Privacy in an age of magical machines: A cross-cultural discovery of patterns of privacy in GenAI

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Introduction

Andreessen (2011) said: "Software is eating the world", but today it might be more appropriate to say *Data* is eating the world. There is no longer a distinction to what can and cannot be captured in data from nature (Walford 2018) to bodies (Van der Ploeg 2012). This 'datafication' (Cukier and Mayer-Schönberger 2014), tries to capture all things into data, with data being a tradeable commodity (De Franceschi and Lehmann 2015). Our daily lives are deeply connected with digital technology that collects the what and when on our interactions as capital (West 2019). The tools and distractions social media provides turns us into consumer-workers (Puaschunder 2018) collecting data for these companies whilst we enter into license agreements without being able to control the data we produce (Thatcher, O'Sullivan, and Mahmoudi 2016) and approaching user agreements with a sense of apathy (Gómez Ortega, Morales Ornelas, and Genç 2025).

Recent developments have seen generative Artificial Intelligence (genAI) being available for the masses with Large Language Models (LLM's) having a much easier interface for non-technical users. Often signified with the moniker: AI or with magical stars ( ) it features in many applications ranging from web search to (Google n.d.a; DuckDuckGo n.d.; Microsoft n.d.a) personal communication such as Outlook ("Chat with Copilot in Outlook - Microsoft Support" n.d.) or Whatsapp (Meta n.d.). genAI is quickly becoming embedded in all sorts of business and applications (Grantham-Philips 2024). Even more than in applications beforehand users are encouraged to upload documents and provide more context for the LLM to perform better.

GenAI has been lauded as tool that can help with productivity, can help out in creative industries such as writing, music, film. But there is a real darkside to it too. Besides the darkpatterns that are emerging and the plausible, but false pictures and text it can produce, there are many concerns about the energy abuse and infrastructure that is needed for it to function. The impact it is having on learning and social relations (Hou et al. 2025). Then there is the issue of bias by training and the amplification of this bias (Lloyd 2018). Jailbreak

prompts are a way to subvert the main goals and to misuse LLM's (Perez and Ribeiro 2022). Which could lead to the extraction of personally identifiable information (Li et al. 2023). In older models (GPT-2) training data could be even be extracted after an attack (Carlini et al. 2021).

Concerning the use of personal data, this in itself should be alarming. On top of that the terms of service for ChatGPT allow for OpenAI (the company behind the popular chat based LLM) to make use of content provided by users to improve services, and even to train models (OpenAi n.d.). The same holds true for Anthropic (Claude) (Anthropic n.d.), Google (Gemini) (Google n.d.b) and X (Grok) (X n.d.), even in areas with stricter legal restrictions such as the European GDPR.

Finally there seems to be an inherent faith and push for Big Tech companies to "spread the good news", to use religious language.

Recent news from Amazon, Microsoft and Google, the three largest companies that provide infrastructure for software around the world, mentions that they are investing in data centers in Uruguay (Google 2024), Thailand and Malaysia (Onag n.d.; Browne 2024; Chiang 2024), Busan in South Korea (Microsoft 2024), Brazil (Microsoft, n.d.b) and Chile (Amazon 2025; Cambero 2025). Who stands to benefit from these transactions?

The extracting of data and the use of AI have become a powerful tool, but at the same time data and AI "entrench power assymetries and engender new forms of structural violence and new inequities between the Global South and North" (Madianou 2024).

In recent years this phenomenon of data extraction has been described as 'data colonialism', as an exploitative transgression for profit. (Couldry and Mejias 2019), digital colonialism (Kwet 2019) or 'data extractivism' (Brevini et al. 2024, pp 126), or in the case of African nations even a '21st century scramble for africa' (Coleman 2018).

For this research however I would like to focus on data justice as Jimenez further poses that a focus on justice instead of coloniality would require 'us to go further and actively attempt to eliminate the injustices we observed' (Brevini et al. 2024, pp 133). Instead of only looking at what that coloniality looks like and trying to prove this as 'colonial'.

As Kwet (2019) asks himself in the case of South Africa: 'are cloud centres built by Amazon, Microsoft, and Google good for the country'? Software and the push for GenAI comes with its own agenda and is not free from political or commercial agenda's (Kwet 2019). Abandoned experiments as part of 'AI for good' have been compared to leaving a Lamborghini in the desert.

What then do we define as progress? Is it the mere evolution of technological tools? Or the more petabytes we can store? Or is it actually making a difference in peoples lives in a profound, meaningful and positive way? And does importing more corporate "Big Tech" technology increase the way of life? Or does it further enrich Global North pockets?

Research Questions

What actual gains can we see in productivity when we look at the use genAI tools in the Global South and do they measure up to the costs made towards that gain?

Sub questions

- What are the costs of using genAI?
- What uses are there?
- How do costs differ over different types of use?
- *Who stands to gain?*

Bonus questions

Who owns the data?

What influence can AI for *Social Good* actually have? What is

What is the relation of power and the created social standards In what way is power big tech has exterted in and misused in policies concerning data in lower income countries? - Lead with examples of policies in powerful (Khanal, Zhang, and Taeihagh 2025)

In what ways does GenAI express itself as a neocolonialist hegemonical agent? - How do localized LLM's differ in bias towards policies from commercial models widely available

How is blind faith in techonological advancement towards "Singularity" influencing optimism towards creating an Artificial General Intelligence? - forces of marketing and opportunities of use - overpromises (Krokowski and Hirsch-Kreinsen 2025) -

What local solutions can we offer for people groups who have a larger gap towards digital accessibility

- How do people use genAI cross-cultural study?
- What patterns exist in the solution realm?
- What intrinsic motvation

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