The Impact of AI On Developing Countries

Why AI may impact developing countries more negatively & what they can do about it

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26th CSTD side event:
the multi-faceted implications of AI

UNCTAD

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- Domain Expert in Data and AI Ethics

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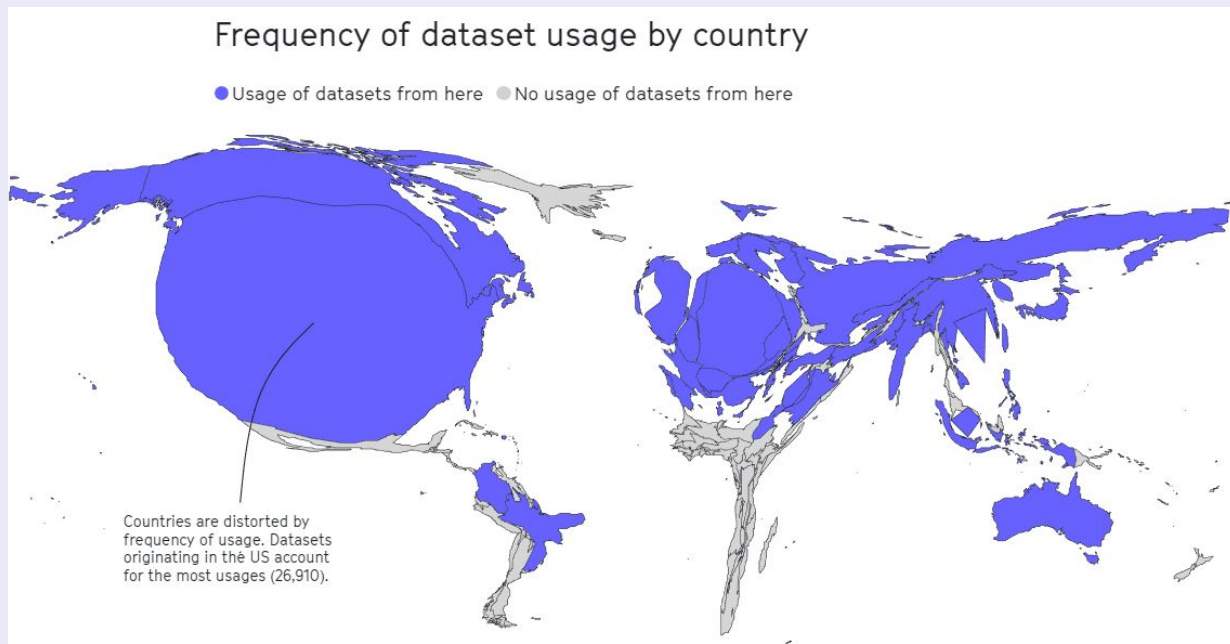- PhD in philosophy, UC Berkeley

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Developing countries

are vulnerable

to excessive AI harms

Some examples

AI systems
are trained on Western data

Frequency of dataset usage by country

● Usage of datasets from here   ● No usage of datasets from here

Countries are distorted by frequency of usage. Datasets originating in the US account for the most usages (26,910).

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AI systems are designed for Western contexts

The New York Times

A Genocide Incited on Facebook, With Posts From Myanmar's Military

Arun (2019), AI and the Global South: Designing for Other Worlds

AI Ethics Principles
May Reflect Western Values

Westen Autonomy Principle:

"individuals have a right to make decisions for themselves about the treatment they do or not receive"

Floridi et al. (2018)

African Critique:

"this principle conflicts with common communitarian values in African cultures due to its emphasis on individual decision-making"

Carman & Rosman (2021)

The AI Industry Exploits Developing Countries

Annotators

Paid 90 cents/hour on average
as low as 11 cents/hour
in Venezuela and North Africa

Content Moderators

Watch traumatizing content
paid as little as 1.5 dollars/hour
No wellness breaks or unions

Experiments

Global North companies
test invasive AI apps in Africa

Mining

Cobalt and lithium
are often mined by children
in Global South countries

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Patricia Gestoso, "How artificial intelligence is recolonising the Global South"

What can developing countries do to mitigate AI harms?

- National regulation

- National AI strategies, with focus on AI ethics

- Increase participation in AI ethics conversations

- Create financial incentives for responsible AI development

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Thank you!

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