

Chapter 12

Data Colonialism: The Silent Force Behind Global Inequality

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ABSTRACT

Digital Colonialism and Inequality represent a new front of global power, in which control over technology and data reinforces inequalities between nations and populations. The rapid expansion of digital technologies has brought about an uneven access to, and use of, knowledge and resources, predominantly benefiting a privileged minority at the expense of others. This is achieved as a digital divide, in which economically underdeveloped or backward regions are largely cut off from the digital economy and sharing of knowledge. The concept of digital colonialism proceeds to explore how data extraction, algorithmic control, and platform monopolies shape global power dynamics that increase existing inequalities. Employing bi-stacked Artificial Neural Networks (ANNs), the present work investigates the complex interaction among technological systems, human behavior, and socio-political forces behind digital inequality.

INTRODUCTION

Digital colonialism involves the domination and control of dominant nations and corporations over digital infrastructures and data in developing countries. This is a new colonialism precipitated by the rapid development of the digital economy and the globalized internet. With the rise in technology and digital platforms being

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more central to every area of life, it is the people who own these platforms that enjoy an enormous amount of power. The Global North nations and corporations have dominated a large part of the digital space, having systems that are economically, politically, and socially lucrative for them. Developing nations risk becoming digital vassals that lack full sovereignty in the digital sphere.

Control over data is one of the primary features of digital colonialism. Data. For many, data is referred to as the new oil, a resource that lubricates the global economy of today. It's collected. For storage and used. It has significant economic impact, but most of it is taken from people in the Global South without proper remuneration or ownership. It is then used by corporations to create algorithms that bolster current power structures and increase their power within the global market. This uneven control of data perpetuates global power inequities, as poorer countries are still reliant on the technological platform of richer countries. The digital divide is perhaps the most obvious form of digital inequality.

Technology, the internet, and digital services are not evenly distributed around the globe. In most parts of the world, especially the Global South, there is a major segment of society that has no access to high-speed internet, devices, and digital skills. This creates an economic divide where developed countries and companies can use digital technologies to increase productivity, innovation, and wealth while poorer countries are left behind. The denial of access to technology hinders economic development and worsens inequality and impedes developing nations' capacity to engage in the world economy. Digital colonialism is not merely about economic domination but also cultural hegemony. Western technology monopolies like Google, Facebook, and Amazon are the gatekeepers of digital content. These entities influence the information and entertainment people consume around the world, usually advancing Western ideology, values, and way of life.

Consequently, non-Western voices and cultures tend to be silenced, producing a kind of cultural imperialism. Western-dominated narratives are spread all over the world and challenge local cultures, languages, and traditions, sustaining a homogenized global culture with the economic interests of richer countries at its center.

Increased digital technologies also led to the birth of a novel kind of surveillance capitalism, in which individuals' personal information is continuously gathered, scanned, and sold. This system of surveillance disproportionately affects populations in the global South, where data protection legislation and regulatory structures are typically weaker or absent. Multinational corporations and states through electronic platforms have greater than ever before access to individual data, which allows them to control, influence, and manipulate people.

In nations where privacy rights are weakly ensured, citizens become objects of online observation, reproducing an imbalance of power by which the Global North exerts authority over the lives and identities of individuals in the Global South. The

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