

AI and environmental justice

Advocating for fairer futures



Harnessing AI for environmental justice

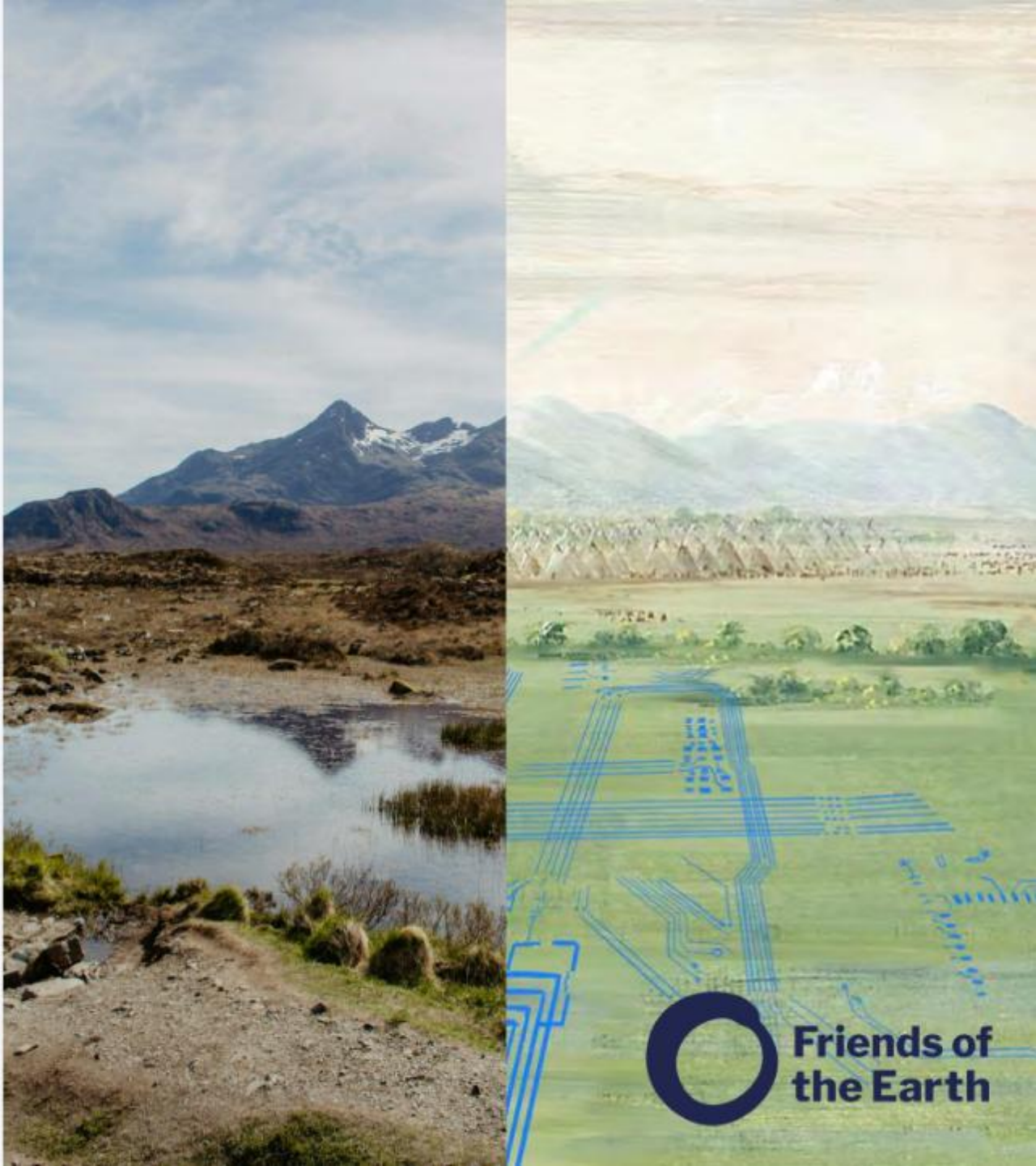
Principles and practices to guide climate justice and digital rights campaigners in the responsible use of AI

Images Left: Cuillin Hills in Scotland, Viktor Löwen. Right: Hanna Barakat + AIxDESIGN & Archival Images of AI / Better Images of AI / Weaving Wires 2 / CC-BY 4.0

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Campaigning



Why the government urgently needs to rethink its approach to data centres and AI infrastructure.

12/05

RE:     



Projects Approach Staff from us Blog

AI: From disruption to alignment

Shaping a vision of AI for good



The Problem
Development of generative artificial intelligence (AI) is advancing faster than our ability to manage its impacts. This is already causing unintended problems like the loss of existing jobs and inequities and massive growth in water and energy use. Organisations increasingly dependent on large tech to operate are finding it hard to hold them to account.

The Challenge
Like other non-profits, while we recognise the value that AI can bring to our impact and operations, fragmented efforts and lack of shared resources mean we don't yet have the guidelines, frameworks and tools to help navigate the ethical dilemmas posed by AI. AI's potential impact is too great to be left to a few billionaires running big tech companies. We need to find effective ways to advocate for AI that serves societal and environmental needs.



Exploring



Using ChatGPT for foresight: Futures wheel

Christian Graham | Innovation Specialist
Friends of the Earth

How to use chatGPT to quickly produce futures wheels— a key tool for futurists



Using ChatGPT for foresight: Scenario Development

Christian Graham | Innovation Specialist
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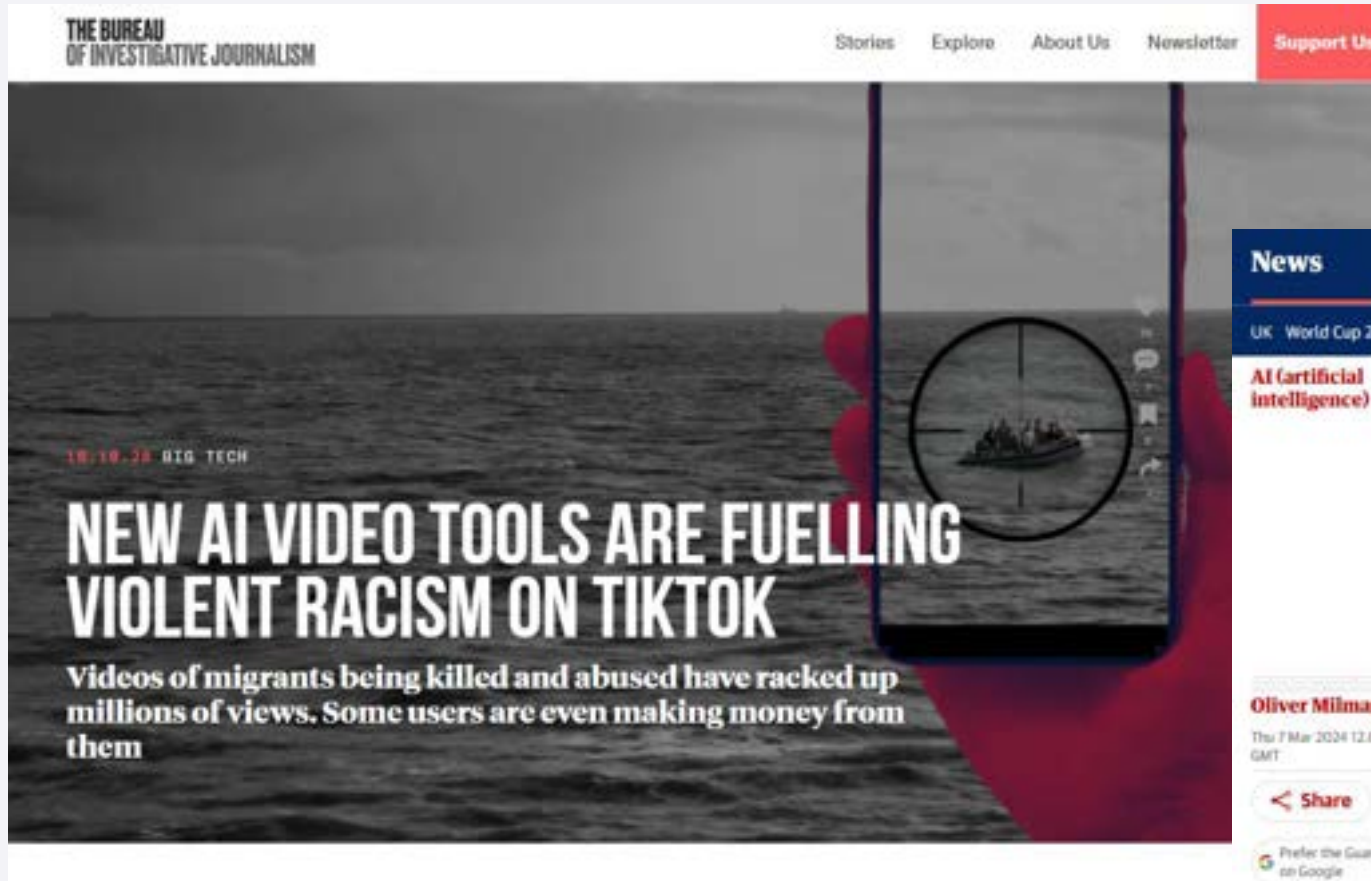
How to use ChatGPT to develop compelling scenarios — another useful tool in the futurist's kit.



The bigger picture

The international context

Turbo-charging disinformation



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This Article is From Nov 07, 2023

AI-Generated Disinformation Tactics Spotted Ahead Of COP30

The United Nations and governments are beginning to respond to how disinformation spreads, researchers say.

Agence France Presse World News Nov 07, 2023 13:34 pm IST

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from ahead of COP30

Powering extraction

ENABLED EMISSIONS CAMPAIGN

Aligning advanced technology with climate science



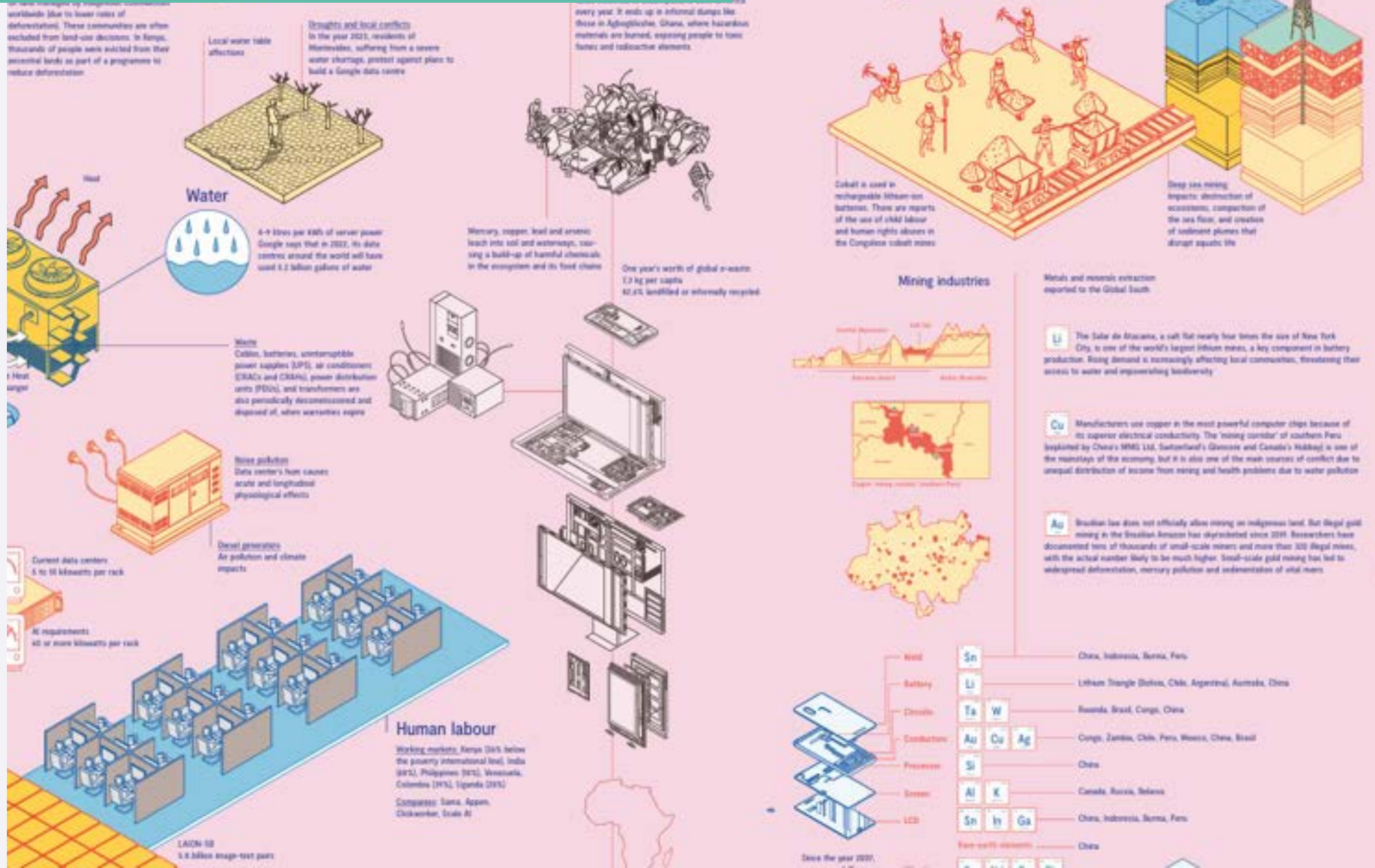
ENABLED EMISSIONS
CAMPAIGN

Enabled emissions are the additional greenhouse gases released when advanced technologies (AI, IoT, and high-performance/cloud computing) make fossil fuel production economically viable.

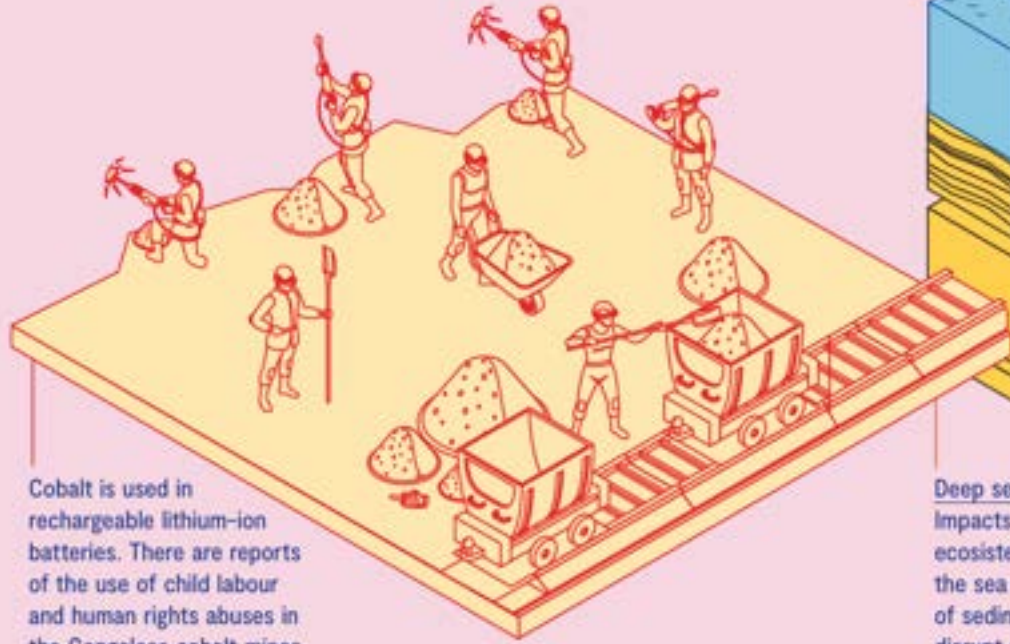
The **Enabled Emissions Campaign** works on one of the most consequential and least examined dynamics in climate and technology — building the research base, governance frameworks, and cross-sector coalitions needed to address it.



Exploiting people & resources



Supply chain of raw materials

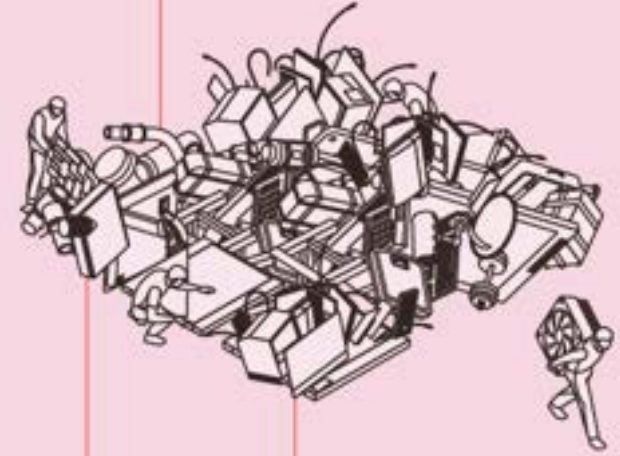


Cobalt is used in rechargeable lithium-ion batteries. There are reports of the use of child labour and human rights abuses in the Congolese cobalt mines.



Deep sea mining:
Impacts: destruction of ecosystems, compaction of the sea floor, and creation of sediment plumes that disrupt aquatic life

More than 50,000 tonnes of e-waste, which takes millennia to decompose, is sent to Africa every year. It ends up in informal dumps like those in Agbogbloshe, Ghana, where hazardous materials are burned, exposing people to toxic fumes and radioactive elements



64% of e-waste sent to recycling centres in Europe is then shipped to Africa



In our global network

Uruguay

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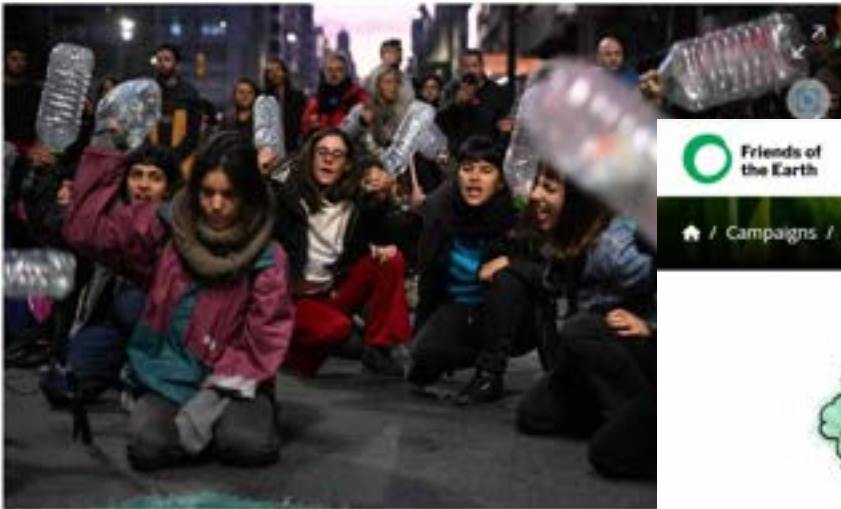
'It's pillage': thirsty Uruguayans decry Google's plan to exploit water supply

Country suffering its worst drought in 74 years, with government even mixing saltwater into drinking supply

Grace Livingstone in Montevideo

Tue 11 Jul 2023 11:15 BST

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People take part in a protest amid a shortage of drinking water reserves in May 2023. Photograph: Eitan Abramovich/AFP/Getty Images

A plan to build a Google data centre that will use millions of day has sparked anger in **Uruguay**, which is suffering its worst

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DATA CENTRES ARE BIG ENERGY AND WATER



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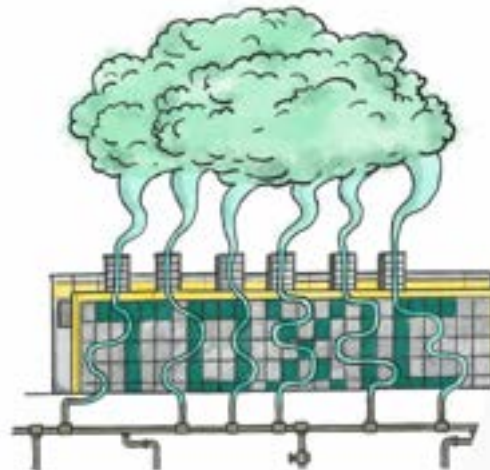
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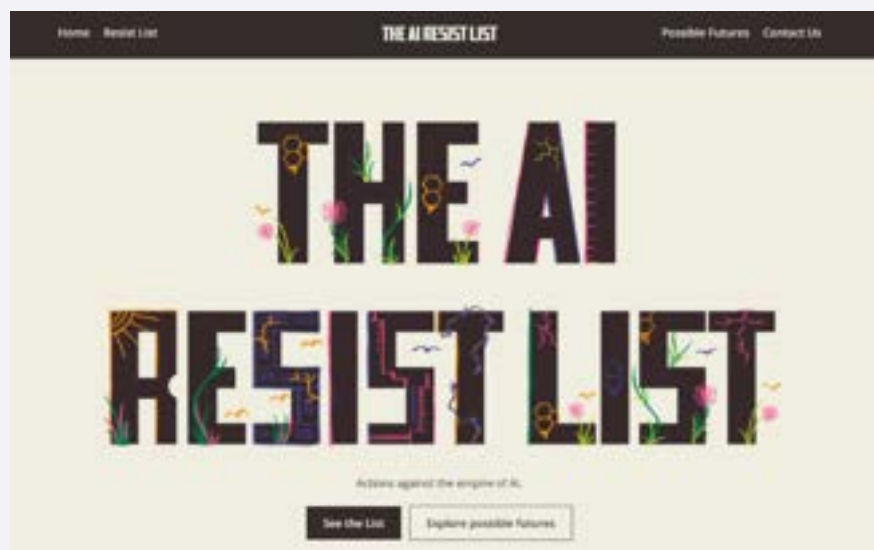


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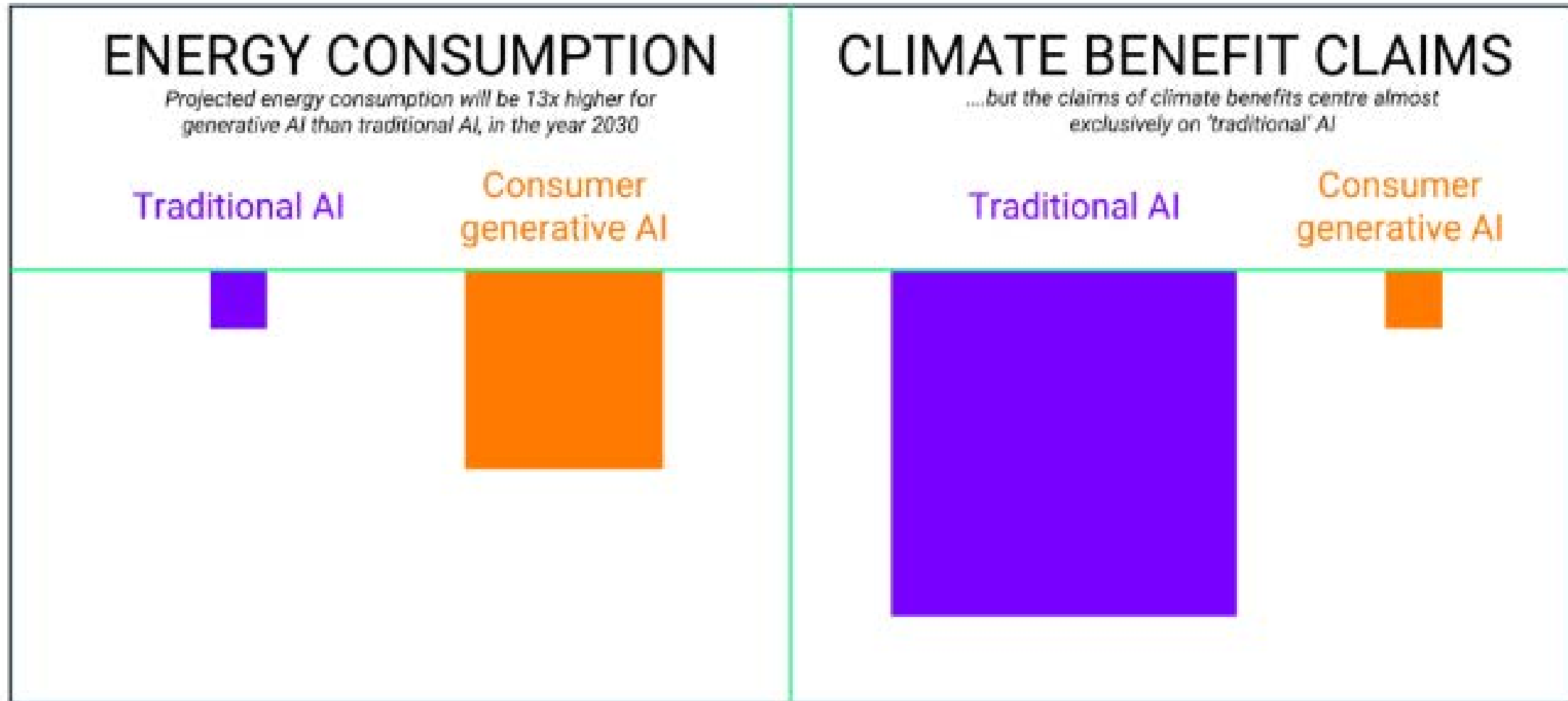
Resistance is growing



What are some alternatives?

Does it have to be all or nothing?

AI is not going to save us



But there are useful applications

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Former DeepMind expert's AI tool could help boost National Grid ESO's solar forecasts

Future energy - 19 Aug 2021 - 3 minute read

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Green and intelligent: the role of AI in the climate transition

Research article on 23 June, 2025

AI within planetary boundaries

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Green Screen Coalition

— A catalyst in making visible the climate implications of technology by supporting emerging on-the-ground work, building networks, and embedding the issue area within philanthropy.

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JOINT STATEMENT FROM CIVIL SOCIETY FOR THE AI ACTION SUMMIT

We demand that AI systems
be made compatible with
our planetary boundaries

A vision for Manchester?

**C4O
CITIES**

LONDON CLIMATE ACTION WEEK 2026

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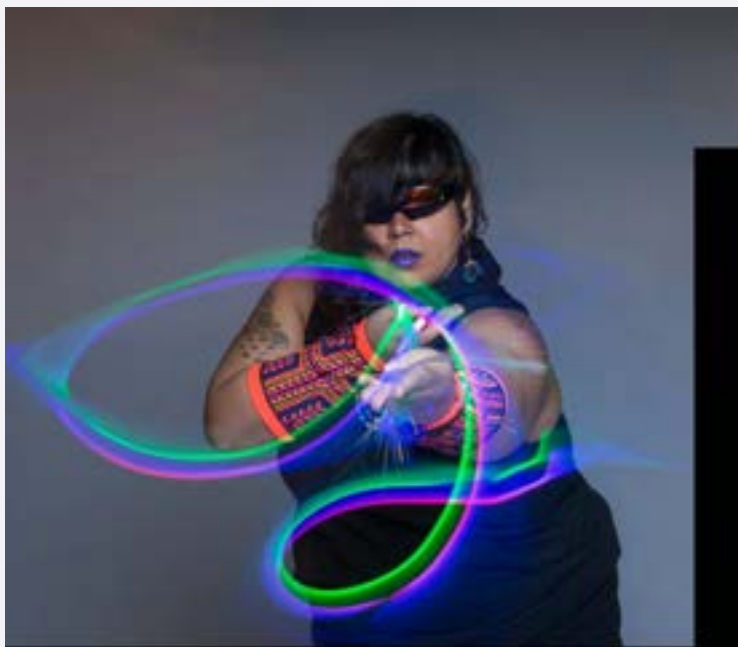
**C4O
CITIES**

The Global Urban Data Centres Pact

A mayoral vision for a sustainable, affordable digital future

[READ THE FULL PACT](#)

Alternative visions



'Narrow purpose' AI: choosing the right tool

The claim of a net 'climate benefit' from generalised "AI" is based on the illogical **false coupling** of completely different technologies

TACTICAL
VAGUENESS



A call to action

1. Find the common ground – don't judge users.

2. Stay curious

3. Planet over profit. Focus on corporate power.

Thank you



Acknowledgements

Authored by Laura Hilliger and Doug Belshaw,
[We Are Open Cooperative](#)

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Friends of the Earth

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Green Screen Catalyst Fund

Read it
[here](#)

7 principles for responsible AI use

- 1. Curiosity** around AI creates opportunities for better choices.
- 2. Transparency** around usage, data, and algorithms builds trust.
- 3. Accountability** Holding tech companies, governments, and each other accountable leads to responsible action.
- 4. Including** diverse voices strengthens decision-making around AI.
- 5. Sustainability** in AI systems helps reduce environmental impact and protect natural ecosystems.
- 6. Community** collaboration in AI is key to planetary resilience.
- 7. Intersectionality:** Advocating with an intersectional approach supports humane AI.