African Humanities Research & Development Circle

Journal of AFRICAN HUMANITIES RESEARCH AND DEVELOPMENT (JAHRD)

Volume 2, 2025
Published by The African Humanities Research and Development Circle (AHRDC)

E-ISSN: 3115-5375

FROM COLONIAL LEGACIES TO DIGITAL FUTURES: RETHINKING KNOWLEDGE, INSTITUTIONS, AND TRANSFORMATION IN AFRICA

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This volume gathers a set of essays whose individual topics—spanning education, history, technology, health, social work, creative industries, and psychological predictors of learning—might at first glance feel disparate. Read instead as a deliberately curated conversation, this collection forms a composite argument about how past and present interact in West African societies, how technologies (broadly understood) mediate social relations and institutions, and how knowledge production itself is lodged in terrains of power that are historical, political, and epistemic. The nine articles collected here—ranging from archival-historical studies to sectoral technology studies and tightly empirical social-science investigations—invite readers to think about the multilinear ways that colonial legacies, nation-building narratives, global networks, and everyday practices shape what counts as progress, care, and learning in contemporary Nigeria and the wider Anglophone Africa.

Two structural logics animate this editorial framing. First, this collection stages a movement from macro-historical accounts to micro-institutional and individual-level studies. Beginning with essays that interrogate early twentieth-century educational systems and historic conflict, the reader is gradually taken through mid- and late-twentieth-century nation-building and technological transformation, and finally arrives at focused treatments of sectoral technology uptake (fashion, animation, social work) and an empirical classroom/psychological study on emotional intelligence and reading habits. This progression—from large historical canvases to situated contemporary practices—allows us to see continuity and rupture: how historical meanings and institutional architectures continue to shape present-day technological imaginaries and social outcomes, even as new media and global networks reconfigure space and agency.

Second, the essays collectively stage an epistemological critique: they force us to ask whose histories count, which forms of knowledge are privileged, and how global descriptions—of "development," "technology," or even "war"—can mystify as much as they explain. This collection therefore calls for a careful, historically informed reading of contemporary claims about "transformation," "innovation," and "modernity" in Africa. Drawing from postcolonial theory and scholarship on networks and information societies, we read these papers as interventions that both document local practices and interrogate the global frames within which those practices are evaluated.

Historical Memory, Education, and the Politics of Labelling

This volume opens with an essay that orients the reader historically. "The Battle of Enugu: A Historical Review and Its Implications" ask us to be attentive to the politics of naming and memory. It shows how naming—whether of conflicts, educational reforms, or historical episodes—acts as an instrument of governance and a site of contestation. The paper shows how

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political violence and conflict are read into national narratives in ways that redefine civic membership, memory, and pedagogy. Where the educational-archives essay interrogates labelling as a discursive technology, the historical review of Enugu foregrounds how events are woven into national histories to perform moral and pedagogical labour: as sites for trauma, as justification for policy turns, and as loci for competing historical claims. This historical contribution insists that any contemporary discussion of schooling, identity, or national transformation must be grounded in a careful reading of past contests over meaning and method.

This historical piece also lays the groundwork for the next set of essays by demonstrating that contemporary technological and institutional transformations are not ahistorical phenomena; they inherit colonial institutional architectures and discursive frames that shape possibilities and constraints.

Nation, Technology, and the Question of Progress

Two essays in the mid-section of this volume—"Nigeria's Technological Transformation: Sixty Years after Independence" and "Nigeria and Technological Advances: Sixty Years after Independence, 1960–2020"—pursue an explicit national-scale diagnostic. They ask: sixty years after political independence, what has technological transformation meant in Nigeria? The pairing of two similarly titled but differently analytical pieces is useful: one provides a synthetic overview of macroeconomic, infrastructural, and policy shifts; the other offers a chronological mapping of specific technological domains and the uneven diffusion of innovations.

Taken together, these essays invite readers to interrogate the normative association between "technology" and "progress." Drawing on literature that reconceives technology as socio-technical systems embedded in political economies and cultural practices, the contributors show that technology's effects are variegated: they produce inclusion and exclusion, spur new forms of entrepreneurship and informality, and create dependencies alongside new capacities. The essays thus push back against celebratory accounts of "transformation" that treat technology as an unalloyed good. In their place, the authors provide a sober diagnosis—technology as ambivalent: productive of opportunities but also of widening inequality, infrastructural fragility, and policy misalignment.

These diagnostics resonate with theoretical work that sees contemporary globalization as organized by networks rather than by territorially bound states, and that stresses the centrality of information flows to contemporary capitalist organization. At the same time, the Nigeria-centred pieces insist that networked global flows encounter specific historical legacies—colonial infrastructures, educational regimes, and extractive economies—that mediate outcomes. In short: the network does not wipe history clean; it routes itself through pre-existing channels that shape who benefits and who is left behind.

Health, Social Support, and Institutional Response

Following the macro-technical analyses, this volume turns to institutional responses to public-health crises. "The University of Ghana and the Fight Against HIV/AIDS and COVID–19" is a case study in the governance capacities of higher-education institutions when confronted with public-health emergencies. What stands out in this piece is the way a university's response—its mobilization of research, public outreach, and community partnerships—functions as a

microcosm of the state-society relationship in Ghana. The essay highlights the multiple roles universities have to play: knowledge producers, service providers, and moral authorities. Equally important, it reminds us that institutions with long colonial pedigrees have often had to repurpose their legitimacy for new civic tasks, especially in contexts where public-health infrastructures are underfunded.

There is an implicit normative argument here about the responsibilities of higher-education institutions in contexts of fragility: universities are not merely sites for credentialing elites; they can be catalytic social actors. But the essay also problematizes this ideal by pointing to resource constraints and the risk of over-responsibilising academic institutions in lieu of stronger public systems. The piece therefore sits at an important intersection with the technological diagnostics: technological affordances (data collection systems, telehealth platforms, public outreach via digital media) can augment institutional response, but they cannot substitute for robust public infrastructure.

"Technology in Family Support: The Role of Technology in Social Work Practice in Nigeria" brings this institutional thread into the domain of social work and the family. The essay demonstrates how digital platforms, mobile communication, and data systems have been adapted in family support interventions. Yet it moves beyond a simple inventory of tools to interrogate how technology reshapes client–practitioner relationships, confidentiality norms, and definitions of care. Where technology promises reach and scalability, social work practice must grapple with trust, cultural competence, and the uneven distribution of digital literacy. Importantly, this essay attends to the ethical tensions that arise when technologies developed in industrialized contexts are transplanted into different sociocultural milieus.

Taken together, the health and social-work pieces argue for a relational understanding of technology: technologies are effective only insofar as they are embedded in institutions that have legitimacy, capacity, and proximity to communities. Without those, technological solutions risk being superficial or, worse, extractive.

Creative Economies: Fashion, Animation, and the Cultural Politics of Visibility

This volume's attention to technology in the creative sector—"Digital Technology and the Nigerian Fashion Industry: Platforms, Practices, and Global Visibility" and "The History and Practice of 3D Animation in Nigeria"—brings into relief a central tension in contemporary African publics: the co-existence of enormous cultural production and persistent infrastructural constraints. Both essays study creative practitioners who have leveraged platform economies, digital distribution, and new forms of production to reach global audiences. Yet they are not celebratory paeans to neoliberal entrepreneurialism. Rather, they deploy case studies to show how capacity, aesthetics, and local cultural repertoires interact with platform logics that are often extractive.

The fashion essay examines how Instagram, e-commerce platforms, and digital lookbooks have allowed Nigerian designers to craft new visibility strategies, bypassing older gatekeepers in global fashion capitals. The analysis examines how the affordances of visual platforms enable particular modes of self-presentation while also imposing algorithmic constraints. Similarly, the animation essay traces a history of Nigerian 3D animation work that moves from constrained studio practices to an emergent ecosystem of freelancers, studios, and cross-border collaborations. Both pieces

insist that technology is enabling but not determinative: creativity is still grounded in labour practices, training infrastructures, and intellectual property regimes that are unevenly developed.

These papers thus push us to think about cultural visibility as a product not merely of talent but of networks—technological, financial, and institutional. Visibility is political and economic: to be seen on Instagram or a streaming platform is to be subject to new forms of curation and monetization, which in turn shape the forms of cultural expression that are sustainable. These essays therefore make an important contribution to scholarship on cultural economies by showing how local practices are reconfigured by global platform ecologies.

Education, Emotion, and Individual Outcomes

The closing piece, "Emotional Intelligence, Reading Motivation, and their Combined Impact on Senior Secondary Students' Academic Success," returns us to the micro-level and to the schoolroom. In a volume that repeatedly emphasizes institutions, networks, and structures, this empirical study is a salutary reminder that individual dispositions, practices, and psychosocial skills remain critical mediators of educational attainment. The study tests the predictive power of emotional intelligence and reading habits—two variables that are both shaped by institutional contexts and formative in shaping future institutional trajectories.

This paper is an apt conclusion because it links back to this volume's opening concerns. If educational systems are technologies of the self—mechanisms that shape subjectivities—then emotional competencies and reading habits are outcomes of those systems and, in turn, inputs into the construction of future citizen-subjects. The study's empirical results thus occupy a double role: they are evidence-bearing findings about educational correlates, but they are also a prompt for thinking about pedagogy in an era of digital distraction and neoliberal pressure for measurable outcomes. The paper encourages policymakers and practitioners to invest in affective and reading literacies as much as in instrumental skills.

Crosscutting Themes and Critical Conversations

Across these varied papers, several recurring motifs emerge. First, the persistence of history: colonial and early-postcolonial institutions continue to shape contemporary trajectories in schooling, public health, and technology uptake. Readers will notice that the historical essays are not antiquarian; instead, they supply the analytic tools necessary to understand how infrastructures (material, bureaucratic, and discursive) persist and evolve.

Second, the ambivalence of technology: in domain after domain, technology appears as both opportunity and problem. The essays collectively resist technological determinism: rather than treating technology as an exogenous force that produces modernization, the contributors show that technologies are socialized—they are embedded in local practices, policy choices, and historical legacies that condition their effects.

Third, networks and visibility: several essays probe how new media and platforms mediate access to markets, publics, and publics-of-exposure. Fashion designers and animators, for instance, use platforms to gain visibility; universities and social workers use digital tools to extend their reach. But the network also introduces new gatekeepers (algorithms, platform policies) and new dependencies (payment systems, intellectual property regimes).

Fourth, ethics, care, and responsibility: the pieces on health and social work, together with the study on emotional intelligence, raise questions about the ethical responsibilities of institutions and practitioners. Technologies and policies do not absolve actors of moral obligations; rather, they reconfigure the terrain on which obligations are recognized and executed.

Finally, the politics of knowledge and narrative: this volume is self-conscious about historiography and the production of narratives. The deconstruction of labels—whether "World War" or "technological transformation"—is not merely semantic but political. How we name phenomena structures policy responses and scholarly attention. This meta-reflexivity is one of this volume's chief strengths: the essays do not simply document; they critique the frames within which documentation is performed.

Toward an Agenda: Policy, Research, and Pedagogy

What should readers (and policymakers, educators, and researchers) take away from this volume? We conclude with an agenda that synthesizes the volume's empirical and theoretical insights.

1. Invest in Institutional Capacities, Not Only Technologies. Technologies must be embedded in institutions with the legitimacy, human capacity, and resources to use them ethically. Institutional strengthening—of public health systems, schools, and cultural training programs—is a precondition for technological impact.
2. Historicize Policy. Policies around education, technology, and cultural industry development should be informed by historical understanding. Quick-fix digital interventions that ignore institutional legacies are unlikely to yield sustained results.
3. Regulate Platform Power While Supporting Local Creative Economies. The creative sector's ability to access global visibility hinges on platforms that are often governed by distant corporate policies. Collaborative policy experiments—local payment systems, artist cooperatives, and public grants—can help redress exploitation.
4. Prioritize Affective and Literacy Skills in Education. The final empirical study underscores the salience of emotional intelligence and reading habits. Curricular reform that includes affective skills, critical reading, and digital literacies will better prepare students for uncertain, networked futures.
5. Support Interdisciplinary Research that Bridges History and Technology Studies. Many of the most generative insights in this collection arise when historians, sociologists, technologists, and educators talk to each other. Funding interdisciplinary work will enrich policy-relevant knowledge.
6. Attend to Ethics and Care. Whether in public-health responses or social-work practice, ethical commitments and community engagement are indispensable. Technologies should be assessed not only for efficiency but for their capacity to sustain trust and dignity.

Conclusion

This volume is, in form and substance, an argument for reading the contemporary through the historical and for understanding technology as a set of social relations rather than as merely a collection of tools. The essays assembled here speak to one another across scales: from archival reconstructions and military histories to macro-analyses of national technological trajectories, from university-based public-health responses to the intimate dynamics of family support and classroom learning. Each author contributes to a pluralistic, critical conversation about how African societies

grapple with the legacies of colonial rule, the promise and peril of digital networks, and the everyday practices that sustain civic life.

If there is a single normative throughline in these pages, it is this: the work of building more inclusive, resilient, and humane institutions requires both historical memory and imaginative futures. It requires attention to the infrastructures and practices that make meaning, to the networks that enable visibility, and to the ordinary skills—reading, emotional regulation, caregiving—that shape life chances. The essays in this volume do not offer simple answers. What they offer instead is a rich analytic cartography—one that scholars, practitioners, and policymakers can use to navigate the complex topography of history, technology, and social life in contemporary Africa.

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