

Artificial Intelligence: A New Global System, a Genocidal Project or the revival of the tokoloshe culture?

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Abstract

In the context of inclusive innovation, artificial intelligence (AI) presents opportunities to address inequality and social exclusion by integrating fairness, inclusion, and representation. Despite AI's benefits, its global transformative impact, disruption of traditional labour patterns, and integration into daily life, it remains essential to consider the potential downsides, including deepening inequalities and enhancing the digital divide. This article explores the multifaceted nature of AI, examining whether it implies developing a new global system, risks becoming a "genocidal project", or challenging traditional African ways of being. We illustrate this by comparing AI usage and African Epistemologies to understand how both have a dual nature in their adaptability and versatility in shaping our everyday lives. Using the African Epistemological lenses of Ubuntu and African folklore of the tokoloshe, we incorporate evidence from academic sources and policy; we argue that AI's replacement of human labour is a form of economic genocide, mainly impacting less advantaged people by intensifying inequalities and unemployment. This paper aims to contribute to the growing study of inclusive innovation by incorporating AI and African experiences, emphasising the philosophy of Ubuntu and bringing to the fore humanness in the development of AI in Southern Africa. We offer policy recom-

mendations for policy development that emphasise the challenges and influence of AI's potential for inclusive innovation. These recommendations promote equitable access to technology and prioritise ethical considerations to avoid harm and marginalisation.

Keywords: Artificial Intelligence, Inclusive Innovation, African epistemology, Capitalism, Traditional Labour.

I Introduction

In his seminal work *Artificial Intelligence Poses Risk of Extinction*, Roose (2023) cautions that Artificial Intelligence (AI) technology could one day pose an existential threat to humanity, placing it on the same scale of societal risk as pandemics and nuclear wars. From this premise, we argue that from a historical lens, AI's development reflects the continuation of capitalist expansion rooted in the feudal elites and the genesis of capitalism, where technological development has constantly combined power and wealth among the capitalists. This new global system, driven by AI, has further entrenched existing hierarchies and widened the gap between the Global North and South. For South African communities, the development of AI threatens economic systems and undermines deeply rooted epistemologies, mainly Ubuntu, a philosophy emphasising communal interconnectedness and shared humanity. The loss of Ubuntu in the face of AI's individualistic, capitalist nature symbolises the cultural loss associated with AI development.

South Africa continues to grapple with overwhelming levels of inequality and persistently high unemployment rates. According to the World Bank 2022 report, South Africa's Gini coefficient, a measure of income inequality, stands at 0.63, making it one of the most unequal nations globally (Sulla et al. 2022). Additionally, Statistics South Africa (2023) reported an official unemployment rate of 32.6% in the second quarter of 2023, with youth unemployment reaching a staggering 62.1% among individuals aged 15–24. According to the World Bank, South Africa is one of the most unequal nations world-



wide, with 10% of the people owning more than 80% of the wealth (Orthofer, 2016). The role of AI in our communities remains controversial. Instead of improving unemployment, it contributes to it. It is with these disturbing statistics that we contend that AI could be a genocidal project, and we risk participating in that project if we neglect ordinary citizens who rely on their ability to work to provide for their families. We risk exacerbating existing inequalities and leaving a significant portion of the population behind in an increasingly technology-driven world. Upskilling these citizens is not just a moral imperative but also an economic necessity. By equipping individuals with the skills to leverage the affordances of artificial intelligence (AI), we can create a more inclusive economy where technology acts as an enabler rather than a barrier.

This article brings a new way of looking at AI, proposing the metaphor of AI as a “genocidal project”. This metaphor is not new, but it is a radical and contested perspective. Building on the concept of Genocide we advance the metaphor for AI contributing to the economy and its neglect of African ways of being. Communities, particularly those relying on labour-based industries, face socio-economic devastation as AI automates traditional jobs and marginalises already helpless people. Furthermore, framing AI within Western epistemological frameworks preserves a form of intellectual and cultural erasure, sidelining African knowledge systems (Ofosu-Asare, 2024). Interestingly, the rise of AI also parallels cultural revitalisation, predominantly the resurrection of the *tokoloshe*. In contemporary discourse, the comparison between the *tokoloshe* (a supernatural figure in African folklore) and AI is an interpretive metaphor, not an established expert opinion or a widely recognized academic perspective. It is a creative analogy that draws parallels between the unseen, disruptive nature of the *tokoloshe* and the often impervious, far-reaching impacts of AI technologies on society. To be clear, this comparison is not backed by direct evidence or scholarly consensus. It is a conceptual framing that uses African folklore as a lens to critique the hidden and potentially harmful effects of

AI, particularly in the African context, where we neglect ordinary citizens who rely on their ability to work to provide for their families. Upskilling these citizens is not just a moral imperative but also an economic necessity. This paper contributes to the literature in several ways. First, it questions the role of AI in shaping a new global system and its potential as a genocidal force that undermines traditional labour, African epistemologies, and values. To bring humanness to the discussion of AI, we use *tokoloshe* folklore to demonstrate how ordinary citizens in other communities understand and view AI. In this way, we bring their experiences and voices into the discussion. The paper reflects on South Africa’s National Artificial Intelligence Policy Framework. It concludes by offering recommendations for policymakers, advocating for a more equitable and culturally inclusive approach to AI development that respects the diversity of epistemologies and strives to mitigate the socio-economic harms of technological change.

1.1 Artificial intelligence and the world of work

The development of AI has many scholars discussing its impact on society (Popkova and Gulzat, 2020; Tai, 2020; Paraman and Anamalah, 2023; Molfino et al., 2024; Shen and Zhang, 2024). These discussions are gaining eminence, and everyone’s voice needs to be heard. These voices specifically refer to individuals or groups who are systematically excluded, marginalized, or overlooked by dominant social, economic, and political systems. These groups are often denied access to resources, opportunities, and representation, making them particularly vulnerable to the negative impacts of technologies like AI. AI has brought unprecedented technological development, promising efficiency, creativity, and change (Sharma, 2023). The most substantial challenge accompanying AI’s introduction is human agency, which refers to the capacity of individuals to act intentionally (Anderson and Rainie, 2023; Otto et al., 2020). Brynjolfsson and McAfee (2014) boldly questioned: “Will Humans Go the

Way of Horses?” whether recent technological developments, particularly in AI, will, in due course, make human labour obsolete. This provocation echoes a growing apprehension and fixation with the country’s high unemployment rates.

As AI is picking up pace, disadvantaged people in our communities are increasingly anxious about losing control over tasks that humans used to perform, which may have far-reaching consequences for employment opportunities, social order, and even one’s identity. In South Africa, AI worsens inequality and unemployment, particularly in labour-intensive industries (Le Roux, 2018; Manamela and Ngomane, 2021; Molopyane, 2021). AI is applied in specific industries such as mining, manufacturing, and agriculture, all of which employ a large section of the workforce, eliminating jobs formerly occupied by people. For example, AI and machine-operated drills perform mining operations more efficiently and safely, significantly reducing the need for human miners. As these technologies replace human labour, miners who have spent years honing their skills are left without viable employment opportunities, often lacking the resources or training to transition to new roles. This not only exacerbates unemployment and economic inequality in mining-dependent communities but also erodes a skilled workforce that could contribute to sustainable and inclusive development (Le Roux, 2018; Manamela and Ngomane, 2021; Molopyane, 2021). The same occurs in manufacturing, where AI bots perform product assembly and warehouse management at a higher level than human labourers, leading to redundancy (Parschau and Hauge, 2020). AI systems are designed to control the monitoring and harvesting of crops and even their distribution, replacing farm workers (Subeesh and Mehta, 2021). Since most of these jobs are for low-skilled workers, AI worsens inequality because they work in a low-tech environment. To make matters worse, many skilled individuals may have lost their jobs due to AI and cannot do up-tech work. In South Africa, AI amplifies the digital divide, benefiting the wealthy while increasing job losses for the poor.

2 A New Global System

The arrival of AI signalled a new era in human history. It has redefined our societal and economic systems (Li, 2020; Ben-Ishai et al., 2024; Liando and Tatipang, 2024). However, capitalism has long catalysed global economies. AI is not abolishing the traditional capitalist structure but is instead evolving into a new international system that reinforces and deepens the existing capitalist framework (Barnhizer and Barnhizer, 2019; Bánkuty-Balogh, 2024). Our stance is that AI is becoming the most potent instrument, reshaping global economies, labour markets, and social systems to entrench existing hierarchies further and concentrate wealth and power in the hands of a few. This transformation signals a continuation of the capitalist logic of accumulation and control, rather than a break.

There are many ways inequalities are evident in an AI-driven world. For example, in the book *Race After Technology: Abolitionist Tools for the New Jim Code* by Ruha Benjamin (2020) shows how machine learning (ML) and emerging technologies can perpetuate and even worsen social inequalities under the guise of objectivity and neutrality. Benjamin introduces the concept of the “New Jim Code”, highlighting how various technologies can reinforce racial hierarchies and enforce more discrimination. Benjamin (2020) highlights how, as far as inclusive innovation goes, our everyday applications are not free from bias. A typical example is a conundrum for many people of colour is facial recognition technology that shows increased error rates for individuals with darker skin tones and how predictive policing tools frequently concentrate on people of colour in a disproportionate manner (Benjamin, 2020; Hardesty, 2018).

The collaborative research from MIT and Stanford University found that major technology companies were replete with skin type and gender bias. Their research examining facial-analysis software showed an error rate of 0.8 per cent for light-skinned men and 34.7 per cent for dark-skinned women (Hardesty, 2018). We, therefore, need to grasp how in-

equalities are ingrained in AI systems and their ties to profit and capitalism (Joyce et al., 2021). Despite capitalism flourishing on human labour and the workforce, AI's effectiveness challenges the very spirit of this labour-centric model, prompting a revision of traditional employment structures.

Capitalism has historically been categorised as the centralisation of economic power in the hands of a few (Kumar, 2024). AI, by nature, facilitates centralisation through its influence on information and decision-making (Avital, 2024; Li and Chen, 2024; Schwartz and Te'eni, 2024). In the era of AI, data has become a valued resource, parallel to currency (Afshan et al., 2024). Capitalism has traditionally functioned based on exchanging goods and services, but AI-driven economies flourish on the exchange and use of biased data (Hendrikse et al., 2024; Satornino et al., 2024; Joyce et al., 2021; Seaver, 2018). This shift supports the very foundations of capitalism and presents a new model where data-driven understandings and innovations drive economic growth (Tiits et al., 2024). AI is not simply a technological development within the framework of capitalism; it embodies a paradigm shift in the direction of a new global system that further supports capitalism.

2.1 A Genocidal Project and disregard of the African epistemologies

As we stated in the introduction, AI in enforcing a genocidal project refers to the potential for AI-driven automation and efficiency to displace vast numbers of workers, leading to mass unemployment and economic disenfranchisement. This form of 'genocide' is metaphorical, emphasising the destruction of livelihoods and the ability of individuals to provide for themselves and their families. As AI continues to advance and replace jobs traditionally held by humans, especially those relying on manual labour and routine tasks, a significant portion of the workforce may find themselves obsolete. This can result in severe economic disparity, where the majority, who depend on their labour for income, become unemployed and unable to sustain

their families. The societal impact can be devastating, leading to increased poverty, social unrest, and a breakdown of community structures.

AI has become a part of our everyday lives, revolutionizing industries, enhancing convenience, and offering solutions to complex problems (Harding, 2024). However, ethical concerns raise significant doubts about its optimistic possibilities. For instance, AI systems often perpetuate biases present in their training data, leading to discriminatory outcomes in areas like hiring, and law enforcement. The onus is on us to address the probable negative significances arising from its use. One of the most upsetting possibilities is that AI could become a genocidal instrument if it is distorted or left unrestricted. Moreover, using AI could worsen current inequalities and threaten essential human rights, such as freedom, privacy, and equality. Ensuring that these advancements do not inadvertently create systems capable of causing global-scale destruction is crucial. For example, the widespread adoption of AI in automated defense systems without adequate safeguards could potentially lead to catastrophic conflicts affecting multiple nations. This paper does not advocate for boycotting AI altogether but emphasizes the critical need for responsible implementation that carefully considers ethical, security, societal repercussions and inclusive implementation.

As AI technologies gain importance and are combined into several industries, those with access to and control over these technologies may accumulate power and wealth. This could lead to a broadening of the digital gap, as individuals and areas that lack access to AI resources may find themselves at a disadvantage in the developing job market. This problem is not unique to Africa, though the continent faces distinct challenges. In recent work by Mokoena (2024), he asserts that the digital gap in Africa highlights significant barriers to adopting and developing AI technologies, such as limited infrastructure, lack of investment, and insufficient technical expertise. However, similar challenges exist in other regions, albeit in different forms. For ex-

ample, in rural areas of Asia, particularly in countries like India and Indonesia, the digital divide persists due to uneven internet access and literacy rates, hindering equitable AI adoption (Bhattacharya et al., 2021). While AI has significant potential benefits, barriers like a lack of digital skills and the risk of job losses due to automation must be addressed. The uneven development of AI technology between the Global North and the Global South exacerbates these issues because the Global North is more resourced. While the Global South currently has limited access to AI tools, the rise of AI still poses significant challenges, as the adoption of AI-driven automation in the Global North can disrupt global labor markets, outsourcing, and supply chains, indirectly affecting economies and employment in the Global South (Mokoena, 2024). This disparity can lead to further inequalities. The effect of AI on the labour market cannot be understated (Mariyana et al., 2024; Peixoto et al., 2024; Sixiao et al., 2024). Automating repetitive and manual tasks by AI systems poses an essential challenge to jobs that humans formerly performed. Businesses such as fast food and construction, which usually hire low-skilled workers, are increasingly implementing automated systems, leading to fewer job opportunities for such workers.

Companies like McDonald's have already begun integrating AI systems to streamline their operations, reduce costs, and improve the dining experience for their customers (The Benefits of McDonald's Self-Service Kiosk - Restaurant Self-Service, 2024). Even though this may seem like a reasonable development in the chase of productivity, it raises questions about the consequences of human employment. The fast-food industry is one of the major employers in the world, and many disadvantaged people depend on it as a source of income. The growing use of AI and robotics in the industry presents a danger of extensive unemployment, which may severely impact the livelihoods of many. Additionally, using AI and robotics in the fast-food industry has consequences for the quality of work. Even though these systems can do specific tasks more competently than humans, they lack human workers' so-

cial and emotional intelligence (Robertson et al., 2024; Seyitoğlu and Ivanov, 2024). Implementing self-ordering kiosks and robotic chefs can significantly reduce the need for human employees, leading to job losses and increased unemployment rates (Shibata, 2019). This can lead to a less personalised and less engaging dining experience for customers, possibly impacting the character and effectiveness of fast-food businesses.

The change in the direction of a more automated labour force poses challenges for entry-level employees and supervisory and management roles (George, 2024; McDonald et al., 2024). Even though it may decrease labour costs and increase productivity, it raises questions about the possible economic and social significance. AI technology has also improved the job safety and working routine of workers in this industry (Raliile and Haupt, 2023). However, this also brings to light critical issues like human displacement and rising unemployment rates that demand our attention. The impact on employment extends beyond individual job losses to broader economic and social consequences. One critical concern is the potential for amplified income inequality (Oluwaseyi and Cena, 2024). The skilled workers involved in designing, maintaining, and improving AI systems may experience job growth and prosperity, while the less-skilled workforce faces the risk of unemployment and economic instability. This disparity could exacerbate existing social inequalities, raising critical ethical questions about the future. For instance, the unequal distribution of AI benefits and opportunities may deepen income inequalities, as those with access to AI-driven tools and education gain unequal economic advantages. This creates ethical concerns around fairness, access to opportunities, and the potential disregarding of already disadvantaged communities, further entrenching systemic inequalities.

Adopting AI and automation in the workplace also affects job training, education, and safety. As traditional jobs become automated, workers must develop new skills and adapt to new roles to remain employable. This requires investments in educa-

tion and training programs to prepare workers for future jobs. Additionally, it is essential to ensure that the benefits of automation are distributed equitably across society. Therefore, it is critical to take a thoughtful and deliberate approach to adopting automation and AI in the workplace, ensuring that its benefits are distributed fairly and that workers are prepared for future jobs.

While AI offers numerous benefits, such as increased productivity, automation, and innovation, its rapid adoption raises important questions about its compatibility with cultural and ethical frameworks specific to Africa. For instance, Ubuntu, an ethical system originating from Southern Africa, emphasizes community, interconnectedness, and the intrinsic value of human relationships (Gondwe, 2024; Mulaudzi and Gundo, 2024). This tension highlights the need to critically examine how AI technologies align with or disrupt cultural norms and ethical systems like Ubuntu. The following section explores strategies to harness the potential of AI while ensuring that its implementation respects and preserves the values that define our humanity.

2.2 AI and African Epistemology: Loss of Ubuntu

Ubuntu is a transformative philosophy that has shaped the values and interactions of numerous Southern African societies for centuries, embracing the essence of community and interconnectedness, it serves as a crucial guiding principle for fostering mutual respect and understanding (Patel et al., 2024; Venter et al., 2024). It is a worldview that emphasises the interconnectedness of all things and the importance of relationships, empathy, and communal harmony. At its core, ubuntu teaches that "I am because we are," meaning that an individual's sense of self is fundamentally tied to their community and the people around them (Boboyi, 2024; Kaunda, 2024; Sachikonye and Ramlogan, 2024). Ubuntu holds that everyone has inherent worth and dignity and that everyone is responsible for treating others with respect and compassion. This in-

cludes other humans and multi-species, including animals, plants, and the environment (Celermajer et al., 2020; Haraway, 2016). Ubuntu encourages individuals to act with kindness and generosity towards others, to share resources, and to work together towards common goals.

The philosophy of Ubuntu has shaped social norms and ethical behaviour in many Southern African societies, influencing everything from how people relate to one another to how they approach decision-making and conflict resolution. It has been a driving force in the fight against inequality and discrimination, and it continues to inspire people worldwide to work towards a more just and equitable society. In this context, the Ubuntu philosophy provides a valuable framework for evaluating the ethical implications of emerging technologies. Research by van Norren (2022), using an African ontology in comprehending Ubuntu, argues against transhumanism and instead emphasises that Ubuntu prioritises sharing over competition, promoting an anti-capitalist approach that seeks fair distribution and is non-exploitative. These are fundamental differences in a capitalist society. Furthermore, van Norren (2022) asserts that some AI applications or technologies might be more contentious in Africa than in other regions. Within the African context, to benefit from AI, Africans require AI ethics awareness, sensitivity, and literacy (Mokoena, 2024).

When examining smart cities within the USA, AI has several valuable applications, which include predictive powers to explore new development paths, water and risk management, and improving security (Mokoena, 2024; Gaffley et al., 2022). It is open to interpretation in Africa as we have not seen an effective use of AI in our societies. Ubuntu emphasises the importance of human relationships and interactions (van Breda, 2019). When AI replaces human labour, it reduces face-to-face interactions and weakens communal ties, challenging Ubuntu's emphasis on prioritising human connections. Another value affected by AI's rapid adaptation is the loss of dignity. People who lose their jobs may struggle

to find meaningful work or support themselves and their families.

Those who benefit from AI may become wealthier, while those who lose their jobs may face financial hardship. This disparity contravenes Ubuntu's focus on equitable treatment and communal well-being, as it reflects a systemic failure by those designing and implementing AI technologies, governments, corporations, and developers to prioritise fairness and inclusivity. Job loss, particularly on a large scale, undermines communal well-being by eroding social cohesion, increasing economic inequality, and placing strain on community support systems, which are central to Ubuntu's emphasis on collective care and interdependence. Ubuntu also stresses the importance of recognising and addressing human needs. AI's focus on efficiency and productivity often prioritises economic gains over human-centric considerations, which can lead to the overlooking of individuals' emotional and social needs, particularly for those displaced from their jobs. This concern is supported by literature highlighting the societal impacts of automation, such as Frey & Osborne's (2017) study on the potential for job displacement due to AI and robotics, as well as Zuboff's (2019) critique of how technological developments can wear down human agency and social well-being.

Additionally, research by Acemoglu & Restrepo (2020) highlights the risks of automation-driven job losses without adequate measures to address the social and economic consequences for affected workers. These studies jointly point to the need for a more balanced approach to AI development that considers both productivity and the preservation of human dignity and social interconnection. This can lead to the neglect of essential human needs, further challenging the principles of Ubuntu. This section has introduced the idea of how AI poses a challenge in comprehending African epistemologies such as Ubuntu philosophy. The subsequent section will expand this discourse by comparing AI and African folklore. This comparison aims to elucidate AI's impact on our society.

2.3 AI and African epistemology: the revival of the Tokoloshe

With the integration of AI into modern technology, there has been an ongoing debate about its impact on society, culture, and traditional beliefs (Dobrodum et al., 2024; Floridi, 2024; Tsuria and Tsuria, 2024). What we have found to be intriguing in AI research is the discourse surrounding AI and African Afrocentric beliefs. One of which is the comparison between AI and the tokoloshe, a mythical creature deeply embedded in Southern African folklore. As much as it is academically collaborative, it is the lived experiences of many African societies that believe in this analogy (Tsuria and Tsuria, 2024). Dobrodum et al., 2024; Floridi, 2024; Tsuria and Tsuria, (2024) contribute to the ideas of how the revival of the tokoloshe metaphor highlights the importance of recognising that local beliefs and experiences shape how technology is perceived and integrated. These perspectives matter because they reflect a broader understanding of how AI affects economies, labour markets, and society's cultural and spiritual fabric.

In African folklore, the tokoloshe is known for its ability to cause mischief, bring harm, and disrupt the regular order of life (Bane, 2013). Just as the tokoloshe challenges the established social order by causing fear and disruption, AI unsettles societal structures by questioning human labour's value, altering relationships, and contributing to economic inequalities. This being, particularly among the Zulu people of South Africa, is described as a small, malevolent force capable of shapeshifting and entering homes unnoticed, often causing inexplicable disturbances (Brown, 2008; Nel, 2018). The tokoloshe's power lies not only in its ability to cause direct harm but also in the psychological fear and anxiety it instils in people. As the creature disrupts daily life, individuals take extreme, often irrational measures to protect themselves, such as raising beds off the ground or engaging traditional healers for protection (Cumes, 2013).

Similarly, AI, though a product of human ingenuity, operates in ways that often elude common un-

derstanding. Much like the tokoloshe, AI enters into spaces in our workplaces, homes, and social systems, disrupting traditional roles and relationships. AI's "shapeshifting" ability to take on various roles, from decision-maker to labourer, echoes the tokoloshe's capacity to adapt and infiltrate different facets of life. The metaphor becomes even more compelling when we consider how AI and the tokoloshe embody forces beyond individual control yet deeply influence lives. In folklore, the tokoloshe can bring fortune or destruction, depending on how it is controlled. Likewise, AI holds the dual potential to revolutionise society for the better or exacerbate social and economic divides. This "god-like" force can either serve or harm depending on who wields it, and the consequences of failing to control it are devastating (Mokoena, 2024).

By drawing on this parallel, we can more clearly distinguish the socio-cultural fears AI evokes. The concern about AI, for example, reminds us of past concerns about technological development, such as the Industrial Revolution, when the machines were seen as instruments of threat to human labour and social order. In the same way, AI's development brings job losses, loss of human agency, and ethical concerns, as with the emergence of nuclear technology bringing fears of devastation and ethical accountability. These parallels point to how far AI, as a revolutionary technology, provokes profound cultural fears about control, identity, and the unknown. As a symbolic figure, the tokoloshe is not just about physical harm but represents deeper concerns about losing control over one's life and environment (Matthee, 2021). Similarly, AI's potential for widespread automation, surveillance, and decision-making raises concerns about losing human agency, dignity, and control over societal outcomes (Mariyana et al., 2024; Peixoto et al., 2024; Sixiao et al., 2024). Like the tokoloshe, AI's presence may not always be visible, but its consequences, job losses, data manipulation, and bias are keenly felt.

In this sense, the tokoloshe serves as a cultural metaphor for the anxiety and fear that AI brings

into modern life, particularly in contexts where technology threatens to disrupt existing power dynamics, livelihoods, and cultural values. The rise of AI demands collective approaches to mitigate its potentially harmful effects, especially in marginalised communities that its advance may disproportionately impact. 2.4 South Africa's National Artificial Intelligence Policy Framework As Artificial Intelligence (AI) increasingly shapes global systems and economies, South Africa has recognised the need to adapt to and leverage this transformative technology. The South African National Artificial Intelligence Policy Framework is a strategic initiative to guide the responsible development and deployment of AI within the country (Department of Communications and Digital Technologies, 2024). This framework aims to align AI innovations with the nation's socio-economic goals, ensuring that AI is utilised to promote inclusive growth, address inequalities, and enhance public welfare.

The framework emphasises several critical areas of concern, such as the ethical deployment of AI, transparency, accountability, and fairness in AI applications (Department of Communications and Digital Technologies, 2024). A core aspect of this policy is to mitigate AI's potential risks of job displacement and widening social inequalities, particularly in a country still grappling with high unemployment and poverty rates. By advocating for the upskilling of workers and promoting AI literacy, the framework seeks to balance technological advancement with human welfare, aiming to prevent the metaphorical "economic genocide" that AI might otherwise unleash on South Africa's vulnerable communities (Department of Communications and Digital Technologies, 2024). In addition to addressing these socio-economic impacts, the South African AI Policy Framework must align with African epistemological concerns, particularly with philosophies like Ubuntu. The policy must acknowledge the need to foster human-centred AI that reflects African values of communal interconnectedness and shared progress rather than merely replicating Western capitalist models prioritising profit over people.

This section highlights the features that the framework aims to address, enabling AI development that is equitable, inclusive and engrained in African culture and traditions. By incorporating Ubuntu principles, the framework can guarantee that AI technologies serve the needs of societies, promote social cohesion, and avoid repeating the exploitative tendencies of capitalism. This approach not only addresses the limitations of current global AI practices but also positions South Africa as a leader in developing ethical, culturally grounded AI policies. This framework serves as a critical reference point for policymakers, guiding them in creating regulations that both harness the potential of AI and safeguard the well-being of South African citizens. As AI continues to evolve globally, the South African National AI Policy Framework will play a crucial role in shaping a future where AI technologies can contribute to equitable and sustainable development, preserving the values of Ubuntu while embracing the innovations of the 21st century.

3 Recommendations for Policymakers

The hasty pace of technological development means that various jobs will become automated, interrupting the labour market. This could worsen existing inequalities, with those who lack the skills or education essential to become accustomed to the fluctuating job market being left behind. It is, therefore, significant for society to advance policies to alleviate the possible adverse impacts of AI on the labour market. This includes participating in education and training programmes to support individuals in obtaining the skills needed for future job opportunities and developing policies to guarantee that the benefits of AI are spread fairly across society. Several critical steps must be taken to ensure a more equitable transition to an AI-driven economy. Critical steps such as investment in education and training is essential.

Funding should be allocated to programs that prepare individuals from diverse backgrounds with the necessary skills to thrive in an AI-driven workforce.

Additionally, promoting diversity and inclusion in AI development is crucial. Encouraging a diverse AI labour force ensures that a wide range of perspectives and experiences are represented in the development of AI technologies, which can lead to more inclusive and practical solutions. Support for community-led innovation is another vital component. For example, providing resources and support for community-led initiatives can harness AI technologies to benefit disadvantaged populations. Moreover, policies that foster job creation and economic development in underserved areas are necessary. Stimulating the growth of AI-driven industries and businesses in these communities can create job opportunities and spur economic growth. Finally, public engagement and participation in AI policy-making processes are imperative. Ensuring that the voices of poor communities are heard and their concerns are addressed will lead to more inclusive and responsive AI policies. Together, these measures can help mitigate the risks associated with AI and promote a fair distribution of its benefits.

4 Conclusion

This article has discussed how the advent of AI presents opportunities and challenges that demand careful consideration as we contemplate whether AI represents a new global system poised to replace capitalism, a potential genocidal project threatening jobs and livelihoods, especially in industries like fast food and construction or a force reviving the African folklore of the *tokoloshe* through the automation of human labour. It is essential to approach the subject with a nuanced perspective. The notion of AI as a new global system is intriguing, as it has the potential to reshape economies, industries, and societal structures. It creates the need for a transdisciplinary approach to the study and theoretical conceptualisation of it, integrating social scientists, policymakers, and economists into the conversation. While capitalism has been a driving force for innovation, the transformative power of AI introduces the need for recalibration in economic models and social structures. The impact on employment raises concerns about job displacement and the need

for proactive measures to address potential societal challenges.

The fear of AI becoming a genocidal project, leading to mass job losses and economic upheaval, is a valid concern. It necessitates a thoughtful approach to policymaking, education, and ethical awareness to mitigate the potential negative consequences. For instance, the example illustrated in this article of the fast-food industry undergoing automation, initiatives such as retraining programs and investment in new sectors can help ease the transition for affected workers. A metaphorical shift in human perception towards these technological advancements is apparent in the intriguing concept of AI reviving the tokoloshe culture. As AI evolves, society must engage in open dialogue to demystify its intricacies, fostering understanding and collaboration between humans and machines.

This article has argued that integrating AI into our global systems requires an inclusive approach that considers economic, social, and cultural implications. The paper also discussed the importance of viewing AI development through a collective lens, rather than solely as a driver of productivity and progress. This approach emphasises the need to consider the broader societal impacts of AI, including issues of equity, inclusivity, and shared benefits. By focusing on collective well-being, the discussion aims to address who stands to advance and who might be left behind in this technological revolution, ensuring that AI serves the interests of all stakeholders rather than benefiting a select few.

We are asserting whether this technological revolution will lead to a genocidal project impacting several people. Therefore, if we address challenges proactively and foster a collaborative approach across disciplines and sectors, we can harness the potential of AI to enhance human capabilities, encourage innovation, and create

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