

Big data Commons and the global South

What do we know of the social impact of big data on most of the world's population, about 60% of them below the poverty line and residing primarily in emerging economies? Big data manifests in novel and unprecedented ways in these neglected contexts. India is in the process of creating biometric identities for her 1.2 billion people; Brazil has partnered with Phorm, a British spyware company that uses big data to track all navigation activities of Brazilian users without consent; and Africa initiates social entrepreneurial sites such as Ushahidi that transforms data from different channels into real-time crisis maps to assist in humanitarian relief efforts. These endeavors span the spectrum of inspiring celebration to evoking serious concern. This talk critically assesses the 'bottom of the pyramid' populace as a new consumer base, inverting decades of viewing the poor in the global South as passive beneficiaries to potential co-creators of their own data. This compels us to rethink what constitutes as data identities, data democracies and whether the global South is experiencing such a thing as a data commons?

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