



Conferência Nacional dos Agentes Produtores e Usuários de Dados

SOBERANIA NACIONAL EM GEOCIÊNCIAS, ESTATÍSTICAS E DADOS

Riscos e oportunidades
do Brasil na Era Digital

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AI: THE SOCIAL *RECONSTRUCTION* OF REALITY: UNDERSTANDING THE RISKS

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AI: THE SOCIAL *RECONSTRUCTION* OF REALITY

The potential benefits of large-scale AI

- Applying *vast* computing power
- *combined* in a non-linear way (neural *networks*)
- to make predictions for *clearly specified, socially useful* purposes
- that are *beyond human* capacities
- but which *benefit* humans
- and which *citizens* can control

But to get those benefits, complex *social* conditions must be met





The serious risk of large-scale AI

Those potential benefits will *not* materialize if:

- AI is applied for purely *commercial*, rather than clear social purposes
- in ways that *undermine*, rather than enhance, human capacities
- and may *harm* humans
- without *citizen-shaped* control or regulation

→ societies risk *reconstructing* their reality to suit commercial interests, not citizen interests (compare Berger and Luckmann, *The Social Construction of Reality* 1966; Couldry and Hepp *The Mediated Construction of Reality* 2016)





We can avoid this risk via two principles

- **‘AI is an Ideology, not a Technology’** (Jaron Lanier and Glen Weyl, *Wired*, 15 March 2020):
 - AI ‘references a subjective measure of tasks that we classify as intelligent’
 - ‘mak[ing] it easier for a small group of technologists and investors to claim all rewards from a widely distributed effort’
- When societies use ‘artificial intelligence’, they are **changing how they define knowledge and expertise . . .**
- Ignoring those principles has huge implications for institutions and individuals, labor and education, ie for life itself.



The reality of AI is *not* the story AI ideology tells

- AI is the result of (billions of) statistical predictions: it *can* have no sense of the world (true or false), *except* to the extent that humans train it
- → even large-scale AI are Stochastic Parrots (Bender, Gebru et al. 2021, cf Shanahan 2023) *except* to the extent that humans train them (Burkhardt and Rieder 2024)
- Which is why GenAI *needs us!*
 - Chat-GPT produces adequate guesses that *we* help refine and that *we can choose* whether to accept or not
 - Where guesses are not enough (eg law), general AI may ‘hallucinate’ [go wrong!] **up to 82%** of the time, and even specialist legal AI **up to 34%** of time (Magesh et al 2024)



Specific Risks

- 1) if GenAI becomes our default way of interpreting social reality, it will install super-powerful surveillance into everyday life (Bruce Schneier in *Slate*, December 2023)
- 2) AI, rather than supplementing human labor, risks *supplanting/ reshaping* it (Erik Brynjolfsson in *Daedalus* spring 2022 on the Turing Trap)
- 3) If we introduce AI without careful regulation into institutions based on human expertise (education, law, medicine), this could *undermine* those institutions
- EU AI Act's risk pyramid approach (compare Brazil's AI Bill 2338/2023) *may* address risk 1, but not risks 2 and 3



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The need for *citizen-guided* regulation of AI

From business-focused to *citizen-focused* questions:

- Who benefits from an AI system and who might be directly *harmed*?
- Who evaluates the functioning of an AI system, and who decides when to *switch it off*, if it's not working?
- What are an AI system's effects on *society's wider definitions of knowledge and expertise*, and who decides when to switch it off, if those effects are negative?





... and a *society*-focused debate on AI

- From AI as commercially-enforced *data extraction* that extends the long history of colonialism (Mejias + Couldry 2024)
 - ...
 - ‘everyone is going to have to learn how to use AI and to apply it to their role’ (Jared Spatero, Microsoft, quoted *Washington Post* 19 May 2023)
 - ‘AI won’t replace lawyers – lawyers who use AI will replace lawyers who don’t’ (Lexis+ advert, *Financial Times* 18 May 2024)
- ... to AI that meets *social needs* and serves *citizens’* interests to enhance democracy and freedom





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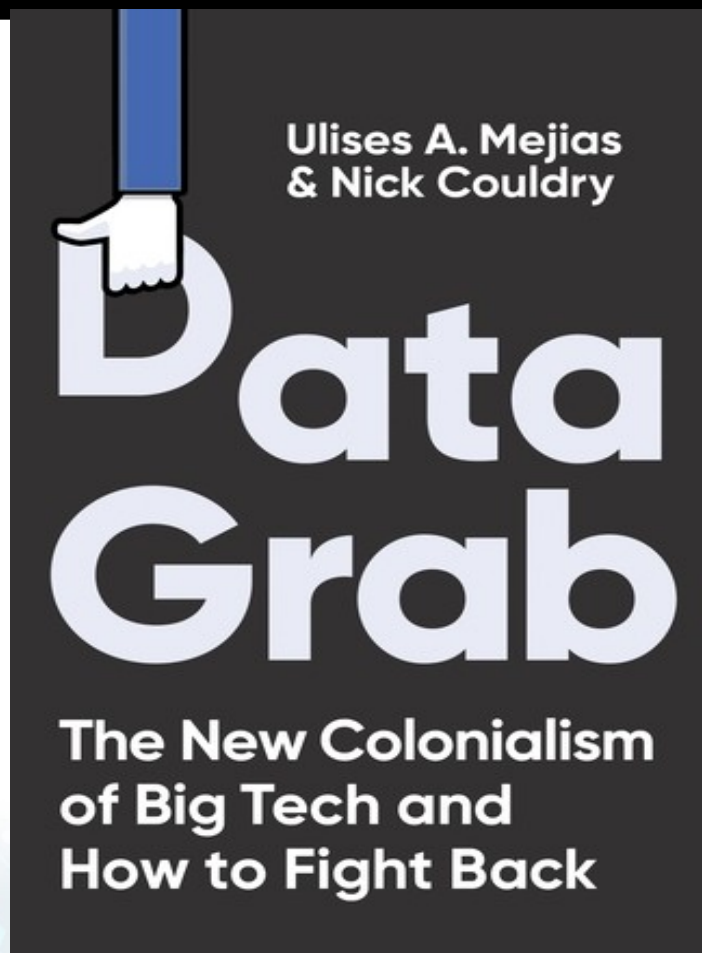
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If you're interested to read more:

Data Grab:

***The New
Colonialism of
Big Tech and
How to Fight
Back***

**(Penguin/
Chicago UP
2024)**



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Thank you!

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