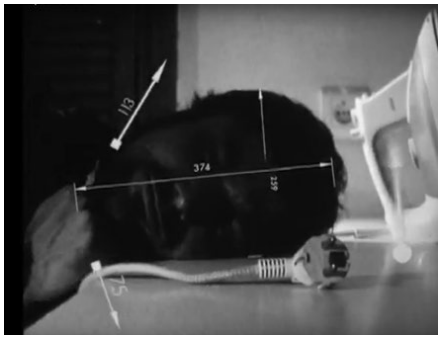
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RHET AI



Input:
AI & Global (In-)Justice

Dr. Anne Burkhardt (University of Tübingen, RHET AI Center)

RhetAI AlphaPersuade Summit II (Presummit), Irvine, March 2026

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Approach to Global (In-)Justice

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AI is more than just a technology

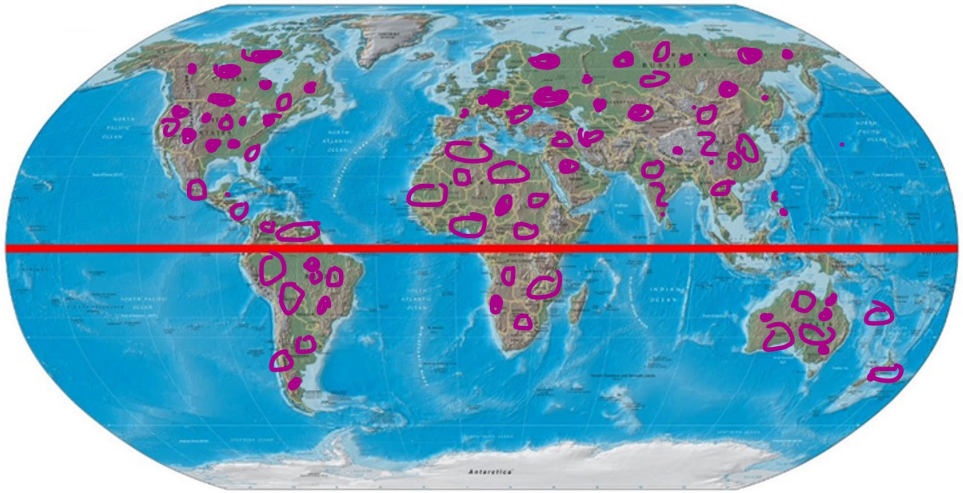
- *AI is neither artificial nor intelligent.*
- *Artificial Intelligence is both embodied and material, made from natural resources, fuel, human labor, infrastructures, logistics, histories, and classifications.*
- *AI is not a purely technical domain. […] AI is technical and social practices, institutions and infrastructures, politics and culture.*
- *Artificial Intelligence is a registry of power.*

(Crawford 2021: 8-9; 19)



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Centering the Souths as an analytical approach



"the Souths":

all individuals or groups that "suffer discrimination, and/or enact resistance to injustice and oppression"

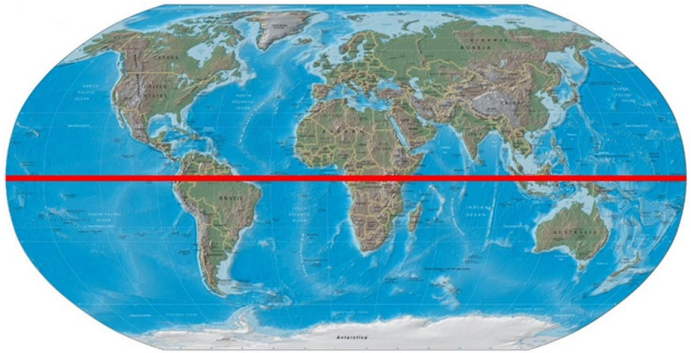
(Milan & Treré 2019, 325)

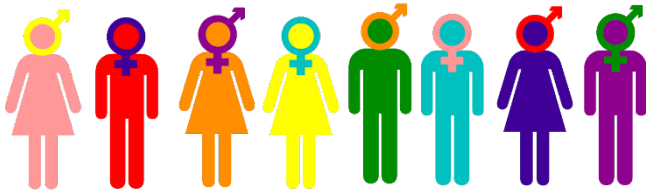
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Justice for whom?
Intersectional analysis categories



Race
Gender
Class
Age
Coloniality
…









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When is a technology just? — A rule of thumb

"A […] technology is just if those who enjoy its benefits are the same ones who bear its (not only monetary) costs […] and if these costs are distributed approximately equally."

(Ammicht Quinn 2014, 37, my translation)



Prof. Dr. Regina Ammicht Quinn

University of Tübingen, International Center for Ethics in the Sciences and Humanities (IZEW)

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Is AI (in)just? – Core questions

Who benefits?

In what ways?

To what extent?

At whose expense?

At what costs?

Are there alternatives?



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Manifestations of Global Injustice in and around AI

I. Infrastructural Injustice

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The future of artificial intelligence will be controlled by the United States and China. The two countries employ 70 percent of the world's top machine learning researchers, command 90 percent of global computing power, and attract the vast majority of AI investment—more than twice the combined total of every other state combined. In past technological revolutions, powers that were not at the frontier could gradually adopt new capabilities and catch up. But the AI revolution will be different, locking those countries into a strategic trap that could consign much of the world to technological vassalage.



)DCAST

FOREIGN AFFAIRS

NEWS

The AI Divide

How U.S.-Chinese Competition Could Leave Most Countries Behind

SAM WINTER-LEVY AND ANTON LEICHT

February 10, 2026



The World Internet Conference in Tongxiang, China, November 2025

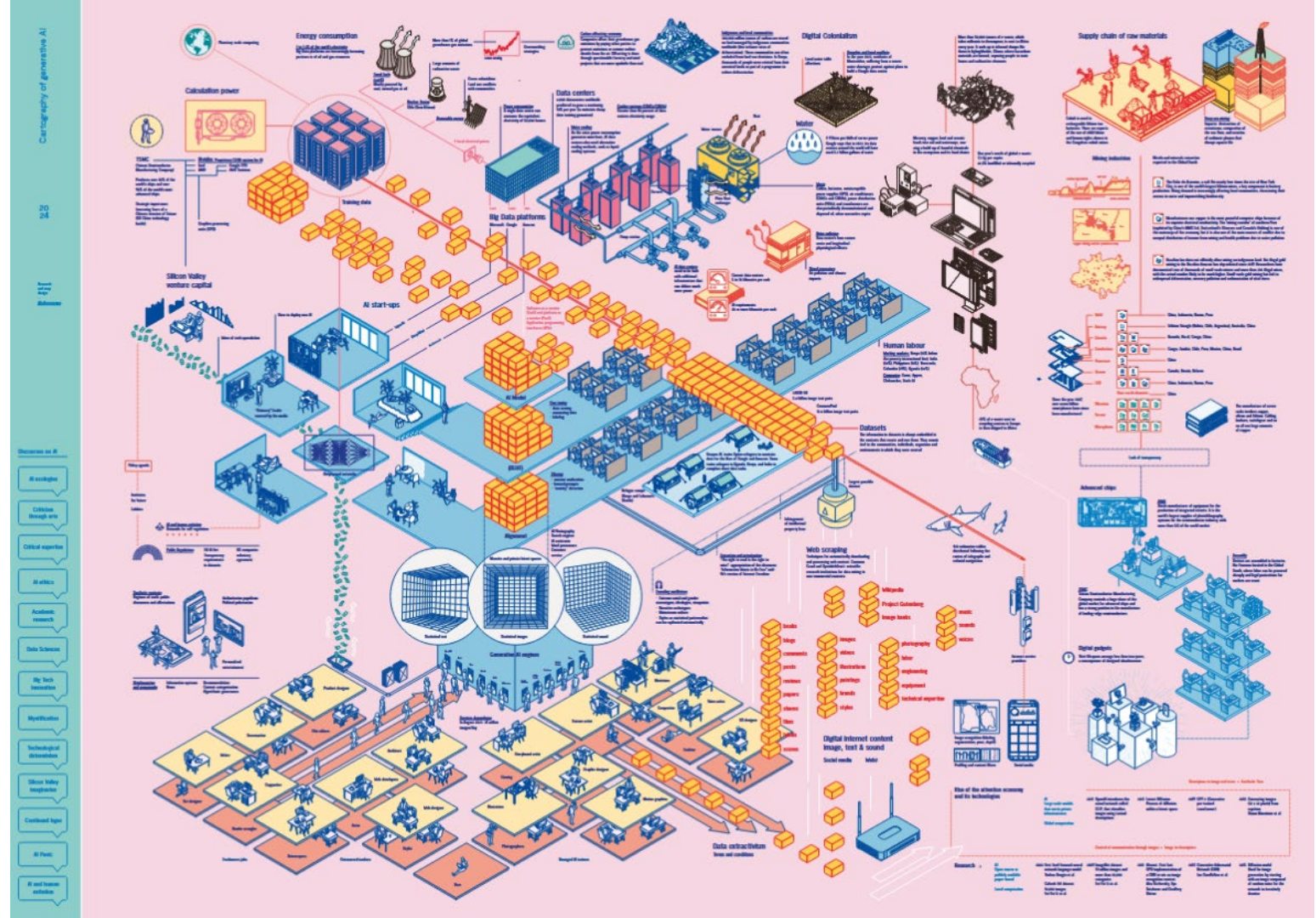
SAM WINTER-LEVY is a Fellow in Technology and International Affairs at the Carnegie Endowment for International Peace.

ANTON LEICHT is a Visiting Scholar in Technology and International Affairs at the Carnegie Endowment for International Peace.

More by Sam Winter-Levy →

More by Anton Leicht →

https://www.foreignaffairs.com/united-states/ai-divide



AI's physical infrastructures

ESTAMPA: "Cartography of generative AI"

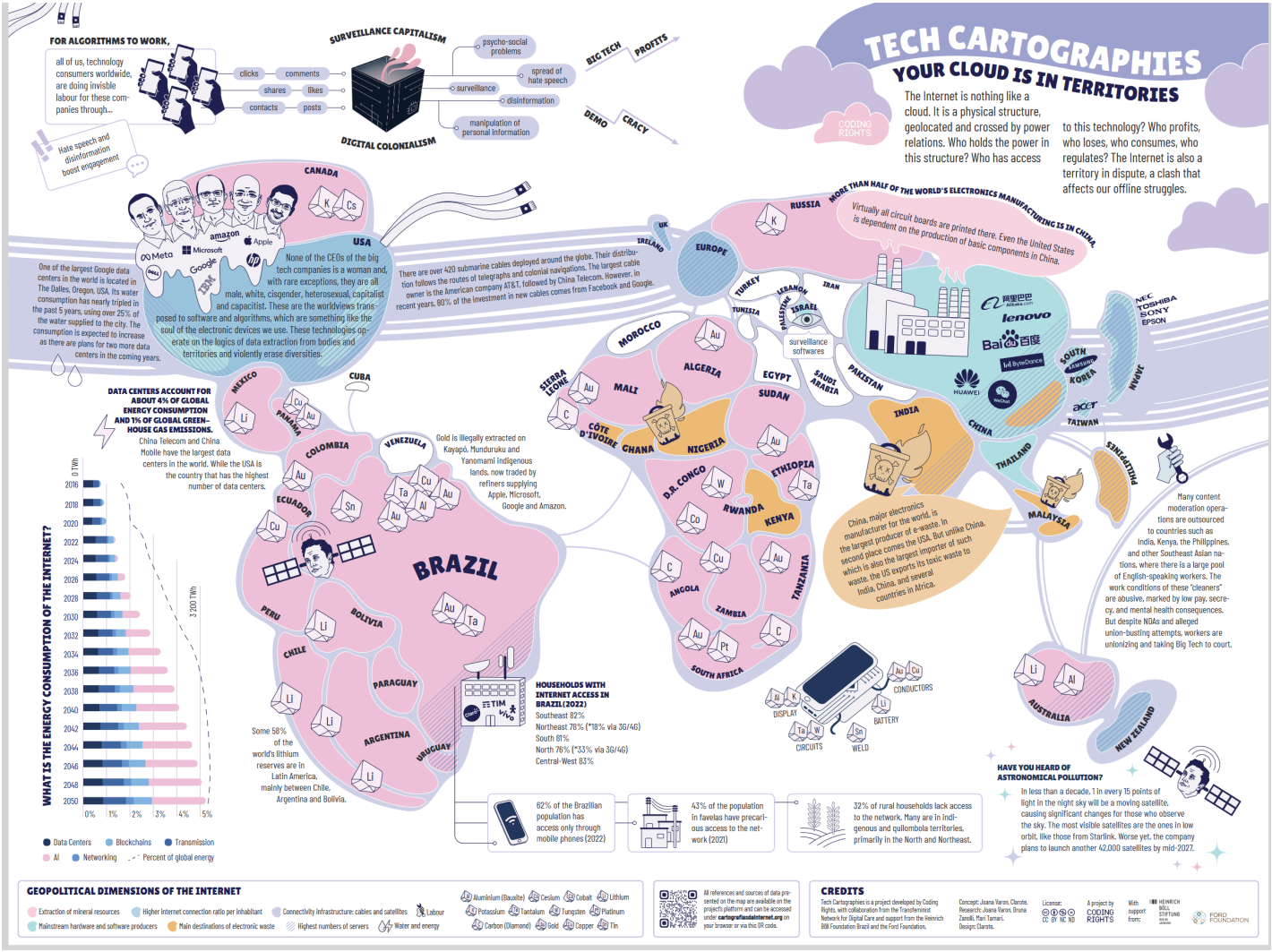
https://cartography-of-generative-ai.net/genai_cartography.pdf

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Infrastructural Global Injustice

CODING RIGHTS: “Map of Internet Territories”

https://www.cartografiasdainternet.org/en

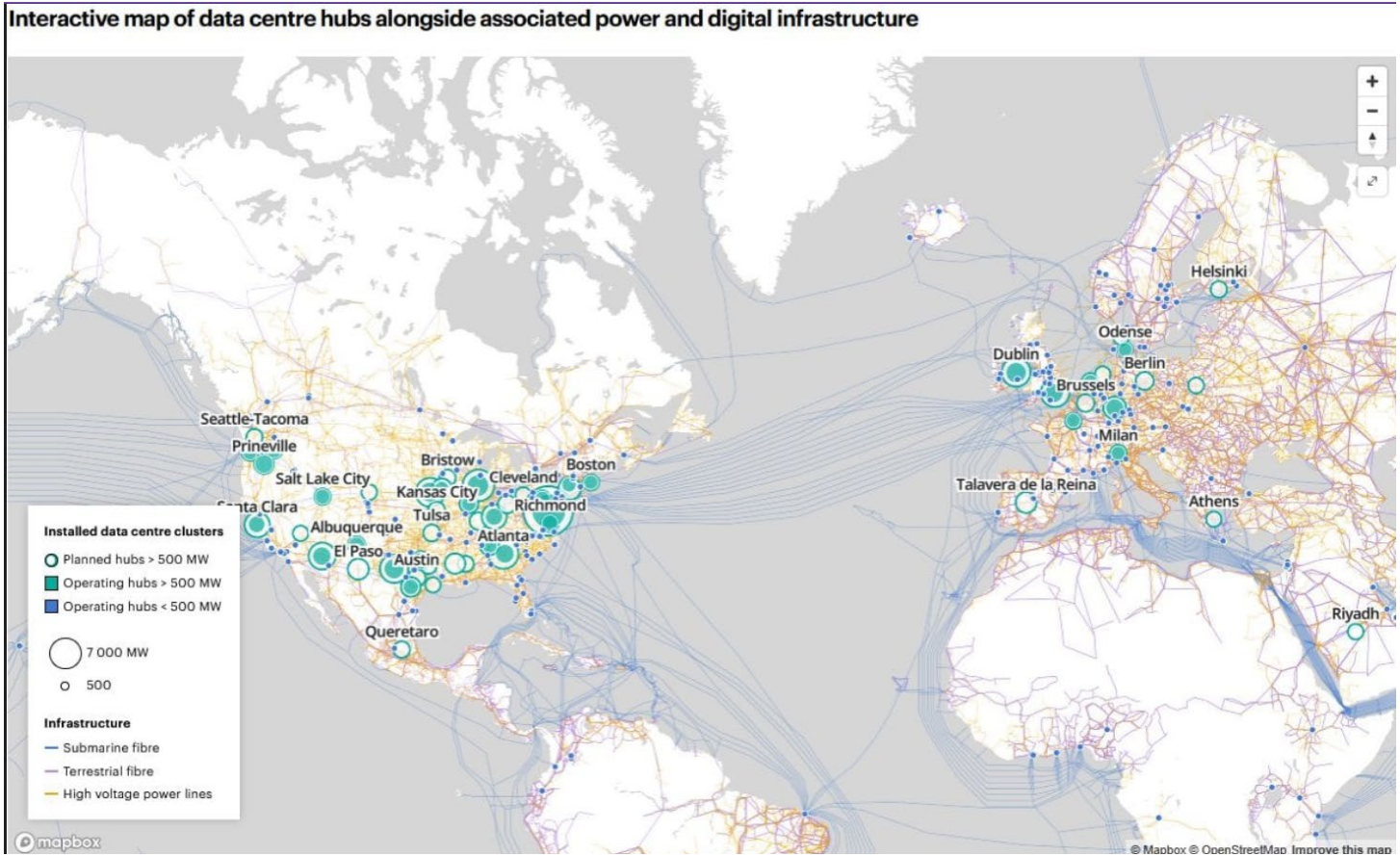


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https://www.theregister.com/2025/06/19/iea_observatory_ai/

Benefits in the Norths

High Connectivity

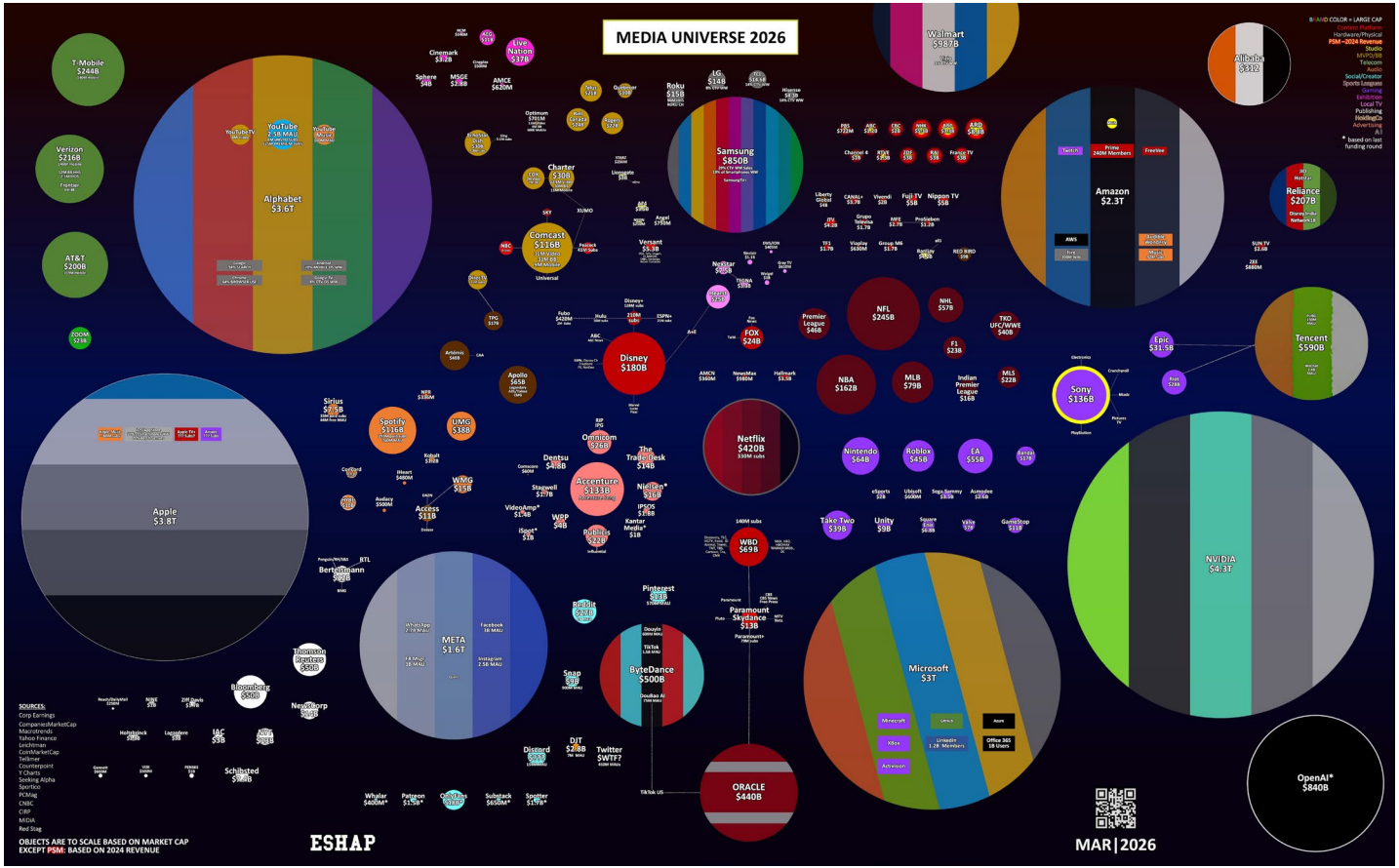


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https://eshap.substack.com/p/media-universe-maps-2020-2026

Benefits in the Norths

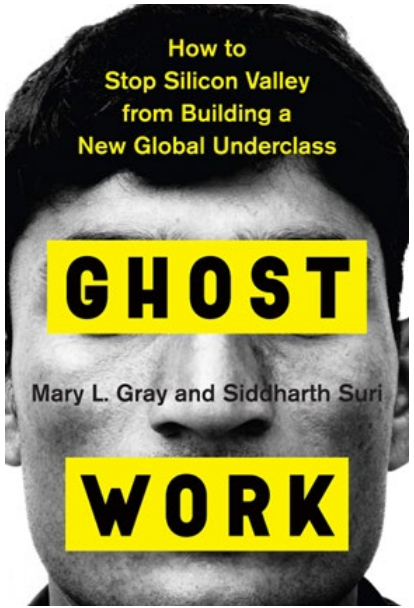
Economical profit and increasing power of BigTech companies
→ providers of AI models and associated infrastructures

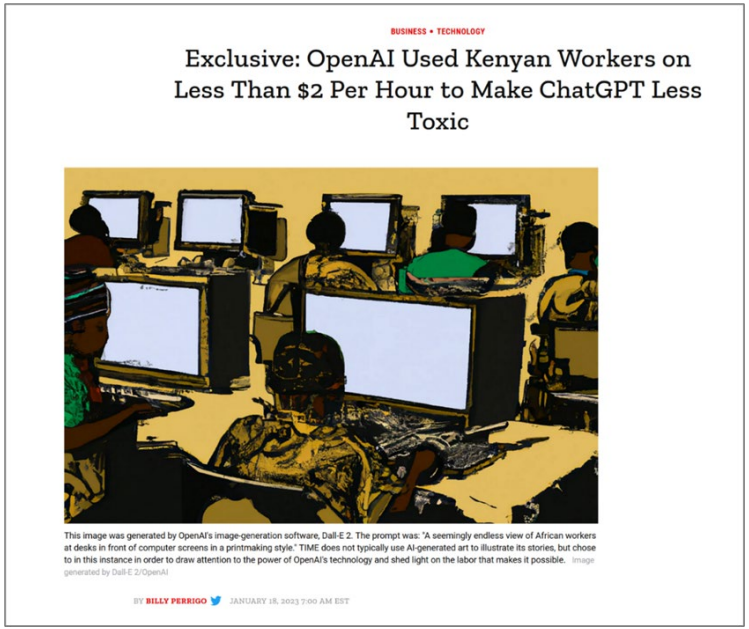


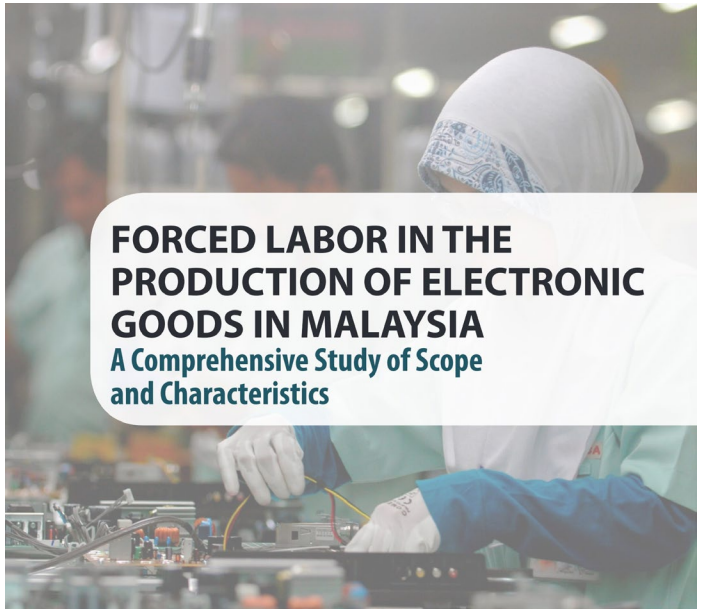


Costs in the Souths

Exploitative labor







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Costs in the Souths

Data Extractivism

Beta Testing:

"In the testing of predictive systems, we find several clearly exploitative situations, where organisations use countries outside of their own as testing grounds—specifically because they lack pre-existing safeguards and regulations around data and its use, or because the mode of testing would violate laws in their home countries (UNCTAD 2013)."

(Mohamed et al. 2020, 668-669)

AI Colonialism

An MIT Technology Review series, supported by the MIT Knight Science Journalism Fellowship Program and the Pulitzer Center, investigating how AI is enriching a powerful few by dispossessing communities that have been dispossessed before.



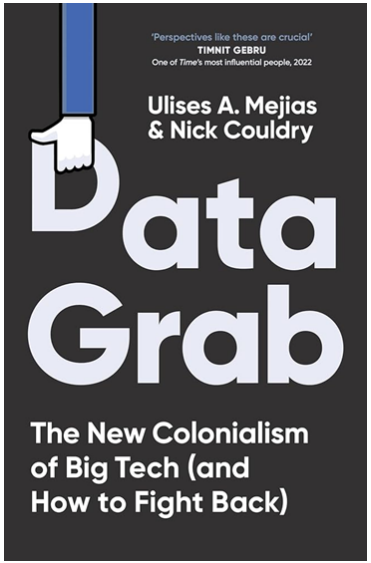
EDEL RODRIGUEZ

INTRODUCTION

Artificial intelligence is creating a new world order

Over the last few years, an increasing number of scholars have argued that the impact of AI is repeating the patterns of colonial history. European colonialism, they say, was characterized by the violent capture of land, extraction of resources, and exploitation of people—for example, through slavery—for the economic enrichment of the conquering country. While it would diminish the depth of past traumas to say the AI industry is repeating this violence today, it is now using other, more insidious means to enrich the wealthy and powerful at the great expense of the poor.

Read the full introduction.

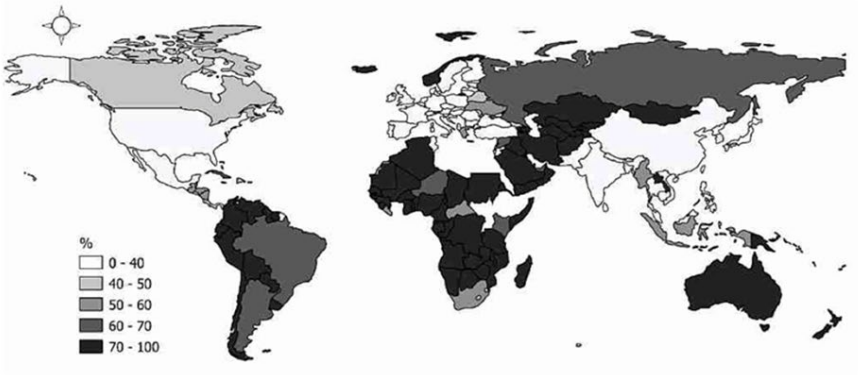


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Costs in the Souths

Resource Extractivism

FIGURE 4: GLOBAL GEOGRAPHY OF PRIMARY COMMODITY TRADE



Primary Commodities as a Share of Total Exports in %. Own elaboration based on UNCTAD 2021b.

FIGURE 3: METALS AND MINERALS TRADE BALANCE BY REGION



5 year average in bn current US$. Source: own elaboration based on UNCTAD 2021b

(Warnecke-Berger et al. 2022)

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Costs in the Souths

E-Waste Dumping

World Health Organization | Health Topics | Countries | Newsroom | Emergencies

Electronic waste (e-waste)

1 October 2024

Key facts

- E-waste is one of the fastest growing solid waste streams in the world *(1)*.
- In 2022, an estimated 62 million tonnes of e-waste were produced globally. Only 22.3% was documented as formally collected and recycled *(2)*.
- Lead is a common substance released into the environment when e-waste is recycled, stored or dumped using informal activities, including open burning, *(3)*.
- Informal e-waste recycling activities may have several adverse health effects. Children and pregnant women are particularly vulnerable.
- ILO and WHO estimate that millions of women and child labourers working in the informal recycling sector globally may be at risk of hazardous e-waste exposures *(4,5)*.

https://www.who.int/news-room/fact-sheets/detail/electronic-waste-(e-waste)

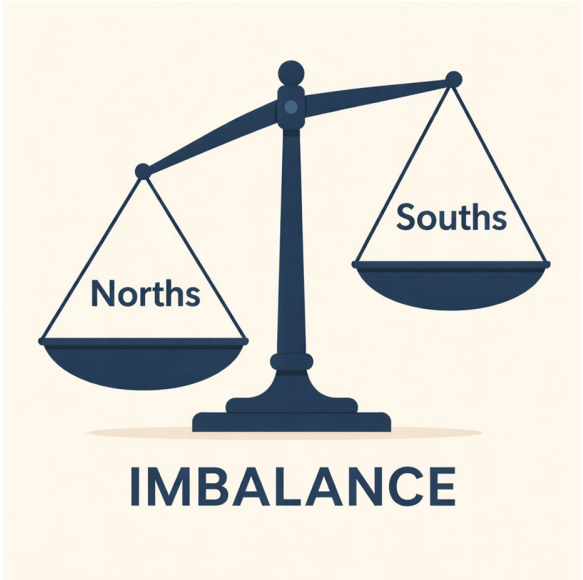




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(In-)Justice Check

AI infrastructures are unjust: those who benefit most are not the same as those who bear the greatest (non-monetary) cost.



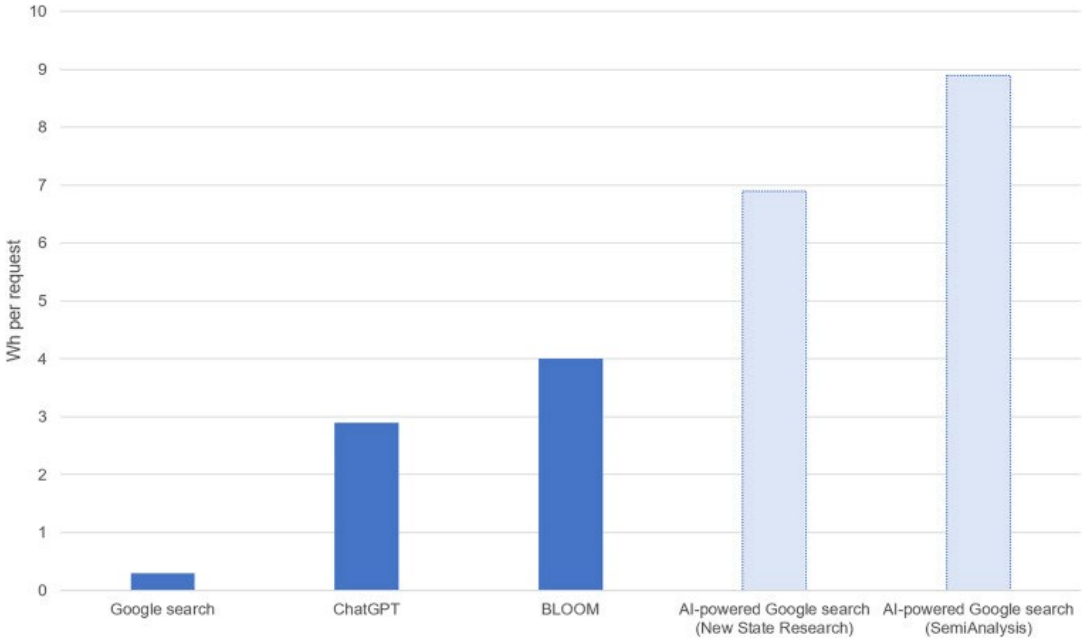
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Manifestations of Global Injustice in and around AI

II. Environmental Injustice

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AI's environmental impact



Energy Consumption:

traditional vs. AI powered online searches

(De Vries 2023)



Tech Giants Sign Energy Pledge at White House

Major tech companies including Google, Microsoft, Meta, Amazon, Oracle, xAI, and OpenAI, signed the "Ratepayer Protection Pledge" at the White House Wednesday, committing to fund new or expanded electricity generation for their datacenters. The initiative aims to prevent higher electricity costs for homes and small businesses while supporting rapid AI development. The companies committed to building power plants, expanding existing capacity, upgrading delivery systems, or entering special utility agreements to meet the growing needs of their datacenters. [» Read full article]

Reuters; Jarrett Renshaw; Laila Kearney (March 4, 2026)

Above: https://www.reuters.com/sustainability/climate-energy/trump-meet-tech-giants-energy-pledge-ahead-midterms-2026-03-04/

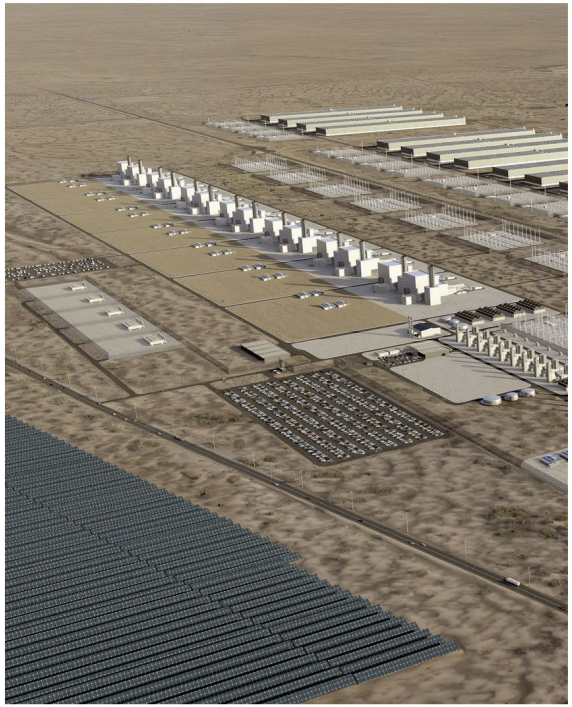
Right: https://www.washingtonpost.com/business/2026/02/19/data-centers-power-grid-ai/

Silicon Valley is building a shadow power grid for data centers across the U.S.

Tech companies are building data centers with their own private power plants, a risky bet that will increase carbon emissions and other pollution.

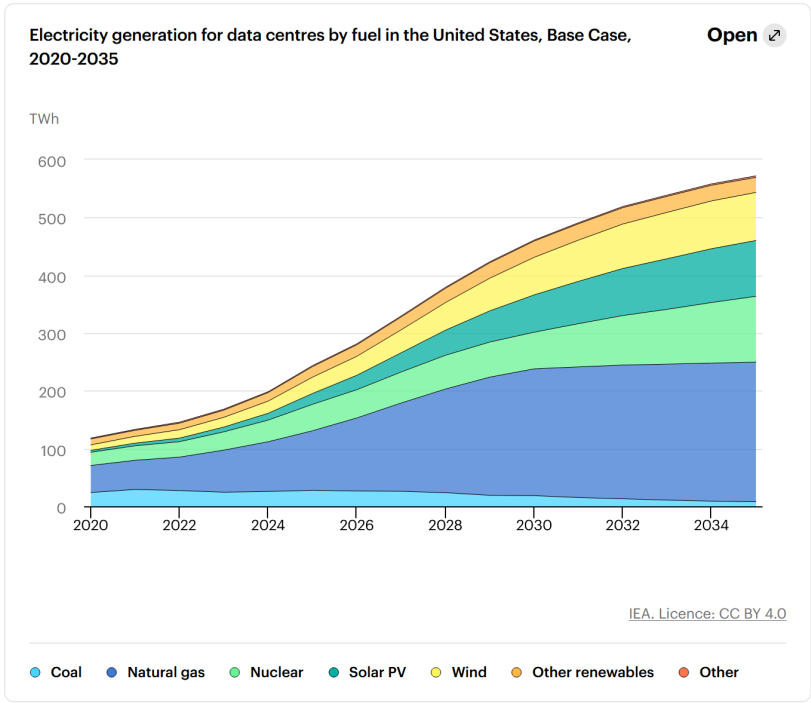
February 19, 2026

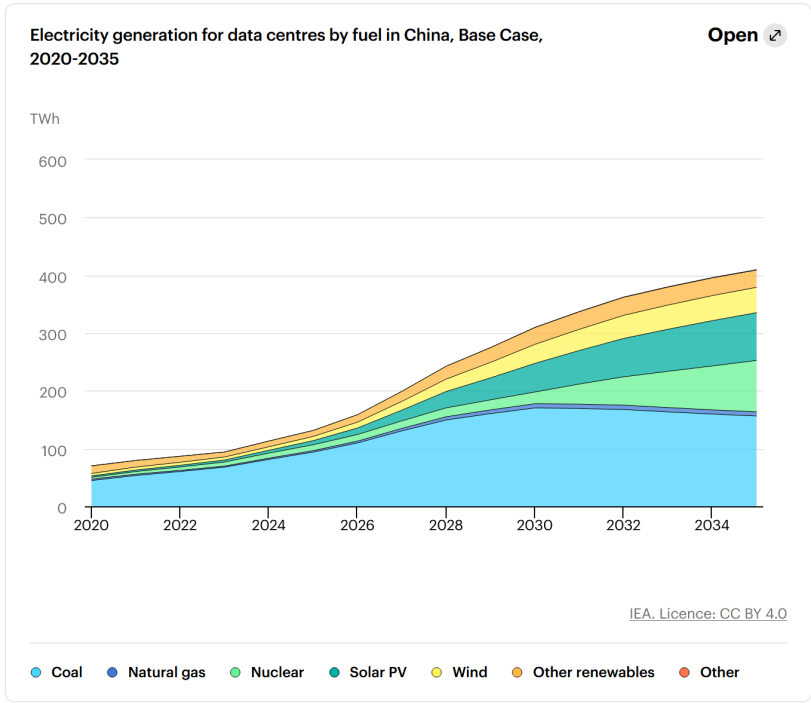
10 min Summary 557 Make us preferred on Google



A rendering of the GW Ranch data center project in West Texas, which shows natural gas and solar plants installed on-site. (Pacifico Energy)

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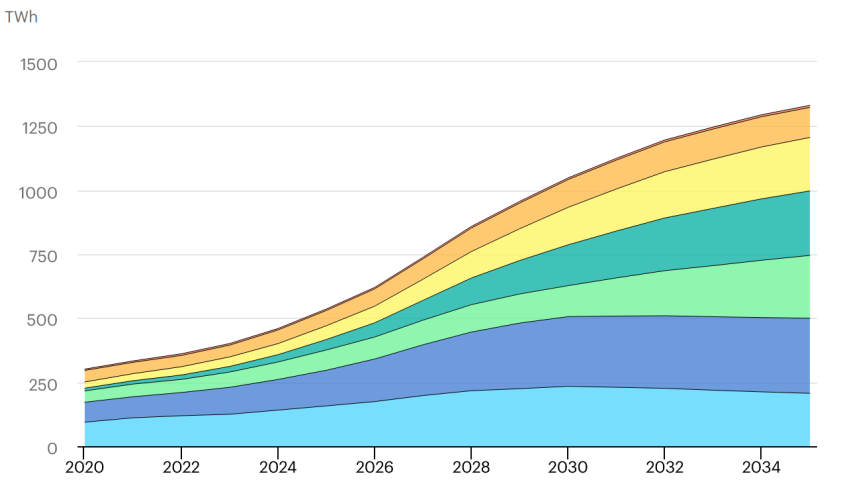




International Energy Agency (IEA) https://www.iea.org/reports/energy-and-ai/energy-supply-for-ai

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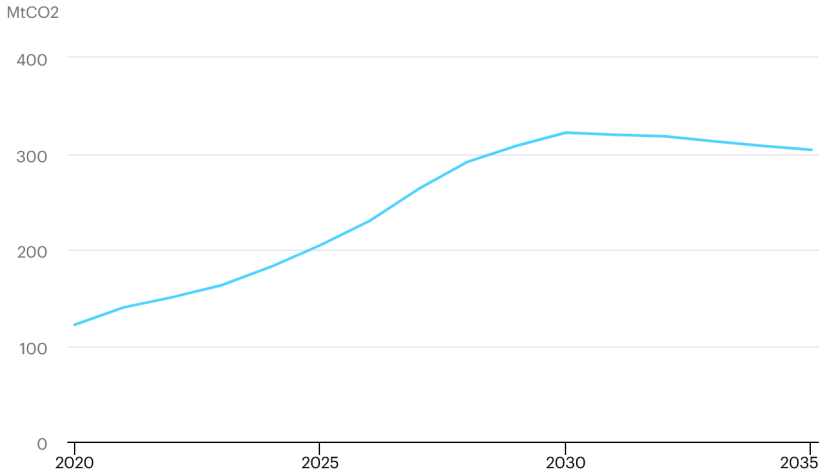
Sources of global electricity generation for data centres, Base Case, 2020-2035 **Open**



IEA. Licence: CC BY 4.0

Coal · Natural gas · Nuclear · Solar PV · Wind · Other renewables · Other

Global data centre CO2 emissions, Base Case, 2020-2035 **Open**

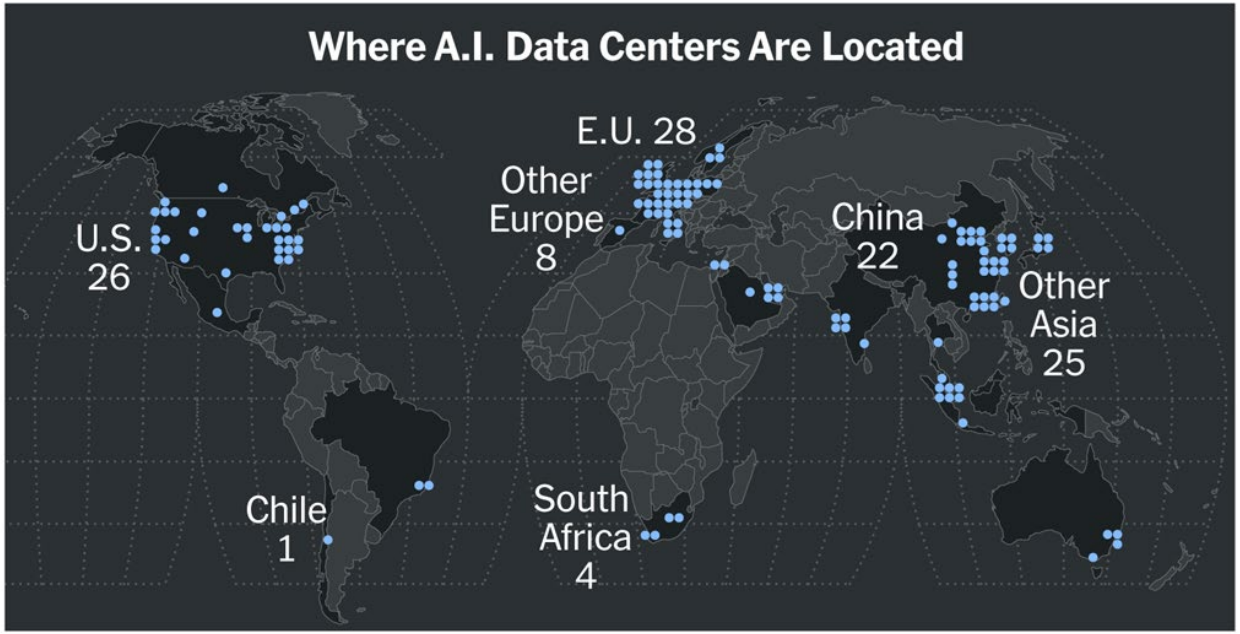


IEA. Licence: CC BY 4.0

International Energy Agency (IEA) https://www.iea.org/reports/energy-and-ai/energy-supply-for-ai

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Global distribution of AI data centers

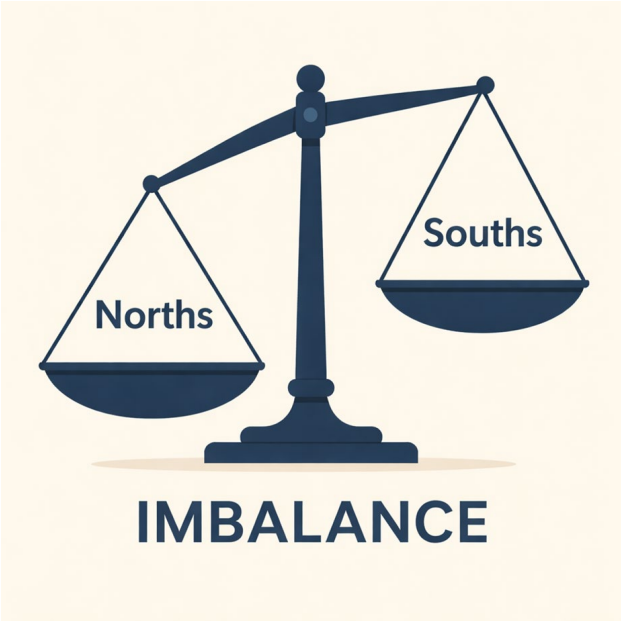


https://www.nytimes.com/interactive/2025/06/23/technology/ai-computing-global-divide.html

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(In-)Justice Check

The environmental footprint of AI is unjust: the Global North is responsible for most AI-driven CO_2 emissions, while the Global South bears a greater burden of the consequences of global climate change, despite contributing less to it.



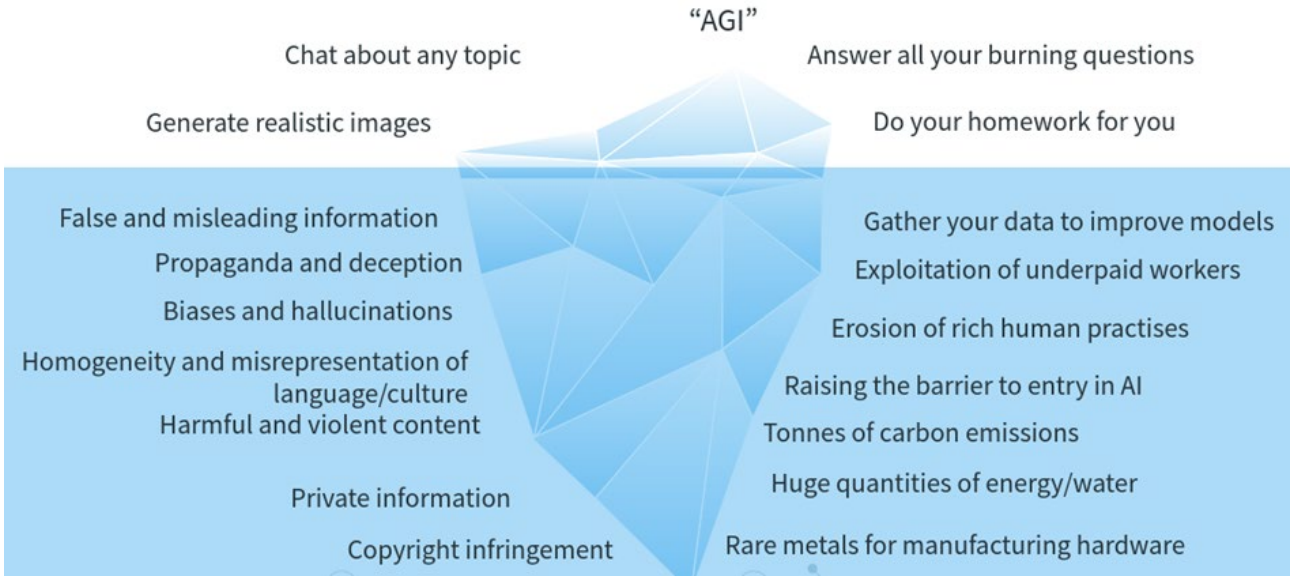
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Manifestations of Global Injustice in and around AI

III. Epistemic Injustice

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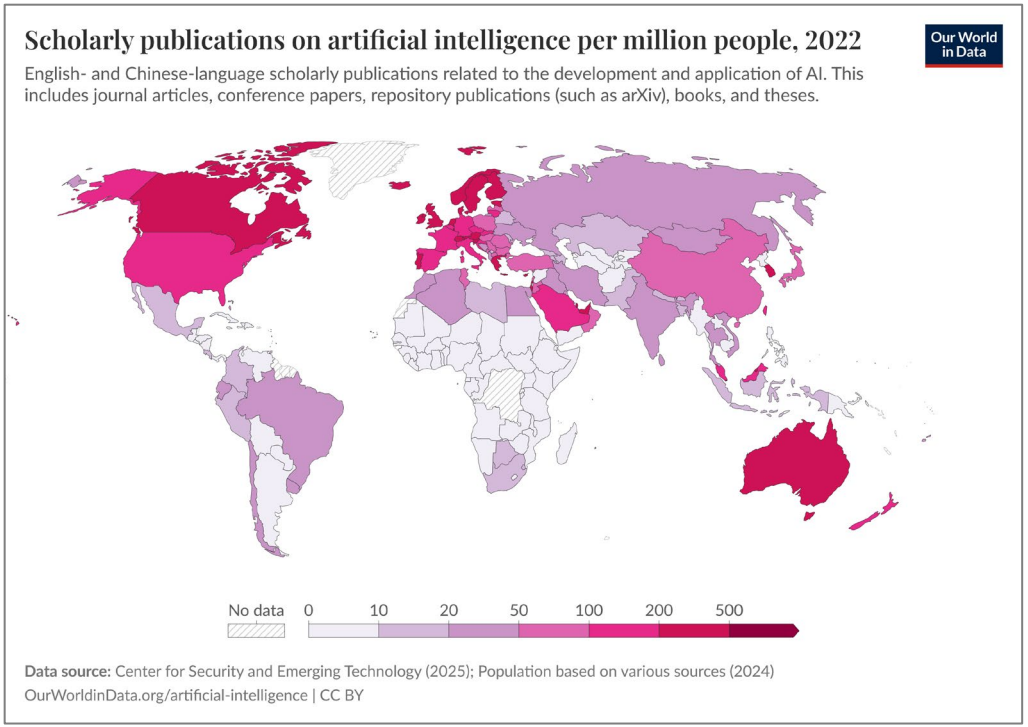
Who shapes AI discourses?
What perspectives are (most) visible?



(Luccioni 2023)

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Who shapes AI scholarship?



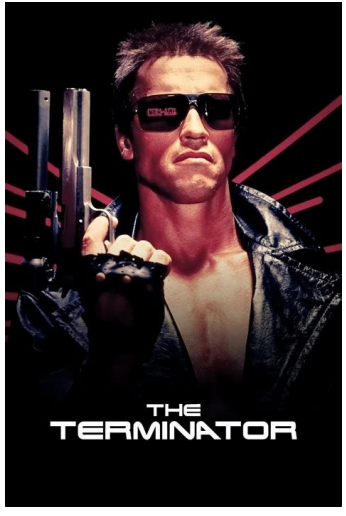
In 2019, North America, Europe, and Central Asia account for a combined 42,1% of the world's total **AI journal publications**, while **only *2,7% come from Latin America and the Caribbean; and only 0.7% from Sub-Saharan Africa***

(Zhang et al. 2021, pp. 19).

https://ourworldindata.org/grapher/scholarly-publications-on-artificial-intelligence-per-million-people

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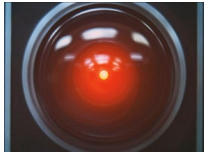
Who shapes AI narratives and imaginaries?



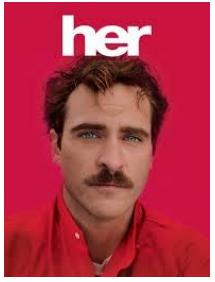
robots' rebellion

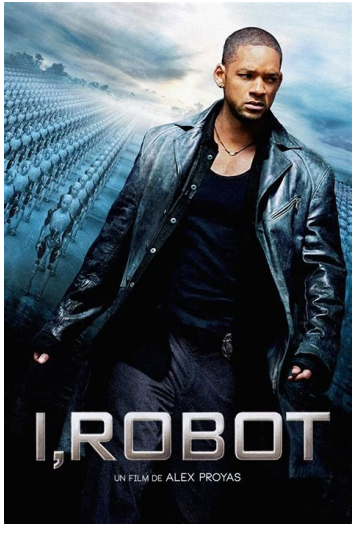
(Cave and Dihal 2019)











"strong AI narratives"

(Bory et al. 2025)



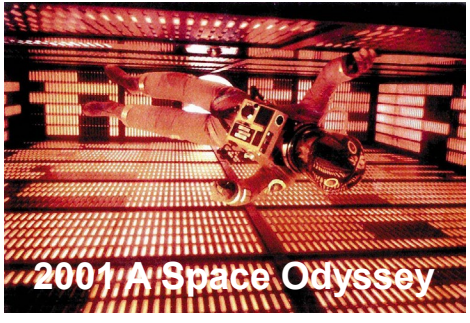
dystopian visions of AGI threatening humanity

(Baker 2022: 313)

ascription of agency; anthropomorphization

(Hermann 2023: 320)





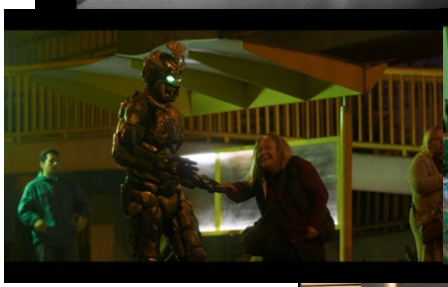
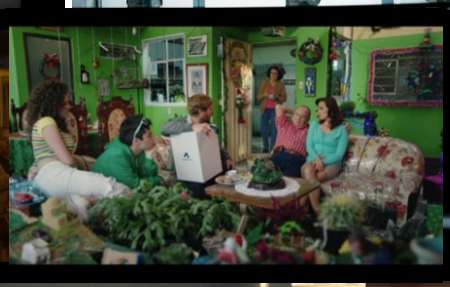
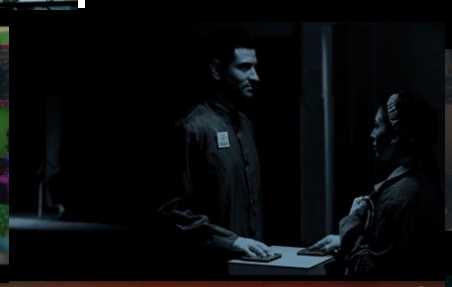
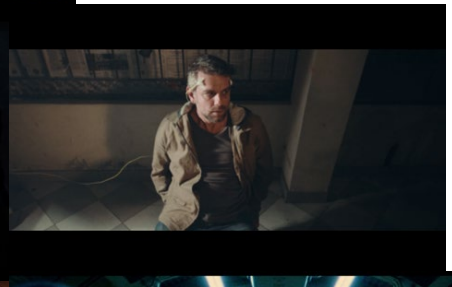
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Invisible AI narratives: AI in Latin American film






Decolonial critique → state control, exploitation, extractivism, North–South hierarchies

"weak AI narratives"

human agency → narratives of resistance against AI-supported social control






(Burkhardt 2025; Burkhardt 2026/in print)

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Biased decision-making, algorithmic discrimination



https://www.elcorreo.com/bizkaia/sociedad/201507/02/google-disculpa-confundir-foto-20150702104923-rc.html

Biased data sets, biased outputs

Algorithmic discrimination against *Black* people and women

(Buolamwini/Gebru 2018)



Eight Months Pregnant Woman Arrested After False Facial Recognition Match
The New York Times
Kashmir Hill
August 6, 2023

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Algorithmic discrimination in GenAI (image generators)



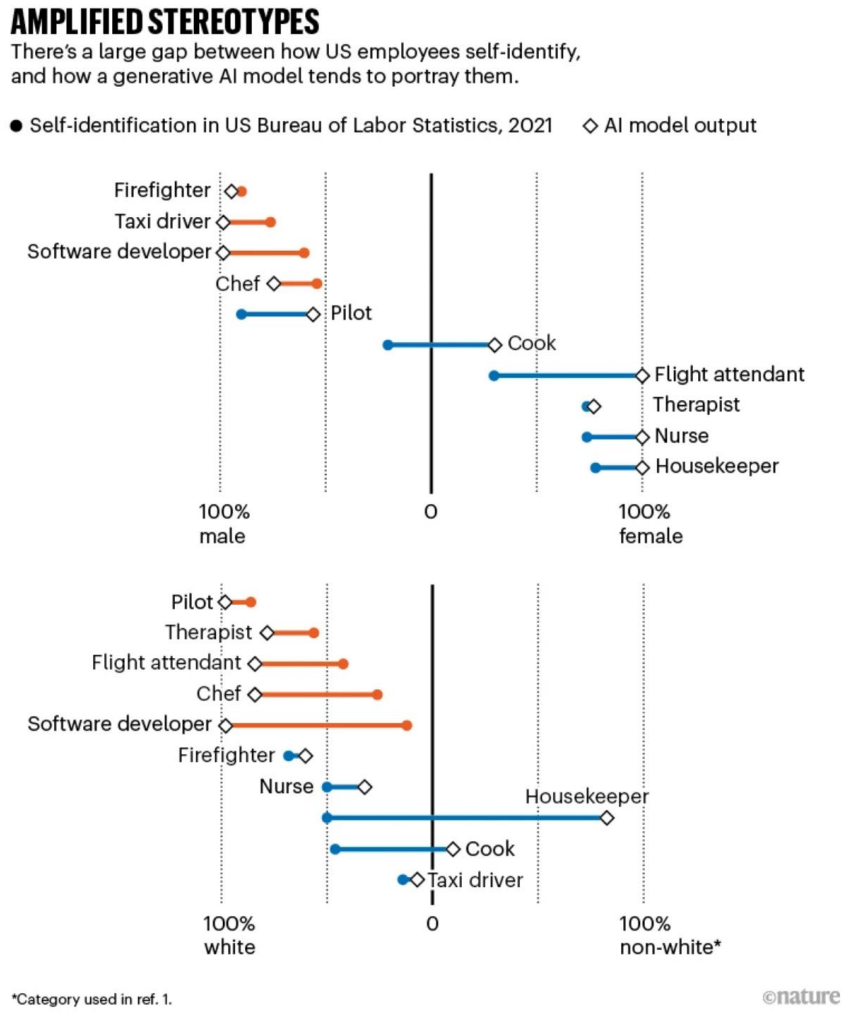
Figure 1. Image examples for visual gender stereotypes. *Note.* All four image examples were sourced from DALL·E 2. From left to right and top to bottom, the images are (A) a biological scientist detected as a woman with a smile; (B) a biological scientist detected as a man appearing calm; (C) a chief executive officer detected as a woman with a lower face pitch value; (D) a chief executive officer detected as a man with a higher face pitch value.

(Sun et al. 2023)

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gender bias

ethnicity bias



(Ananya 2024)

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This image, generated from a prompt for "an African man and his fancy house", shows some of the typical associations between 'African' and 'poverty' in many generated images. Credit: P. Kalluri *et al.* generated using Stable Diffusion XL



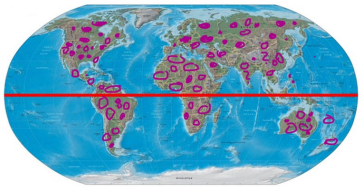
In a *Lancet* study of global health images, the prompt "Black African doctor is helping poor and sick white children, photojournalism" produced this image, which reproduced the 'white saviour' trope they were explicitly trying to counteract. Credit: A. Alenichev *et al.* generated using Midjourney

Algorithmic discrimination in GenAI (image generators)

(Ananya 2024)

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Algorithmic discrimination in GenAI (LLMs)



Plus holen ×

Correct?
However, the canon of films considered in these studies lacks diversity: Western contributions, mainly by male US authors and loaded with corresponding biases, dominate the field, whereas works from the Souths are severely underrepresented.

Your sentence is understandable, but it can be improved slightly for clarity, grammar, and academic tone.

Two small issues:

- **"Souths"** is unusual in English; the common academic term is **"the Global South."**
- The sentence flows better with minor punctuation adjustments.

Improved version:

> However, the canon of films considered in these studies lacks diversity: Western contributions—mainly by male U.S. authors and shaped by corresponding biases—dominate the field, whereas works from the **Global South** are severely underrepresented.

Statistical Probability

→ perpetuation of dominant words, languages, inscribed values, meanings, etc.

→ discrimination against marginalized knowledge and worldviews

Counter approaches:

Diversity Sensitive Design

Pluriversal Design

Culturally Centered AI

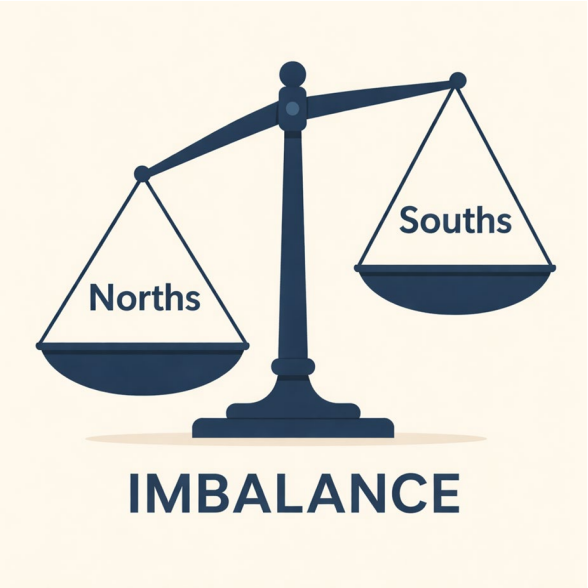
Indigenous AI

…

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(In-)Justice Check

AI is epistemically unjust, as it amplifies existing societal biases to the detriment of marginalized groups. Moreover, (Gen)AI reinforces epistemic inequalities through the statistical privileging of dominant knowledge.



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Where do we go from here?
Approaches to foster ethical AI (use)

Top-down approaches:
Ethics, Regulation, Governance

Bottom-up approaches:
information/dialogue, public engagement, activism/protest

Technology-centered approaches:
Technical solutions for technical problems

User-centered approaches:
AI literacy, AI competence

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Group Discussions

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Group Discussion (I): Between ethical use and abstention



German Ethics Council: Recommendations for ethical AI

"Digitalization is not an end in itself."

(German Ethics Council 2023)



"The solution to a problem should not create worse problems than originally existed."

(Ammicht Quinn, 2014, p. 43; my translation)

- Where have you perceived aspects of (global) injustice in your own AI use?
  (How) has awareness of these injustices influenced your individual use?
- What could be reasonable criteria for balancing pragmatic AI use against choosing not to use AI, in specific cases?
- Are there (other) alternatives?

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Group Discussion (II): AI literacy between user empowerment and “cure-all” solutionalism

If literacy is about the ability of reading and understanding texts – so what is the “text” in AI?



Editorial

The (im)possibility of AI literacy

Luci Pangrazio

Pages 1-7 | Published online: 17 Feb 2026

Cite this article https://doi.org/10.1080/17439884.2026.2615553 Check for updates

The hype surrounding the potential of AI to augment human capabilities and supercharge productivity is matched by fears that it will irrevocably change life and the world as we know it. On the one hand, AI is thought to be a ‘gamechanger’ in terms of its potential to transform industries and make new discoveries. But on the other hand, fears around AI replacing jobs, degrading the environment, and changing the way we think and learn are making many sceptics very cautious and pessimistic. For both the AI optimists and pessimists, however, literacy has been put forward as a response. If one is AI literate, then one is ‘empowered learners’ who use AI ‘ethically’ and ‘meaningfully’ (OECD 2025), not only guarding against the concerns but also ensuring one is making the most of its potential. In this sense, literacy becomes a kind of ‘cure all’ – a solutionist, normative approach to the complex and evolving phenomena of AI. But what exactly is literacy and can it be applied to AI?

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Group Discussion (II): AI literacy between user empowerment and "cure-all" solutionalism

"In current approaches, literacy becomes synonymous with *how to use AI*, rather than questioning the social reality it ushers in […]."
(Pangrazio 2026, 2)

- What kind of AI literacy—and conceptions thereof—do we need to foster ethical and just AI?
- What approaches do you (or should we) pursue to promote justice-oriented AI literacy?
  (→best-practice examples?)

"literacy responsibilises the end user, rather than exploring regulation or other ways of reigning in the AI 'arms race'."
(Pangrazio 2026, 2)

- Who should bear the responsibility for (globally) fair AI? How could a fair distribution of this responsibility look like?

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RHET AI

Thank you!

…any comments or questions welcome

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