all emails you've ever sent, every post you've shared on social media, or every Artificial Intelligence lifestyle product that has guided your daily life in a better way. A Korean AI lifestyle product Kakao Mini scrapes all personal experiences based on user's lifestyle, reveals privacy and security consequences in which sensitive household and personal information are shared with other smart devices and third parties for the purposes of sales to other unspecified parties (Zuboff, 2019). Nevertheless, many people don't care about data leaks because they are not closely attached to their data. It's also undeniable that these platforms produce a lot of benefits for users. We could prevent being tracked by removing metadata from pictures before posting them online or checking privacy settings regularly, yet this is not easy and not everyone can do regularly because it's technically challenging and time consuming.

To make the digital free labour palpable, We need to clarify how we can retain control of the data we produce and what our digital footprints look like. Therefore, my second suggestion is to be more aware of what we are creating by self-tracking own digital footages and finding a way to protect being tracked. Self-tracking is not a new phenomenon. For centuries, people have used self-monitoring as a means to attain knowledge and understanding about themselves (Nair, 2019). Self-tracking the digital footages is for the purpose to self-aware of the possibilities to be tracked by third parties, prevent from companies spying on individuals, and protect own personal informations and individual's digital activities. Moreover, it also gives insights on how the website is tracking you, what informations they are gathering from you, and who is tracking my web-surfing habits.

Unlike the EU, where the General Data Protection Regulation (GDPR) is in force, Korea has almost no data protection law. This makes Korean users harder to self-track their own digital footages. All the time, browsers are at the heart of extracting datas from user's digital free labour. Data brokers track us across sites while Internet service providers load the pages we visit, and they attempt to harvest data we produced. To protect yourself from being tracked, making use of a secure browser app, such as Ghostery would be a good choice. It is a web browser extension which blocks trackers to protect the entire web brower, allowing you to regain control of your data. The app safely shields user's activity, and it also evades intrusive ads that impede load times (Ghostery Midnight, 2009). A self-tracking mobile app called Lumen Privacy Monitor by The Haystack Project analyzes your mobile traffic to identify privacy leaks inflicted by your apps and the organizations collecting this information (ICSI Haystack Project, 2017). Disconnect.me is a similar project that tracks and shows the number of tracking requests on a page by companies and what content is being tracked (Disconnect.me, 2011). These apps find out how my installed apps behave in the network, how they extract or leak privacy-sensitive information so that we stay in control of our network fingerprint. Through the apps, a short time divulgence of a massive data leak can be prevented and improve the Internet by empowering people to exercise their right to privacy (Disconnect.me, 2011). Consequently, this can be extensively useful in Korean platforms to prevent being tracked without knowing it.

3.3 QUANTIFYING IT

Giving numeric values on the quantity of data are the most palpable way to create an urgency because it feels more tangible and easy to get a sense of the volume of data. It's called quantitative research, which is a research method based on measuring phenomena and analysing a statistical, mathematical, or compulational results (Given, 2008). In the quantification of digital free labour, the analysis can include the volume of data, the amount of time that was spent in the web, or the amount of code that was executed while using the Internet platform.

It is apparent that tech companies are altering their algorithms that ultimately control how people use the Internet to normalize human behavior (Rattle, 2010). Quantifying data could help to change the user's mindset of normalizing certain behaviors of using Internet platforms for long periods of time. The Hidden Life of an Amazon Users by Joana Moll is one of the examples that reveals the environmental footprint caused when buying a book on Amazon, what volume of information was transmitted, and how business revenues were made via tracking customer's behavior (ARS Electronica (n.d.)). Another direct example of quantifying data is Web Activity Time Tracker, which is a chrome extension of tracking your Internet activity in the browser every day. It calculates the total amount of browsing time by days, on individual websites and shows in a CSV file. By using this extension, users potentially won't stay anymore in one searching platform such as Naver. If Korean users see how much time they spend on the platform, perhaps they will start to look for alternative platforms where users can have more awareness on controlling their data. Another way to prevent normalizing certain behaviors of users is controlling user's scrolling on the web. A web browser app Disable Scroll Jacking is a Chrome extension to disable scroll jacking. It stops unintentional scrolling on all websites, it shows a full-screen message when it catches you scrolling too long (Make Scrolling Bearable Again, n.d.). This will help users avoid being influenced to infinite scrolling caused by the interface of the website. By quantifying data, they can have a real experience on how much free digital labour has been generated from Internet activities (Alex, 2020).

Throughout part 3, I suggested that three palpable ways to make digital free labour could potentially help users to be more self-aware of what's happening around them, especially people who are vastly exposed to digital like, Korean Internet users. I must say the palpable way will not be able to completely solve the problem of digital free labour culture. However, it is a small gesture to perceive self-awareness in a more tangible way. With this approach, the attitude of looking at digital platforms will be converted from being indifferent to be more aware of the way we position ourselves on using the Internet.

PART 4 CONCLUSION

There is a perception that Japan's 35 years of colonial rule improved Korea's infrastructure, education, agriculture, other industries and economic institutions, and thus helped Korea modernize (Japantimes, 2019). However, one shouldn't forget the discrimination and suffering that the Koreans experienced under a hierarchical colonial rule that remains as a toxic legacy of colonialism in Korean working culture. Eventually this has transfered to the culture of exploitative labour under the concept of digital colonialism in the digital realm. It became more apparent that the idea of colonialism seems to be an eternal loop that comes back throughout history. Although I focused colonialism in a specific context within South Korea, it is essential not to ignore that digital colonialism is applicable to countries other than Korea regardless of the history. It's a worldwide phenomenon that everyone should be aware of.

Throughout the essay, I have highlighted a situation where Korean Internet users are unaware of the extent to which data harvested from their online activities are monetised by digital companies. I presented this as digital colonialism, a form of labour exploitation, and attributed the situation to three specific factors: the high extent of internet usage in Korea, the relative lack of legislative protection for internet users, and the cultural acceptance of this situation. Dismantling the historical colonialism experienced by Korea under Japanese rule and digital corporate society, I identified a toxic legacy of colonial rule in digital space that has entrenched today. And by pointing out the inheritance of colonialism, I have set some templates on how making it palpable might encourage users to resist the situation.

While reading this essay, you may have questioned the solutions. Finding a solution to the problem of digital colonialism and its negative impact on people's lives is necessary. However, this essay doesn't aim to solve the current situation of digital colonialism. Instead, it focuses on helping people realize what situation they're in, to understand what digital colonialism is, that it is inherited, is continuing in different forms and ways, by creating a small gesture that makes these things tangible, to spark self-awareness. Colonization might feel like a heavy topic to discuss, however, if we think of colonization as a way to be aware of the work ethic that makes us vulnerable to exploitative practices in the digital realm, it might be a good moment to look at the situation critically in a different perspective. With making it palpable in mind, the way how we look at this situation and position ourselves when using the Internet will be hopefully shifted.

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