

A New AI Lexicon: Sustainability

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In a new essay for the AI Now Insitute’s “[AI Lexicon](#)” project, Centre Research Director Sonja Solomun and Centre Research Fellow Rachel Bergmann present “A Call for Environmental Justice in AI.”

The “AI Lexicon” project aims to cultivate alternative narratives to the dominant critical AI discourse. You can find Sonja and Rachel’s essay as well as all other submissions [here](#).

“An environmental justice lens helps critical AI scholars consider AI’s role in global systems of environmental, social, and economic exploitation while also grounding that violence in specific places and contexts.”

— Authors

In this essay, the authors foreground their discussion with a call for the application of an environmental justice framework to the critical AI discourse, with a focus on local issues and collective action efforts around economic and environmental justice.

Highlights

- There is a need to focus research and the broader “sustainable AI” discussion on local communities and their relational experiences with AI, environmental justice, and economic justice, rather than research around broad “tech for climate” initiatives;
- Many of the initiatives and research related to sustainable AI remove racial and class injustice from consideration and are based on the assumption that AI is an apolitical tool to implement to solve global issues such as gender equality or food security, irrespective of place-based context;
- A focus on the intersection between technology and “the” environment passes up the opportunity to make connections between matters of economic and environmental justice, including but not limited to, issues of labour fights and public health;
- AI discourse related to sustainability often misses the place-based issues and efforts of certain communities, such as the Center for Community Action and Environmental Justice (CCA EJ).
- A transition to critical AI research framed by environmental justice in practice “might move beyond computational efficiency as the measure of technological sustainability” and towards efforts to require “environmental justice assessments [developed](#) by those directly impacted” or “demanding [community benefits agreements](#) in areas surrounding AI developmentals,” among other intersectional initiatives.

Read the full article at the “AI Lexicon” Medium page at the link below!