Catalyst Fund Grantees Report

Green Screen Climate Justice and Digital Rights Coalition

Green Screen Coalition

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Executive Summary

The Catalyst Fund exists to support the burgeoning ecosystem of actors working on the intersection of digital rights and climate justice to build cross-territorial strategies and weave thematic threads across movements.

18 grantees

working at the nexus of climate and digital rights

€400k

towards tech prototyping, cultural work & media, community action research and legal & policy analysis

Global Reach

focused on bridge-building for transnational solidarity and action

Findings

FINDING 01: We must uplift and resource diverse approaches to tackle emerging challenges such as social-environmental investigations of digital infrastructures, platforms for community-generated environmental data, visual storytelling, and visioning other ecological and technical cosmologies.

FINDING 02: Understanding the stakes of the geopolitical “AI race” and the way it exacerbates harm on people and the planet is an urgent and critical strategic choice. Philanthropic actors are (still) in a position to make this choice.

FINDING 03: Resourcing strategies must connect local struggles, trans-regionally and trans-nationally, but also connect experiences of local realities to “big picture” global decision-making forums.

01.

Contextualising the Catalyst Fund

Building collective infrastructure

2021

Together with the Mozilla Foundation and Ford Foundation, Ariadne Foundation commissioned The Engine Room to conduct field research, exploring the intersection between digital justice and environmental justice movements, as well as a series of issue briefs from a range of organisations with different thematic expertise.

2022

In April, the group published the report "At the confluence of digital rights and climate & environmental justice", which provides an accessible and thoughtful overview on the climate and environmental justice issues that emerge from technological innovation and opportunities for learning from both fields perspectives.

In October the Green Screen Coalition of funders brought together 50 people in Berlin, representing digital rights and environmental justice communities, grassroots and indigenous movements, as well as philanthropic funders, to begin to build an impactful strategy for a sustainable and equitable internet, expose funders to the communities working on these issues, and deepen analysis by key themes. As a result, 7 emerging projects received support under the **"Green Screen Coalition Awards".** This support was intended as a follow up from the October event, a way of ensuring equity about the participation of the community that joined the event.

2023

In June, after RightsCon Costa Rica, the Green Screen Coalition brought together the people previously involved in the 7 projects, but also a much broader regional community of groups representing indigenous peoples rights, environmental justice activists as well as digital rights individuals who attended RightsCon. Community leaders from the previous phases of the initiative co facilitated the event and drew their learnings in a compelling write-up that formed the Branch magazine's issue.

In October, the Green Screen coalition launched a website and an open call titled the "Catalyst Fund" which was shared with the Costa Rica event attendees and a wider network built over the prior 3 years.

2024

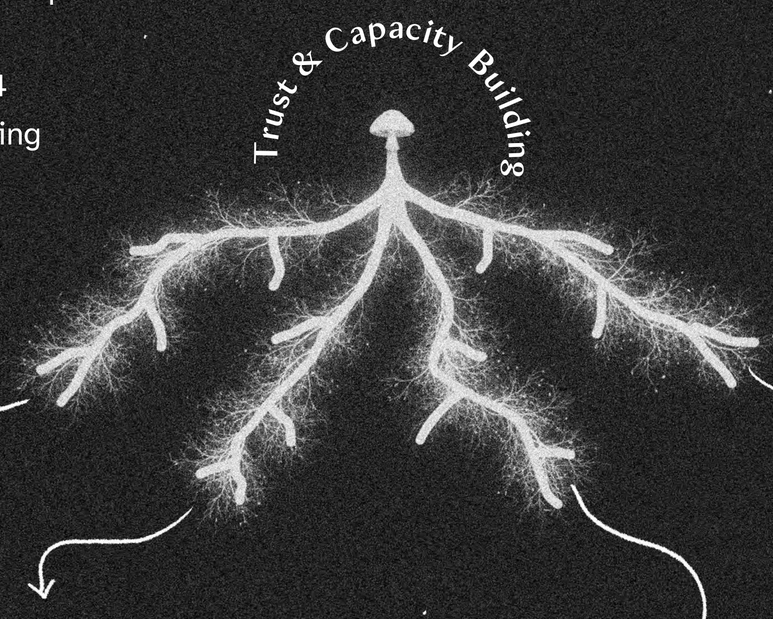
In April, the Green Screen coalition announced its new 18 grantees, as a result of successfully fundraising 400.000 for regranting. With the involvement of community reviewers, the coalition awarded its Catalyst Fund. The grant period extended from May 2024 to September 2025.

02.

Catalyst Fund: Outputs and impact

Resourcing creative interventions

The Green Screen Coalition Catalyst Fund resourced 18 groups working at the nexus of climate justice and digital rights. Complementing the 18 projects, the coalition supported 4 other initiatives throughout the period, reacting to emerging opportunities (see “Scoping” section).



Tech Innovation

Media Awareness and Justice Initiative (MAJI)
The Environmental Sensing Project

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Beyond Carbon: Using Multisensory Datasets for Climate Action

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European Digital Rights (EDRi)
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Environmental Coalition on Standards
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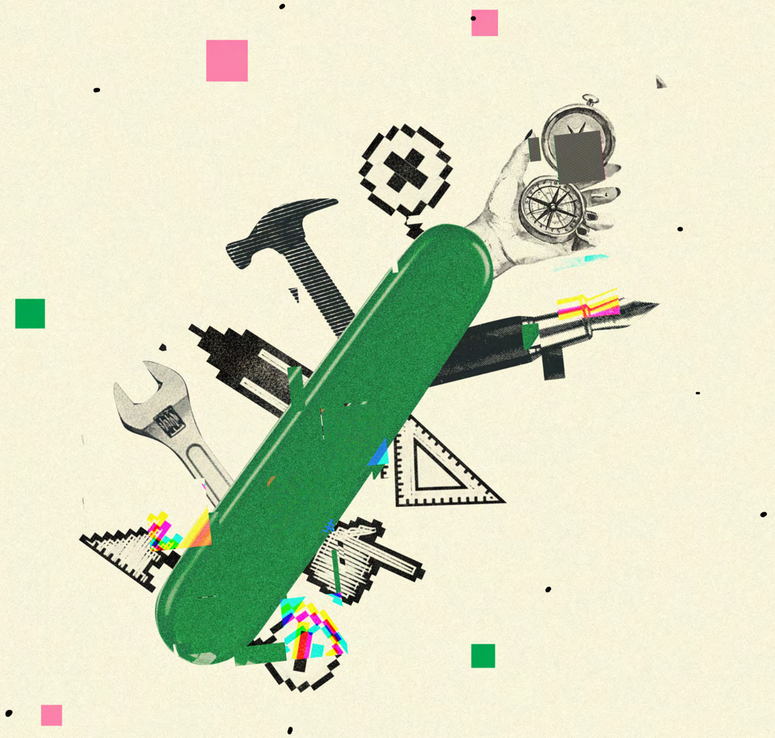
Greening AI policy – an influencing agenda

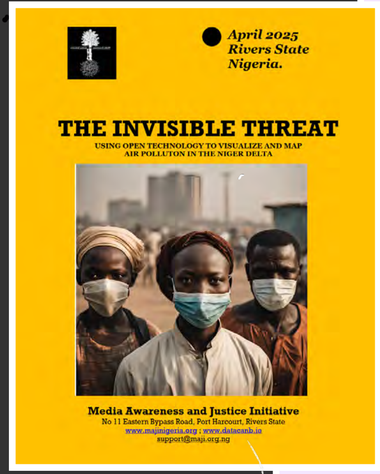
Gesellschaft für Freiheitsrechte e.V. (GFF)
Holding Zalando accountable: Access to retail platform data

The 18 projects fall within 4 categories: tech innovation, cultural work and media, community action research, legal and policy analysis. Two horizontal principles cut through: strengthening communities and bridge-building.

Tech Innovation

These projects developed prototypes and technologies centered on community needs. Examples include software for assessing the energy consumption of the linux kernel, datasets combining scientific data about rainforests with multi-sensory community-owned information, a data mapping project managed by its community, as well as open source environmental sensors.





Media Awareness and Justice Initiative (MAJI) - The Environmental Sensing Project

The Environmental Sensing Project deployed 60 low-cost single-board air and water quality sensors to collect real-time data on air and water pollution in crude oil-impacted locations in the Niger Delta region. The group developed the report "Invisible Threat - Using open technology to visualise and map air pollution in the Niger Delta" providing environmental factsheets and policy recommendations for advocacy and awareness raising. The project served as the basis for training of journalists and community-based local actors supporting their use of collected environmental data for effective evidence-based campaigns.

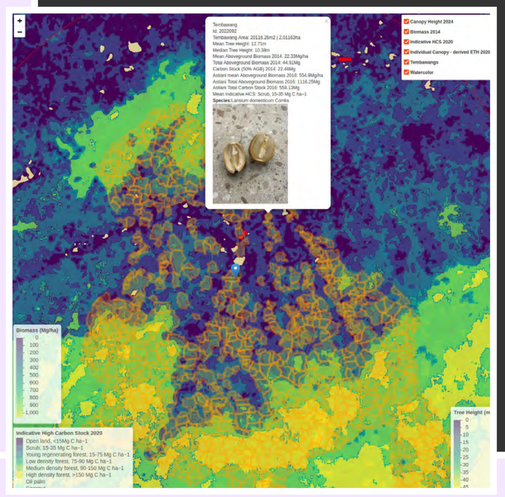
IMPACT

With support from Green Screen, MAJI built **multi-stakeholder locally-rooted forums**, and engaged local participants, community leaders, locally based activists, and civil society organizations. The **research centered on local experiences**, a much needed approach as the impacts of climate change intensify across rural coastal communities and urban areas in Nigeria, and persons living in these areas experience the harshest effects with huge impacts on their health and livelihood. Moreover, the group **built capacity** among journalists and local actors through their trainings, laying the foundations for future advocacy, and awareness-raising.

"Availability and access to citizen-based data provides key insights into environmental based challenges that affect rural and urban community lives and livelihood, while also supporting fact-based engagements with key stakeholders, data-oriented policy development and increased accountability."

Madhuri Karak and Cindy Julianty - Beyond Carbon: Using Multisensory Datasets for Climate Action

Beyond Carbon is a prototype that unites multi-sensory community-owned information and scientific datasets about rainforests in Mekar Raya, a village in Indonesia's West Kalimantan province. In May 2024, Cindy Julianty and Madhuri Karak recorded forest sounds (eco-acoustic); conducted interviews with Dayak elders recounting myths and changes they've witnessed in the rainforest across generations (oral history); asked community members to sing songs celebrating sacred places (acoustic); and compiled a repository of culturally significant local species in the Dayak language (text). In 2025, Julianty, Karak, and Michelle Cheripka coordinated a community review process of a three-screen video installation in Mekar Raya, designed to elicit responses outside of "NGO-speak" and partly to encourage "multi-sensory" ideas.



IMPACT

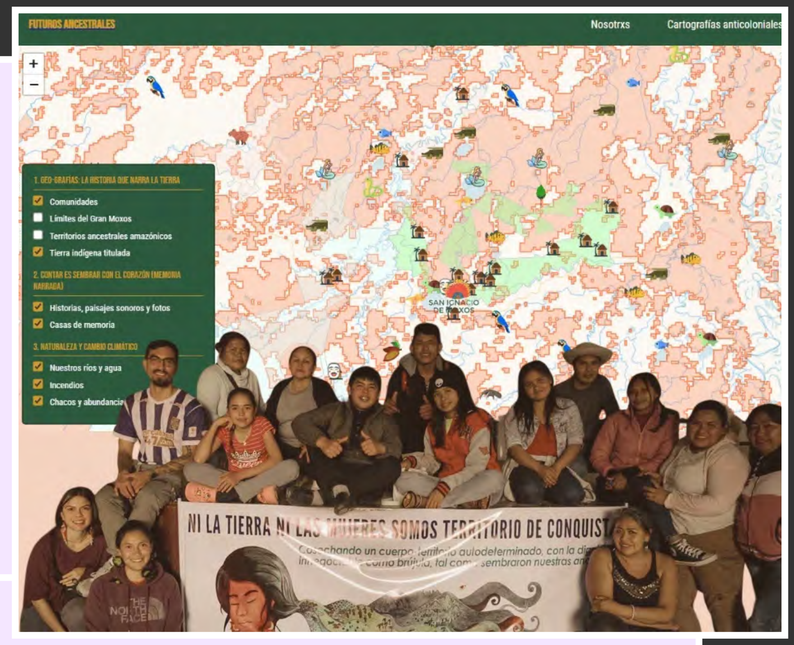
The prototype forged new partnerships, by engaging groups working in forest advocacy in Indonesia (Working Group of ICCAs in Indonesia and Tropenbos Indonesia), advocating for Indigenous and Local Communities seeking territorial recognition. This opened the door for integrating the **multi-sensorial methodology as a novel tool for advocacy** and broader paradigm shifts. Such partnerships are especially important, as state recognition of communities' territorial rights relies on providing **evidence of the community's generational ties to land and forest** (as is the case for Mekar Raya).

The prototype was further perfected, adapted and developed by a bigger team, as it was chosen in Spring 2025 to participate in the Ds-Discovery Program at the College of Computing, Data Science, and Society, University of California, Berkeley. Through this, they were able to focus on traditionally managed fruit orchards (tembawang), and visualise the carbon sequestered in Mekar Raya's tembawang. Strict ritual specifications determine who can collect, forage, or sell fruits, leaves, and seeds from the tembawang. Currently available global forest datasets offer no insight on the interconnections between the carbon stored in trees, and the community that stewards them. This project **closed this gap by uniting both carbon and socio-environmental data** from Mekar Raya's tembawangs.

02 Catalyst Fund: Outputs and Impact

Jasy Renyhê - Mapping Amazonian Indigenous Futurities: Self-determined data in Bolivia's Climate Changing Landscapes

Jasy Renyhê conducted 23 in-depth interviews with Indigenous leaders, territorial authorities, elders, and youth in Bolivia, to scope the project and understand the needs of the community. Afterwards, they trained indigenous communities in data collection, and developed a portal storing the data documenting 19 burned areas in regions immediately adjacent to indigenous communities. The training reached 31 participants, all of whom took part in sessions on data gathering, participatory community mapping, QCIS and meetings coordination for the learning process. Together with territorial authorities, Jasy Renyhê established the data repository Futuros Ancestrales, hosted under the group's website and domain.



IMPACT

The impacts touched many communities, from territorial monitors and authorities, Indigenous youth, elders and artisans. The workshops provided digital tools to **articulate territorial struggles for land reclamation**, historical justice, and Indigenous autonomy. For territorial monitors, this project offered access to materials, content, and concrete practices that shaped not only how they monitor their lands, but also their understanding of what lies behind those practices. For territorial authorities, the process opened an important space to discuss data governance in ways rarely explored before. Because data is intangible, this remains a conversation that requires further depth through training and technical content that makes comprehension more accessible. For Indigenous youth, the project **created spaces of dialogue and creativity** where they could reflect on their histories, knowledges, and visions for the future of their territory. For elders and artisans, it provided a place of special recognition within the communities—something many expressed appreciation for, especially given that the languages and stories they share are increasingly at risk of being forgotten. The documentation process thus became meaningful on both sides of the exchange. By creating a **digital platform owned and managed by participants**, the project established a resource that can continue to grow on their own terms. Project members now have a space where they can access pedagogical materials, contribute new data, and develop additional strategies for territorial defense.

"Es, más bien, una puesta en marcha del honrar la soberanía y autonomía de los pueblos indígenas, sus datos, y las representaciones que de ellos emergen para fabulaciones de hoy, ayer y mañana."

"It is, rather, a setting in motion to honor the sovereignty and autonomy of indigenous peoples, their data, and the representations that emerge from them for fabrication of today, yesterday and tomorrow."

Sursiendo, Comunicación y Cultura Digital - Actions for environmental justice from autonomous and community-based technological infrastructures

Sursiendo, along with May First Movement Technology, researched action strategies to embed environmental sustainability into autonomous internet communications infrastructure projects. Drawing on participatory methodology based on conversations with autonomous and community-based providers, they produced a report in English and in Spanish that documents current sustainable practices already in place, key obstacles, future projections and speculative ideas toward environmental justice. Groups emphasize shared infrastructures, hardware longevity, free software, and collective approaches. The authors identified potential for future action in areas as Hardware & Infrastructure Practices; Energy Use and Common Goods Awareness; Software & Digital Practices; Collective Approaches & Political Imagination; Knowledge, Culture & Learning as well as Creative & Speculative Proposals. The report was documented through a recorded webinar, archiving a conversation with the participating organisations MariaLab (Brazil), Sutty (Argentina) and Cloud68 (Estonia).

IMPACT

The report highlights the importance of collaborative action and radical imagination to create technologies more committed to the protection of life. Through their work with the May First Movement Technology Cooperative, Sursiendo **strengthened the linkages between autonomous infrastructure projects**, and facilitated the **sharing of strategies among groups**. By rooting the work in the reality of communities impacted by megaprojects, this work also shows the importance to develop participatory **methodologies that center the communities most impacted** by the harms researched. Their work shows that the most creative technical solutions will come from community providers who have a closer connection to the people they support and a vision for regenerative infrastructures that meet collective needs.

“In terms of environmental sustainability, autonomous internet communications infrastructure projects are already at an advantage because they simply don’t engage in surveillance and data collection. But what other actions, options and strategies can these infrastructures implement?”

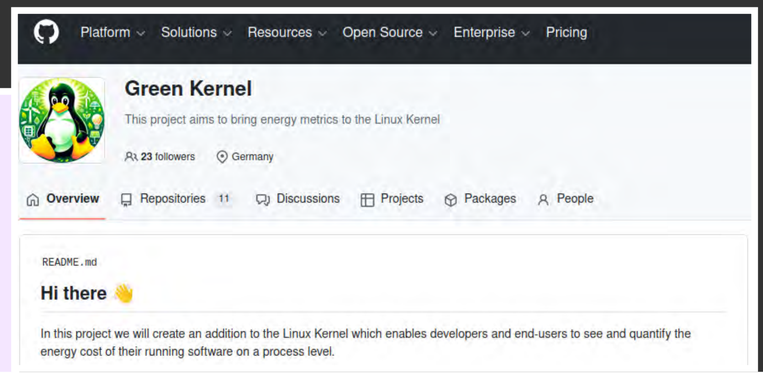
Green Coding Solutions - Energy Models for the Linux Kernel

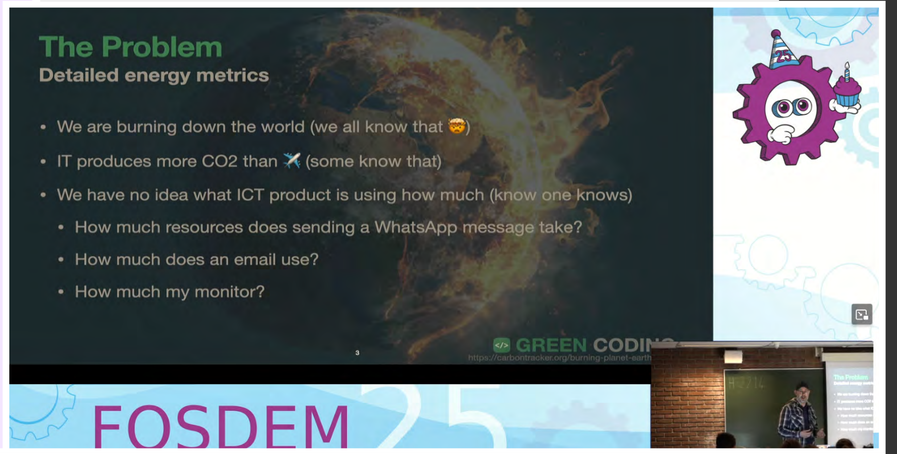
Green Coding developed an addition to the Linux Kernel that enables developers and end-users to see and quantify the energy cost of their running software on a process level (cgroup). This technology is critical because it is a fundamental building block for creating and optimizing software with respect to energy consumption.

IMPACT

As they developed the tool, they **raised awareness** among software developers, companies and open source communities about the need for visualizing the energy cost of software.

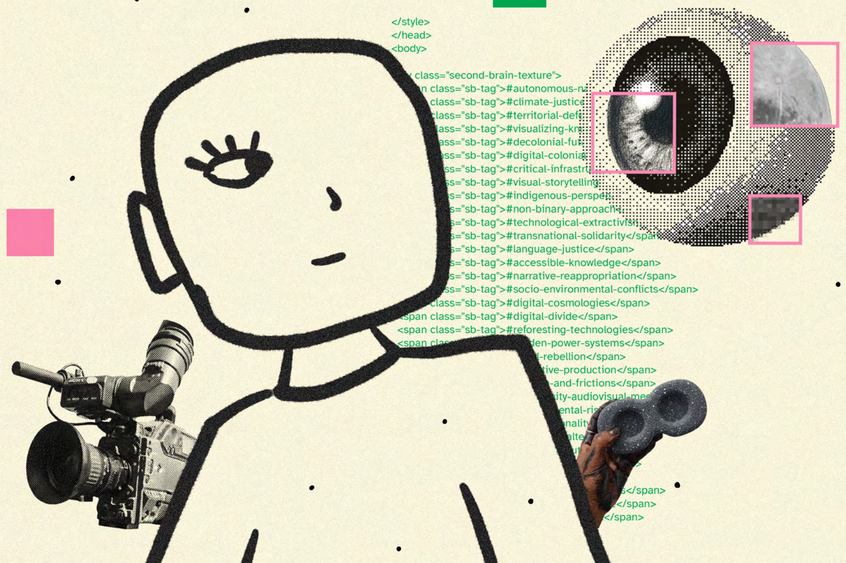
Arne and Didi gave talks at ecoCompute, DWX and FOSDEM and had their work published at one of the best conferences GREENS'25 - PowerLetrics: An Open-Source Framework for Power and Energy Metrics for Linux. Arne was also interviewed for the Environment Variables podcast, probably one of the largest in the space. Their work in the open source community has **led to future collaboration** integrating the tool within NextCloud–a secure self-hosted cloud platform–as well as integrations with 4 Universities. While our other grantees explore the many aspects of environmental harm stemming from tech infrastructure, Green Coding's tool can also quantify one aspect of harm, energy use. Conversations on energy use and tech infrastructure, like data centers, are booming and having concrete data and tooling to quantify use is an **essential component to wider agendas** in the network.





Cultural Work & Media

These projects used visual representations to convey stories, share knowledge in new formats and making visible the “big picture”. This body of work visualised different knowledges - currently missing from formal mappings- envisioned decolonial futures, produced short films, or developed Virtual Reality sets to present research.



Rub(én) Solís Mecalco - Indigenous audiovisual narratives in defense of their territories against megaprojects

Rub Solis Mecalco produced 2 short films in Yucatecan Maya and Spanish (with English subtitles) about the socio-ecological impacts of Megaprojects in the region, as well as local initiatives and alternatives proposals against these impacts. The two films are titled “KOOL” (11min. 21sec., 2025) and “JA’” (9min. 44 sec., 2025). The films were projected in 3 rural Mayan communities and in a cultural space from a peripheral neighborhood in Merida, the biggest city with the biggest urban Mayan population in the region, in Taiwan during RightsCon 2025, and in Berlin at a local queer community center.

IMPACT

The project showcases an indigenous, feminine, non-binary and collective approach to film production. The films center Mayan participation and co-design at every stage behind and in front of the camera. This participatory approach elevates aesthetics and narratives that Mayas want to share with other Mayan Communities and other Land based communities around the world. Rub demonstrates the role of films as a medium to elevate community-first perspectives, and how cinematographic tools can be adapted to complex realities. The films explore and expand beyond tech infrastructure, for example data centers, and includes powerful actors from industrial agriculture and renewable energy, documenting how they contribute to land dispossession, and environmental harms in the region.

“The cenotes feed on the rain, and we feed on them. And it’s like a kind of circle...From the cenotes that we take water, we give thanks, dedicate, and offer to our fathers and mother creators”

Camila Nobrega Rabello Alves - Beyond the Green - Risk Factors

Through the Catalyst Fund, Camila and her team were able to advance the work on the web documentary Risk Factors. Risk Factors highlights the challenges faced by 5 women researchers and students, as well as gender and sexual dissidents, in Brazilian universities as they navigate their work on socio-environmental conflicts.

Through Green Screen, the team created a teaser for the documentary, and produced a dissemination plan culminating at COP 30 in Belem, Brazil. More, the support helped finalise the documentary's design and programming phase, further develop the script to reflect issues of transnational solidarity, organise feedback sessions and content debates with people involved in the project.

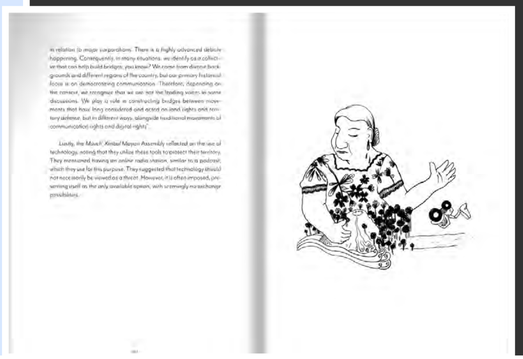
IMPACT

The development of the documentary **created shared narratives through interviews and storytelling**. As debates took place, the team managed to articulate a **process that identifies common challenges** faced by women across different regions in Brazil in their relation with the university and beyond it. As a result, women felt more solidarity amongst each other and identified with the collective struggle. Through this, the script ended up addressing the **intersectional nature of women's experiences** and provided a platform for women to share their stories. Having such spaces made participants feel represented, empowered and developed their agency to reclaim their narratives. The project has been presented at COP30 and People's Summit in Brazil, but also at the DAAD (University Exchange Service in Germany).

> "As the debate on climate change intensifies, the dispute of narratives also grows in both online and offline spaces. Many dominant lenses present a future based on technological solutions and equivalences that erase differences, multiplicities, and ways of life."

Kuirme Collective - Tejiendo Transatlantic and multilingual digital bridges between environmental justice and digital rights

In 2023, the group interviewed practitioners in Brazil, Mexico, Germany and France, researching in the field at the intersection of digital rights and environmental justice. With the support of the “Catalyst Fund”, the group was able to translate the initial report from English and create a new extended Spanish version titled “Ficciones & Fricciones” and adapted English version. Kuirme commissioned illustrations in order to facilitate an accessible reading of the findings. The conversations and illustrations were captured in an open-access online book launched in Fall 2025. Through translation, Kuirme ensured that the communities they engaged with in Brazil and Mexico could benefit from the research about themselves and learn about the findings in their own language.



IMPACT

By translating a report on community realities in Mexico, Brazil, Germany and France into Spanish, Kuirme ensured that the people talked about in this research can read about the findings in their own language. Besides contributing to **language justice**, the collective developed a consultative approach when designing the visual language of the research. They demonstrate the importance of distributing resources to center accessibility of knowledge to build capacity in communities. Kuirme produced a complementary less-expensive print version of the report, for **ease of use by community organisers**.

“The path would draw inspiration from the principle of “alegre rebeldia y digna rabia” (“joyful rebellion and dignified rage”) of the Mayan Zapatista movement.”

Tech for Forests - Meeting people where they are: Tech camp for climate justice

During the course of the grant, the collective focused on core institutional strengthening. Tech for Forests advanced its communications strategy, community building efforts and content production. Tech for Forests developed a new visual identity and website, produced 3 short films, and launched a call for submissions to the "Letters for 2050: Inspiring the future and reforesting technologies" visioning initiative. The collective was able to attend 3 strategic events in Brazil (Free Land Camp in 2024 and 2025 as well as Indigenous Women's March in 2025), and convene together with the Federal University of Sao Paolo's Pimentalab entitled "Thinking Together: Possible Connections between Technologies and Forests in this Climate of Disinformation" (2025).

IMPACT

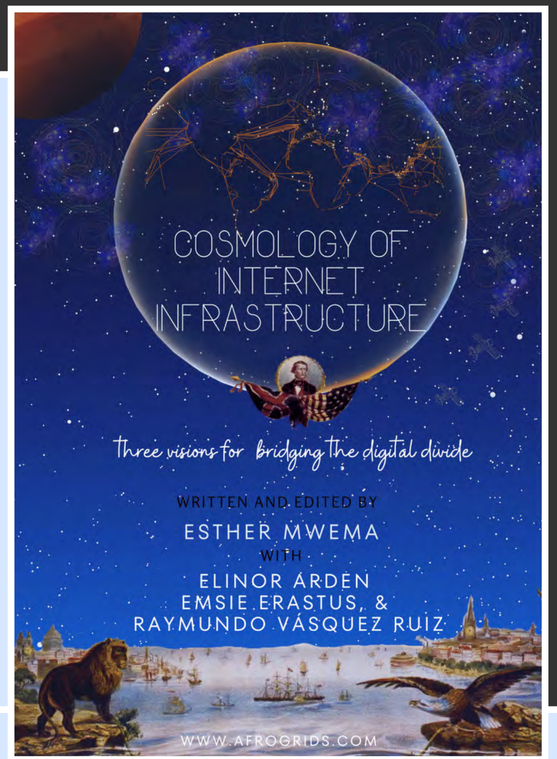
Through the project, they engaged activists within indigenous communities, academics, and developers, fostering debates around COP30, **proposing strategies for resistance** and strengthening reliable and impactful narratives. Tech for Forests built new partnerships with 3 new organisations they haven't previously engaged (Instituto Incube, Pimentalab, and Iri Brasil). Moreover, they were able to **experiment with VR media, engaging both young and senior audiences** previously outside of the group's reach but also with "letters" as an envisioning exercise as a new way to articulate demands in the area of tech and environmental justice.

"Reflorestar é semear ideias novas nos campos do imaginário,
como raízes do patriarcado que sustenta esse tronco oco que chamem de progresso capitalista."

"Reforestation is sowing new ideas in the fields of the imagination,
like the roots of patriarchy that sustain this hollow trunk they call capitalist progress."

Esther Mwema - Cosmology of Internet Infrastructure: Three visions for Bridging the Digital Divide

Esther produced 3 pieces of artwork and coordinated the publication "Cosmology of Internet Infrastructure: Three Visions for Bridging the Digital Divide" . The work includes her artworks and a collection of essays that inspired the artworks, articulated by multi-faceted practitioners Elinor Arden, Emsie Erastus, and Raymundo Vásquez Ruiz from Zambia, Namibia, Mexico and the USA. These visualised versions of the future simplify the concepts of Internet Infrastructure and connect questions of infrastructure to longer histories of violence and environmental harm. Specifically, Esther analyzed the dilemma between increased Internet infrastructure to bridge the digital divide and the extraction of resources in the African context.



IMPACT

Her work provides accessible entry points on the topic of internet infrastructure and digital colonialism, using cosmologies as a way to explore folklore-rooted visions of future infrastructure. This visioning work challenges the inevitability narrative of extractive infrastructure and disrupts the current trajectory of digital colonialism in Africa and across the Majority World. Esther **raised awareness** of the interconnections between colonial histories and internet infrastructure by presenting her artwork to 1000+ people via 2 keynote presentations, and 3 online presentations at local and global community events such as re:publica 2025, Das Nettz and RightsCon Taiwan. Esther was also featured in an interview about the project and in the Reset blog.

"The Internet is layered with technical, geopolitical, socio-economic, and cultural implications. I uncovered a myth that the Internet hides somewhere in the cloud. This language was a shroud to a hidden system of power in digital society –Internet infrastructure."

Community Action Research

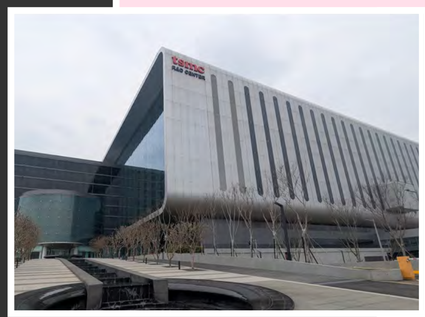
These projects feature a collaborative research approach, where community members and researchers partner to identify issues, scope the project, collect data and develop actionable findings. These projects cover a wide range of theme from health and labor to energy justice and extractivism.

Marie-Therese Png - AI Supply Chain Impacts: Transnational Solidarity Building

Marie-Therese built transnational solidarity around the impact of AI supply chains, through research, organising workshops, publishing photo essays and delivering stories of resistance to policy makers in different fora. The work involved hosting several workshops: an in-person workshop focusing on cobalt supply chains in the Congo and AI infrastructure expansion in Princeton, an online workshop on solidarity between Environmental Rights Foundation (Taiwan) and Friends of the Congo, and 2 workshops in Taipei on the intersections of tech and environmental justice. She carried out research on the semiconductor industry in Taiwan - including interviews and site visits with local individuals and groups and a visit to a semiconductor water treatment facility. She co-published a photo essay on research carried out in Taiwan and Chile forthcoming in the journal for Global Asias. Finally, she presented her work at the Institute for Advanced Study, Data for Black Lives, and COP30 in Brazil, and the G20 Summit in South Africa.

IMPACT

The project developed **solidarity transnationally** between local groups in Taiwan, DRC and Brazil, by **developing relationships** and carrying out workshops where participants from different countries could share their experiences. Participants **built their capacity and understanding** of their own struggles in a transnational context, and built collective knowledge by sharing methods of resisting the environmental and labour impacts of AI infrastructure expansion. Communities **developed a sense of solidarity**, opportunities to share strategies with other groups, and created **pedagogical materials**. Through her project, Marie-Therese **bridged grassroots groups with policymakers** for advocacy opportunities.



“As technology supply chains intersect further with indigenous and local community-led water struggles, exemplified by rallying slogans from - 工業喝好水，人民喝廢水 “industry drinks good water while the people drink wastewater” in Hsinchu, Taiwan, to “no es sequía, es saqueo” “it’s not drought, it’s plunder” in Chile, Mexico and Uruguay.”

Coalición Feminista Decolonial por la Justicia Digital y Ambiental - TRAMAS: Case studies and testimonies of resistance across Latin America

The group “Floresta Digital” is formed of Coding Rights (Joana Varon y Mari Tamari), Instituto Latinoamericano de Terraformación (Paz Peña), Sursiendo (Jes Ciacci), Paola Ricaurte (Red Tierra Común y Red Feminista de Investigación en Inteligencia Artificial) y Loreto Bravo. The collective’s goal was to untangle the diverse socio-environmental impacts of digital technologies in Latin America. Through the help of the Green Screen Catalyst Fund, they were able to formalise their coalition, produce a mapping of the socio-environmental conflicts of digital technology in Latin America, and identify 5 case studies on topics such as mineral extraction for digital devices and the techno-optimistic discourses that dominate their sale and social adoption. In Mexico City in August, they published **TRAMAS**–a website archiving the case studies–in Spanish, Portuguese and English at their launch event entitled “Technologies, Networks, Territories: Untangling the Socio-Environmental Impacts of Technologies in Latin America”.

These projects feature a collaborative research approach, where community members and researchers partner to identify issues, scope the project, collect data and develop actionable findings. These projects cover a wide range of theme from health and labor to energy justice and extractivism.

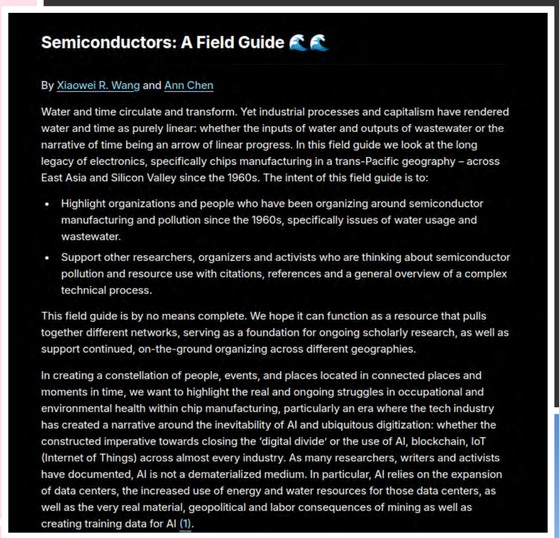
IMPACT

Their project connected socio-environmental territorial struggles to the global production chain of the digital economy, garnering considerable interest from researchers in digital technologies and rights, both locally and internationally. The work **raised awareness of the issues** identified in the Latin American context in many forums across different continents. The methodology shows that **collective knowledge, ongoing dialogue, and regional experience** are essential for understanding the complexities involved in this type of project. Their work decenters Europe and the US in conversations about land, water, and green colonialism, as they relate to the tech industry expansion in their territories.

“Worlds are ending; new ones are coming. Networks must be woven, and voices need to be amplified. We look to solutions and alternatives that have existed in this region for centuries born from acts of resistance.”

Xiaowei Wang and Ann Chen - Semiconductors: A Field Guide

Xiaowei Wang and Ann Chen worked together on a research project diving into the real and ongoing struggles in occupational and environmental health within chip manufacturing. Through site visits and interviews with organisers in Taiwan and Korea, the research looks at resource use and ecological impacts of semiconductor manufacturing over the past 60 years. Beyond creating knowledge, the project also aimed to enable transnational solidarities among grassroots organisers. The research manifested in the publication "Semiconductors: A Field Guide" which functions as a resource that maps and connects networks, as a foundation for ongoing scholarly research, as well as support continued, on-the-ground organizing across different geographies.



Semiconductors: A Field Guide 🌊🌊

By Xiaowei R. Wang and Ann Chen

Water and time circulate and transform. Yet industrial processes and capitalism have rendered water and time as purely linear: whether the inputs of water and outputs of wastewater or the narrative of time being an arrow of linear progress. In this field guide we look at the long legacy of electronics, specifically chips manufacturing in a trans-Pacific geography – across East Asia and Silicon Valley since the 1960s. The intent of this field guide is to:

- Highlight organizations and people who have been organizing around semiconductor manufacturing and pollution since the 1960s, specifically issues of water usage and wastewater.
- Support other researchers, organizers and activists who are thinking about semiconductor pollution and resource use with citations, references and a general overview of a complex technical process.

This field guide is by no means complete. We hope it can function as a resource that pulls together different networks, serving as a foundation for ongoing scholarly research, as well as support continued, on-the-ground organizing across different geographies.

In creating a constellation of people, events, and places located in connected places and moments in time, we want to highlight the real and ongoing struggles in occupational and environmental health within chip manufacturing, particularly an era where the tech industry has created a narrative around the inevitability of AI and ubiquitous digitization: whether the constructed imperative towards closing the 'digital divide' or the use of AI, blockchain, IoT (Internet of Things) across almost every industry. As many researchers, writers and activists have documented, AI is not a dematerialized medium. In particular, AI relies on the expansion of data centers, the increased use of energy and water resources for those data centers, as well as the very real material, geopolitical and labor consequences of mining as well as creating training data for AI (1).

IMPACT

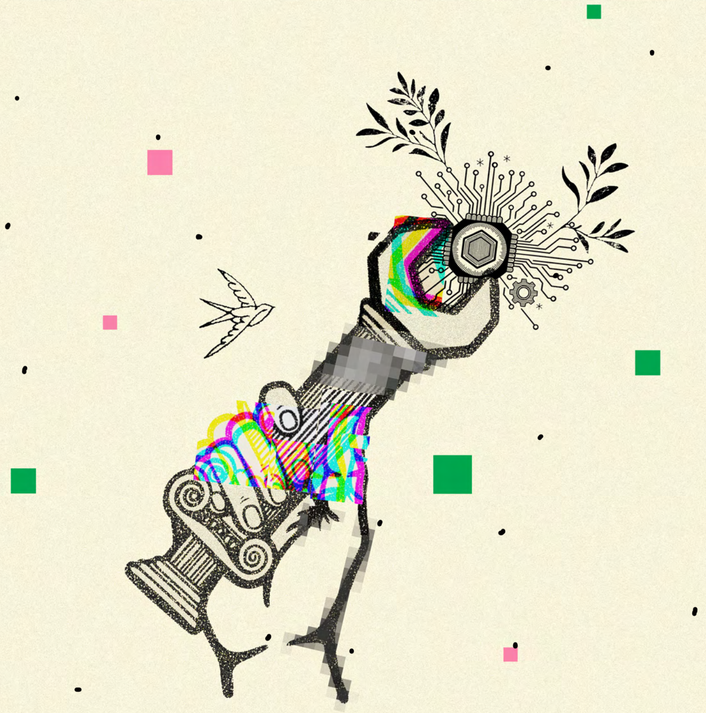
The **research was well received among researchers** studying semiconductor environmental impacts, **activists** organizing around CHIPS Act expansion in the **US and international networks connecting tech worker solidarity movements**. Individual activists found the document helpful especially in "bridging the connections between different places, i.e. TSMC in Minamata Japan and Hsinchu Taiwan." As it was circulated among networks, the research was also useful for **organisers around semiconductor fabrication plants** arriving in new communities.

"There is a need for sustained pressure from civil society groups on corporations and governments that prioritize development over community well-being, for greater environmental responsibility from the semiconductor industry."

02 Catalyst Fund: Outputs and Impact

Legal and Policy Analysis

These projects focused on bridge-building and agenda-setting in legal and policy fora in Haiti, UK, Germany and the EU. Together the work explores the role of platforms and Artificial Intelligence, potential litigation and regional coalition building between climate, environmental and digital rights movements.



Organisation Féministe MARIJÀN - Forum for Climate Justice and Digital Rights: A Feminist and Intersectional Perspective

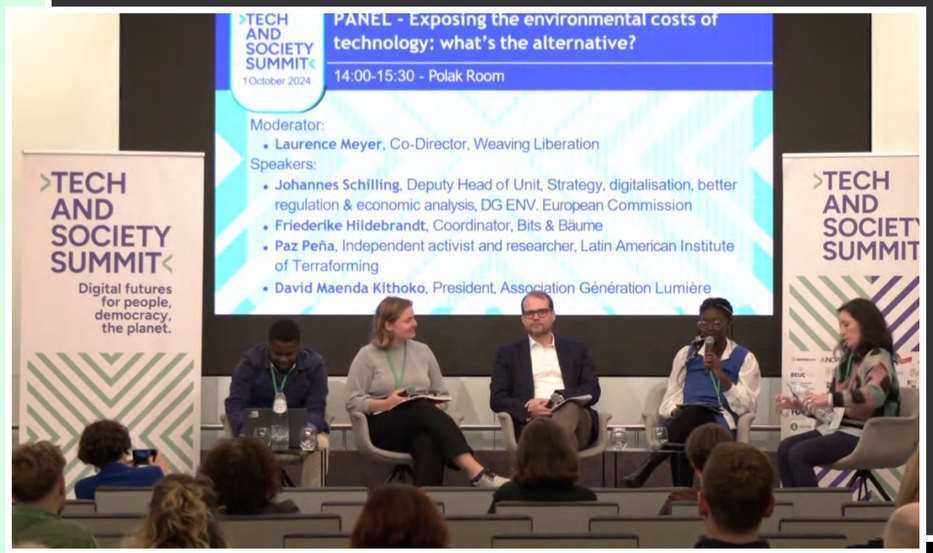
MARIJÀN hosted a national forum on climate justice and digital rights, bringing together thirty young people, experts, and academics to collectively reflect on the intersections between gender, technology, and environmental justice. As a result, the group published a white paper within a feminist agenda for climate action in Haiti and circulated it with policymakers - strengthening feminist advocacy on these issues.

IMPACT

The project created a unique space for **intergenerational and interdisciplinary dialogue** on feminist approaches to climate justice and digital rights, a first of its kind in Haiti. Participants developed a deeper understanding of how climate change, digital access, and gender inequality intersect in their daily lives and in public policy. The forum led to the production of a **white paper** outlining concrete policy recommendations for a more inclusive and gender-responsive approach to environmental challenges. This document has been shared with government representatives, universities, and civil society partners to inform decision-making. **Young women** participants expressed that the experience strengthened their leadership skills and empowered them to advocate for change in their respective communities. Beyond the immediate participants, the project reached national and regional audiences. **Several governmental and institutional actors** expressed interest in integrating the white paper's recommendations into their environmental and digital strategies. Regional feminist organizations from the Dominican Republic and the Caribbean have also shown interest in replicating the model to foster cross-border collaboration.

European Digital Rights (EDRi) - Building capacity and momentum for strategic and collaborative EU advocacy interventions on climate justice, technology and digital rights

The EDRi network built capacity focusing on coalition-building, convening, advocacy and awareness raising. They created The Environmental Justice x Digital Rights Working Group , bringing together 11 digital rights and 10 environment and climate groups, with 6 coordination meetings being held during the project period. They also organised a narrative workshop to collectively envision a community-centered, rights-focused tech field. Over the last two years, they joined and amplified complementary efforts, such as the civil society statement “Within Bounds: Limiting AI’s Environmental Impact” around the AI Action Summit 2025, a LeMonde op-ed, and the End of 10 campaign promoting the right to repair. They built partnerships between environmental NGOs such as the EU Raw Materials Coalition and its members (run by the European Environmental Bureau), the Attecking group focused on data centers, ECOS and Global Witness.



IMPACT

In 2025, EDRi’s 50+ members adopted **its long-term network strategy**, which has a strong mandate for work at the intersection of digital rights and environmental justice, coupling it with EDRi’s ongoing decolonial lens of digital rights. This is an example of how the **digital rights field is increasingly aware** that not only are our struggles interconnected, but actually the digital space is a massive driver of environmental harms. Through its working group and the efforts put to establish and maintain it, EDRi as an actor was also **legitimised in existing coalitions and the broader field**, and seen as a viable actor for future work. Moreover, this grant allowed EDRi to understand **how to best work at the intersection of different fields of expertise**, acknowledging initial reluctances but learning to build trust through recognition of each actor’s contribution.

“We firmly oppose any attempt to delay or re-open the AI Act, particularly in light of the growing trend of deregulation of fundamental rights and environmental protection, which risks undermining key accountability mechanisms and hard-won rights enshrined in EU law across a wide range of protections, including for people, the planet, justice and democracy.”

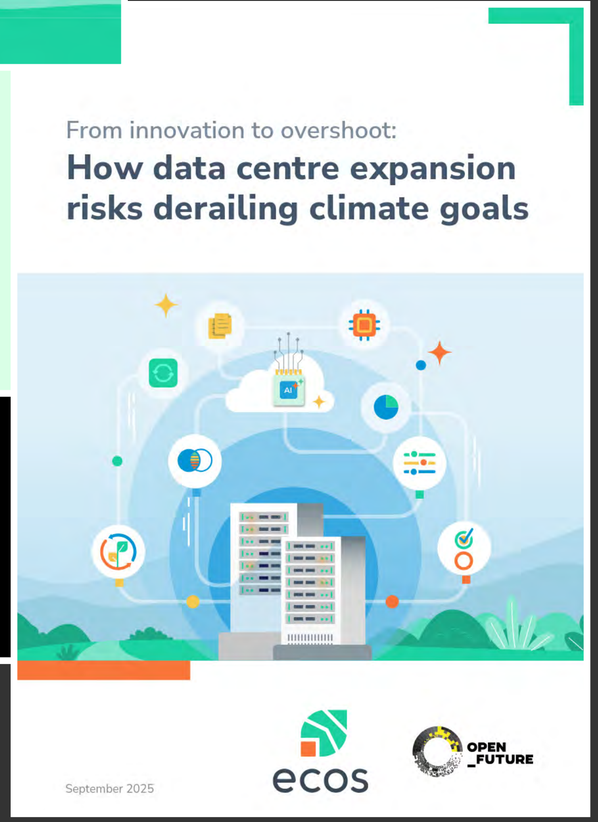
Environmental Coalition on Standards - Ensuring sustainability and transparency of Europe's data centres

The grant allowed ECOS to partner with Open Futures, and produce the report "From innovation to overshoot: How data centre expansion risks derailing climate goals". The report examines the impacts of Data Centers on current climate promises and offers a set of recommendations on how to address these risks. The work offers an analysis of the environmental impacts of data centres, explores solutions to mitigate these impacts, and puts forward a set of possible EU policy responses.

IMPACT

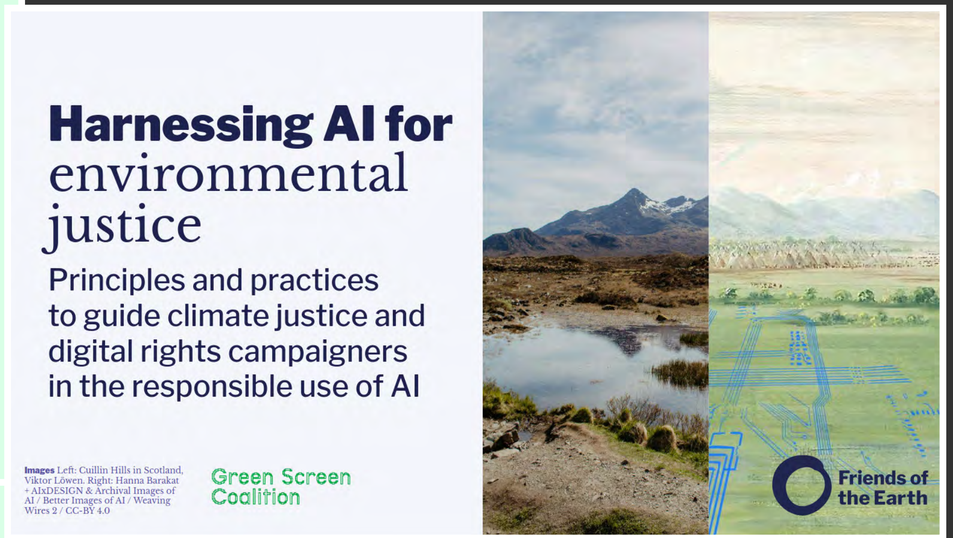
In the process of articulating the position paper, ECOS was able to convene several meetings, build new partnerships, and raise awareness with other NGOs and progressive industry stakeholders about the **importance of transparency around the energy intensity** of digital services. More, the group built its internal capacity by enhancing the understanding of its employees of the sustainability of data centers, and broader interrelation between digital rights and climate justice.

"Data centres are essential infrastructure, but instead of allowing computational excess, we need laws that focus on more than just efficiency, prioritise transparency, and adopt principles of sufficiency – with society involved."



Friends of the Earth: Greening AI policy – an influencing agenda

Friends of the Earth (FoE) set out to develop a coherent and practical set of policy demands around generative AI using large language models and its environmental impact. Following a collaborative exercise (desk research and roundtable) with environmental justice advocates and digital rights campaigners, FoE launched a report "Harnessing AI for Environmental Justice", sharing principles and practical guidelines on how AI can be used responsibly, alongside recommendations for policy. In this paper, the group explored climate and energy, nature and environment and rights and justice and developed 7 principles for activists and campaigners to start their work from: curiosity, transparency, accountability, sustainability, community and intersectionality.



IMPACT

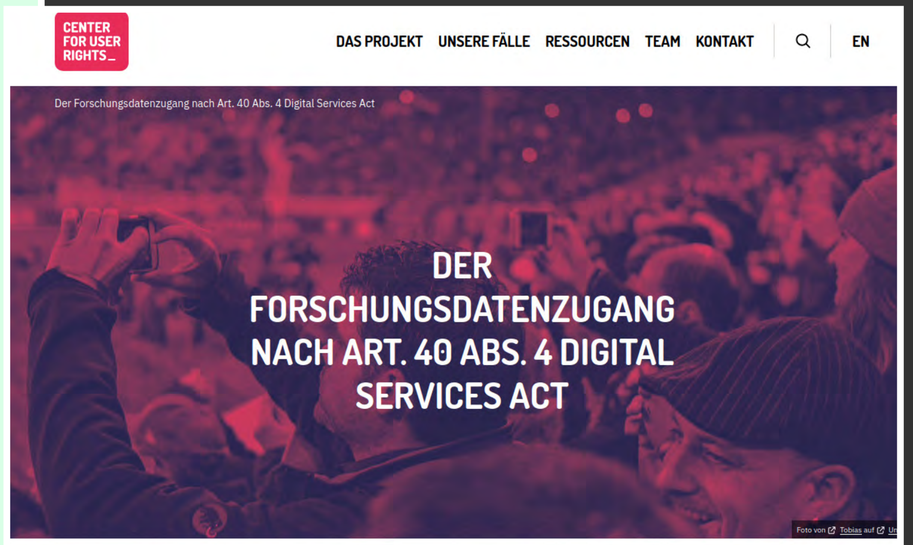
Through their work, FoE managed to go **beyond the utopia-distopia dichotomy**, and **bridged two different fields**: environmental justice activists and digital rights activists. The conversations made fellow campaigners feel empowered to make policy demands, on a topic **outside normal comfort zone**. While the framing may seem to invite openness to AI as a solution, the report **breaks down the terminology** and articulates the value (and lack of value) of different types of AI on offer. It is a **helpful starting point for campaigners** and those who are newer to digital justice conversations.

"These principles are designed to help activist organisations find a balance. We want to ensure these technologies support the fight for a fair, fossil-free future, not undermine it."

02 Catalyst Fund: Outputs and Impact

Gesellschaft für Freiheitsrechte e.V. (GFF) - Holding Zalando accountable: Access to retail platform data

Together with environmental researchers André Ulrich and Maike Gossen, GFF developed a comprehensive data access application for accessing data on environmental harms caused by Zalando's return policies and the impact of ecolables on consumer choices. The application addresses the underlying legal questions if environmental harms can be considered as systemic risks according to the Digital Services Act (DSA) and is designed to serve as a blueprint for future applications. Data access requests under the DSA require a complex application in which the researchers must i.a. provide a legal analysis of the link of their research to systemic risks caused by platforms and a data data security concept. In effect, GFF has commissioned and revised a comprehensive data protection and data security concept that can also serve as a blueprint for other applicants. Starting October 2025, others can use this blueprint to file data access requests with the Digital Services Coordinators (DSCs).



IMPACT

During the project period, GFF **actively engaged with the community of environmental researchers** in Germany and with the international research community working on data access. Among other things, the group took part in the Summit of the Coalition for Independent Tech Research to present the Zalando application, and organized a workshop on research data at RightsCon 2025. Through this networking, GFF received further **requests for support** from other researchers who also intend to work with data from online retail platforms. In the research community working on data access more broadly, GFF's workshops have **helped to sharpen the understanding** of the opportunities and potential for data access under the DSA. GFF raised **public awareness** on the topic of research data access. This included publishing an FAQ on research data as well as several guest articles in both academic and general journals. Their work also illuminates the time needed to request data, build a case and see results. Their work will allow others to shorten their time and effort needed to hold these companies to account.

02 Catalyst Fund: Outputs and Impact

03.

Analysis: Collective impact and emerging work

The analysis below is a collation of various reflections over the last year. These reflections come from several actors with complementary perspectives involved in the coalition and fund, during different times in the fund implementation timeline. Specifically, the analysis relies on 3 sources: a report detailing mid-term conversations with 4 grantees (Lori, Paz, Paola, and Marie-Therese) conducted by fund coordinators Maya, Yan and Fieke; an interview conducted by report author Andreea with fund coordinator Maya, 1 month before the end of the term; and reflections of the author at the end of the grant term.

The analysis is structured in 3 pillars: (1) Emerging issues, (2) the grants' relational nature and practices, and (3) the grant's approach to centering community needs. The first pillar looks at emerging issues in terms of geographies and theories of change, making recommendations in light of the findings. The second pillar touches on the practice of building trusting networked communities, by navigating differences, taking risks, learning and knowledge exchange. Finally, the third pillar dives into the grant's focus on communities' needs and the way this was reflected in the scoping and monitoring of the grant.

03.1

Emerging issues

Before presenting the different topics tackled by the cohort, it is worth noting that the fund's call for application had a **specific political analysis embedded** within – namely a critical lens towards the impacts of large-scale tech infrastructure and a skepticism of quick technical solutions to complex socio-environmental challenges. As a result, the successful submissions were compatible with this framework. Nevertheless, the call allowed for an expansive reading of the intersection between digital and environmental justice. The Catalyst Fund cohort **interrogates this intersection in a broad way**. Some grantees previously explored digital and environmental justice issues that required more attention such as the environmental footprint of an e-commerce online platform, investigating the confluence of environmental and digital rights advocacy opportunities in the EU, or transparency mechanisms for data centers. Many projects in the cohort explored unique and previously under-resourced topics, often not on the radar of technology and digital rights funders. Examples include the archiving of community knowledge that complements satellite data, feeding issues of rainforest maintenance in light of ongoing regional debates, and the intersection of labor and health impacts of those working within the global AI supply chain.

Topics

The topics addressed by the 18 projects all meet at the intersection of digital and environmental justice, but explore this intersection through (broadly) 5 different approaches to the subject.

First, several projects looked into the **environmental footprint of digital infrastructures**. This includes reflections on how data centres, AI models, platforms, and internet hardware drive energy use, emissions, and resource extraction (e.g. Sursiendo, ECOS, GFF, Green Coding, Friends of the Earth UK). Secondly, several grantees looked into the **materiality and extraction of technological supply chains**. Projects explored polluting energy infrastructure, mining, and the production of semiconductors (e.g. Marie-Therese Png, Decolonial Feminist Coalition for Social and Environmental Justice, Xiaowei Wang and Ann Chen). Thirdly, several projects invested in the gathering and platforming of **community-generated environmental data** (e.g. Madhuri Karak, MAJI, Jasy Renyhê). Grantees gathered environmental information through local, often Indigenous-led, methodologies that combine science, lived experience, and deep cultural knowledge. Some projects explored the intersection between environment and digital justice by **elevating the stories of those disproportionately harmed in their own words**, for example Indigenous groups, queer and sex-dissident people, and critical socio-environmental researchers (e.g. Camila Nóbrega, Rubén Solís Mecalco, MARIJÀN, Tech for Forests).

Finally, a group of projects focused on **imagining, visioning and enacting other technological futures** that meet the needs of community and respect the human and more-than-human world (e.g. Sursiendo, Kuirme Collective, Esther Mwema and Tech for Forests).

Geographies

The projects covered the topics in **different geographies**, moving beyond EU and US-centric focus. The projects addressed multiple scales, from specific localities to broad transnational regions. Some projects worked in **villages** (e.g. Mekar Raya, a village in Indonesia's West Kalimantan province). Others investigated **regions**: the Yucatán (through the Yucatecan Maya community in southern Mexico), the Niger Delta in Nigeria, West Kalimantan in Indonesia, the Bolivian Amazon, and the south of Mexico. At a **country** level, grantees covered Brazil, Mexico, Indonesia, Bolivia, Taiwan, Haiti, Nigeria (implicitly through the Niger Delta), and the United Kingdom. **Across continents**, grantees looked, with a transnational lens, at the European Union (EU), Latin America, Africa (and the broader African context), as well as transatlantic relations linking Latin America and Europe, Asia and Africa, and more.

> [The Fund] created a community where we're all clear that environmental justice should center on global majority. This is the kind of thinking big donors are not necessarily tuned into, or the learning process is very slow. The value of the Catalyst Fund is shifting that [...].
>
> - Catalyst Fund Grantee

These geographies reflect the Catalyst Fund's expansive and intersectional reach, connecting local struggles and innovations to regional and global conversations on digital rights and climate justice. Moreover, the Fund shows a clear focus on global majority realities over industry-driven technical solutions.

Recommendations

The topics, geographies and theories of change that emerge from the cohort are varied. Taken together, they show the importance of resourcing research and collective organising on **issues of structural importance**, in **geographies of strategic interest** and within **theories of change fit for specific contexts** and its stakeholders.

The new geopolitical reality re-affirms the perceived role of technology as the sole means of securing political and economic leadership in the global arena. **AI in particular** is seen as a technology that can both advance the **military capacity of state actors**, **the so-called energy transition, and the economic security of markets**. Nevertheless, the harmful impact of AI on climate, environment and people is only exacerbated. The resourcing, design, development, deployment, recycling of emerging technologies has implications for environmental justice and those in the frontline of environmental harms.

Understanding the stakes of the geopolitical "AI race" and the way it exacerbates harm on people and the planet is an urgent and critical strategic choice. Philanthropic actors are (still) in a position to make this choice.

As such, funders must continue **dispelling the tech / AI - hype**, especially mobilising peers in the **climate funding space**. Funders must instead redistribute money away from technosolutionist paradigms and diverted towards projects that explore the full lifecycle of AI, as well as the infrastructure needed to power it, and grounded solutions to address the changing planet.

Funding can be diverted towards projects that explore the full lifecycle of AI, as well as the infrastructure needed to power it.

Examples include **collective action for data centers resistance** (e.g. legal action, storytelling and grassroots bridge-building in areas already depleted of water etc), but also furthering **research and mobilisation around critical minerals explorations** (e.g. exploring bridge-building with anti-mining groups, sites of subsea cables expansion, workers organising in order to take legal action against deep sea mining). **Lithium extraction in Latin America's** "lithium triangle" and **new sites of extraction in Serbia, Portugal, Germany, Spain and France** for resourcing green and military technologies in the Global North is another area where further research is needed. The opacity of the **semiconductor industry invites resourcing of independent networks of research**.

When it comes to the **geographic scoping of funding strategies**, resources must be directed in a way that acknowledges how local / regional people speak about the **interrelation of territories** (e.g. In Latin America, geographies should mention Andes or the Amazon regions rather than specific countries.). Focus should remain on Global Majority spaces, key actors in a new emerging BRICS dynamics (e.g. Brazil), and refer to local realities. Resourcing strategies must connect local struggles between them, trans-regionally and trans-nationally, but also connect local realities to "big picture" global decisional forums.

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When it comes to the tactics used to enact change, continuing **funding advocacy, legal and technical research and capacity-building** projects is critical. Moreover, the cohort showed the importance of funding **translations** (storytelling, linguistic translations, communications), and opportunities for **bridge-building** such as participation in cross-sector, intergenerational, transnational forums.

03.2
Community-centric by design

The Catalyst Fund's approach to both its scoping and grant monitoring processes represents a notable experiment in equitable funding practice. It sought not only to distribute limited resources but also to cultivate a community of practice grounded in trust, reciprocity, and long-term sustainability. Through a participatory scoping process and a responsive monitoring framework, the Fund demonstrated how funders can **center communities and grantees as co-creators** rather than mere recipients of support.

Scoping

The Catalyst Fund's scoping phase was deliberately designed to embed the community at its core. The process began with the "pre-catalyst event," where prospective participants were not passive observers but active co-facilitators and collaborators. This early stage of engagement exemplified a methodology of trust. Participants were invited to shape discussions, identify priorities, and explore intersections across their work. Rather than imposing a top-down agenda, the Fund enabled participants to co-curate themes and relationships that would inform subsequent funding decisions.

Importantly, the Fund's decision to create a "**simple initial application**" process reflected an intentional departure from the bureaucratic barriers that often exclude smaller or emerging actors. This approach was both pragmatic and principled: it recognized the labour already invested by participants and ensured that the benefits of funding remained within the community that helped shape its direction. The scoping process also aimed to address structural inequities in global funding flows. The Catalyst Fund resisted becoming a permanent intermediary—a "Global North entity" deciding resource allocation on behalf of others. Instead, it sought to move money quickly and directly to those already doing relevant work, helping them build prototypes, formalize collaborations, or create organizational structures. This trust-based funding approach is intended as a stepping stone for grantees to later connect directly with larger funders.

Still, there was some reflection within the team about whether this model risked creating an insular network. As participants moved through multiple roles—co-facilitators, grantees, and later reviewers—the process deepened trust but potentially limited opportunities for newcomers. Yet, this continuity also produced tangible results: a coherent body of evidence and shared learning that funders could reference, thus "mainstreaming" emerging issues that had previously been marginal. Its reliance on existing networks meant that certain regions—particularly in Africa—were underrepresented in the final reviewed pool of applicants. This is possibly due to linguistic choices or terminology that didn't resonate such as "de-growth" or "net-zero computing", a focus on technology over land-based issues such as food sovereignty and extractive mining which connects to long-term social movements in the region.

As the scoping phase was completed, with the help of its community, the Catalyst Fund acknowledged that the political environment was in a continuous transformation. For this reason, some funds have been set aside, in order to be allocated in a responsive way - to emerging issues in the coming months. In this way, the Fund developed an agile response mechanism, rooted in a changing reality and designed for uncertainty. 4 projects were supported outside the initial scoping:

- Le nuage était sous nos pieds - Research-action investigations on digital infrastructures and militarisation
- Lori Regattieri - AI and Climate Change: The Global South Facing the New Geopolitics of Innovation

- Zbor - (Plenary Assembly) For Miners, Land, And Water in Bosnia
- Digital Futures Lab - Landscape research on Data Center development, narratives and policy directions in India

Grant Monitoring

Once projects were underway, the Catalyst Fund's monitoring practices reflected an unusual degree of flexibility and responsiveness to grantee contexts. The Fund recognized that its grantees varied widely—from large well-funded organizations like EDRi and Friends of the Earth Europe, to collectives and independent creators such as Rubén Solis, Camila Nobrega, and Sursiendo. Rather than applying a uniform reporting template, the Fund differentiated its support based on the scale and nature of the work.

For individuals or small community-based groups, the Fund offered adaptive guidance and space for experimentation. Many grantees entered the program with ideas that evolved significantly during implementation—**some shifted thematic focus, others changed mediums or methodologies**. This flexibility allowed grantees to stay true to their community needs and capacities, rather than being constrained by rigid deliverables. For example, one grantee realized that producing a film was less feasible than creating a zine that documented local collaborations; another used the grant to deepen existing relationships rather than expand geographically. The Fund recognized that such organic evolution was itself a form of success, demonstrating learning and responsiveness.

For larger organizations, flexibility took a different form. These entities often required **additional capacity rather than conceptual guidance**—such as funds to hire consultants or technical staff. The Fund's monitoring approach was therefore differentiated not by control, but by accompaniment: meeting grantees where they were, understanding their specific institutional constraints, and supporting both process and output.

The Fund acted as what one manager called a "**sleeper agent**," quietly building the intellectual and relational infrastructure for a field to mature.

The results of this approach were significant. Several grantees used the initial Catalyst Fund support to prototype ideas that later attracted more substantial funding. For example, one grantee's artistic-analytical project evolved into a published book and interactive website, supported by new partners. Others built technical collaborations or formalized organizational structures that strengthened their future work. These outcomes were not measured solely in deliverables but in the sustainability of relationships, ideas, and infrastructures that continued beyond the grant cycle.

Recommendations

Future calls would therefore need to **refine language, broaden partnerships with regional organizations**, and establish mechanisms to **connect unfunded applicants with other potential funders.**

In reflecting on its journey, the Catalyst Fund demonstrates how funding can function as a catalyst not only for projects but for community formation, knowledge production, and equitable participation. By embedding trust at every stage—from scoping to monitoring—it transformed the **funding relationship into a collaborative process of mutual learning and shared purpose**. Other funders can adapt this approach as a way of bridging the gap between funding strategies and realities on the ground.

In this sense, funding strategies should be inherently flexible towards recipients' implementation reality, account for the organisational / individual status of the grantee and factor in unforeseen hurdles on the way.

By focusing on assisting grantees in the process of their projects and accounting for their needs, funders can achieve **long-term outcomes beyond the projects' initial expected impact**. Therefore, resourcing must account for collaborative and rewarding scoping mechanisms, and supportive monitoring practices that address the grantees' needs.

03.3
Implementing the fund to build relationships

The Catalyst Fund, and broader coalition building work, has played a transformative role in shaping how people and organisations from diverse backgrounds come together, build relationships, and collaborate across differences. Beyond its financial contribution, the Fund has acted as a **convenor, connector, and trust-builder**, creating the conditions for meaningful exchange among grantees and between grantees and broader movements. Its value lies not only in what it funds, but in **how it brings people together**: encouraging coordination, collective reflection, and shared learning among actors who might otherwise operate in isolation.

At its core, the Catalyst Fund recognised that some of the most pressing challenges of our time cannot be solved within disciplinary silos or national boundaries. **The programme deliberately sought to convene individuals and organisations from radically different worlds**. We brought together both theorists and grassroots organisers, both technologists and policy advocates, both legal practitioners and community leaders directly affected by systemic violence.

This deliberate diversity also brought friction; tensions and misunderstandings were, at times, inevitable. Some examples are discussed below. Yet, rather than seeing these moments of tension as failures, the Fund's programme managers understood them as a necessary part of the process, a sign that people were engaging deeply and grappling with complex realities together.

Navigating Difference: Trusting the Process

Bringing together actors with vastly different experiences and political analyses was never going to be straightforward. Some participants came from deeply theoretical or policy-oriented spaces, while others worked directly with communities affected by violence, displacement, or environmental degradation. Some approached issues through a technological lens, focusing on infrastructure, protocols, or efficiency, while others foregrounded justice, lived experience, or decolonial analysis. These contrasts often surfaced in conversations about language, methodology, and values.

For instance, discussions around concepts like **“de-growth” or “transition”** highlighted how **language can embody cultural and political assumptions**. In Global Majority contexts, these terms did not need articulation; they reflected everyday realities rather than abstract theories. Similarly, when European actors spoke of “green transition,” they sometimes overlooked how communities in the Global Majority countries have long practiced forms of environmental stewardship. These frictions illuminated the deeper layers of power and history that shape how people understand progress, technology, and justice.

Rather than suppressing these differences, the Catalyst Fund’s facilitators encouraged participants to **trust both the people and the process**. The goal was not to achieve superficial harmony, but to cultivate a deeper kind of alignment, one that could hold disagreement without fragmentation. In this sense, the Fund operated not merely as a donor but as a **relationship catalyst**, creating the **conditions for dialogue across geography, theory of change, skills and expertise / discipline**.

From Loose Networks to Organised Collaboration

One of the most significant achievements of the Catalyst Fund has been its ability to move loosely connected individuals and groups into more organised, coordinated relationships. Before the Fund’s intervention, many of these actors functioned informally, driven by shared concerns but lacking the structures or opportunities to connect meaningfully. The Fund’s support gave this constellation of actors a formal framework within which to collaborate, not as a rigid institution, but as a living network capable of evolving organically. Applauding the grant’s comfort with a place-based approach to solutions, a grantee shares the way this philosophy allows from bridge - building.

> [the grant] enables the Amazonian organizations to position themselves in the digital rights and environmental justice community as people who are thinking about their own territoriality and people who are thinking about their own solutions.
>
> - Catalyst Fund Grantee

In practice, this meant creating spaces where people could meet as equals, learn from one another, and explore the overlaps in their work. The programme's approach recognised that **relationships precede strategy**. Trust, empathy, and shared understanding had to be cultivated before collective action could emerge. **Over time, these relationships became the foundation for coordinated advocacy, joint statements, and shared campaigns**.

Taking Risks to Broaden the Room

A distinctive feature of the Catalyst Fund's approach was its willingness to take risks. Instead of limiting invitations to established or "safe" organisations, the Fund made a conscious decision to include individuals and groups that were new or less visible within mainstream networks. Some were recommended through informal channels, while others represented emerging or unconventional movements. This openness enriched the cohort, bringing in fresh perspectives and challenging established assumptions. Commenting on the value of the fund bringing in a diversity of grantees, another fellow grantee mentions that

> [the awardees diversity] is good effort to show how one can take a diverse angle to address harmful impacts, and the diverse approach you can take to analyze and address issues"

Of course, this inclusivity also generated tension. Questions arose about where to draw **boundaries** and how to manage **divergent political perspectives**. Yet, these challenges were integral to the Fund's experiment in pluralism and collective governance. By **refusing to sanitise or simplify the space**, the programme allowed participants to confront the real complexity of building solidarity across differences.

The Fund's political stance also played a role in shaping these dynamics. It refused to adopt an ambivalent position toward technology, recognising its dual potential for empowerment and harm. In doing so, **the Fund distanced itself from spaces dominated by techno-solutionism or greenwashing agendas**, such as those promoting carbon credits or corporate "climate tech." Instead, it grounded its work in political clarity and ethical commitment, prioritising justice and accountability over neutrality.

A new report **“AI and Climate Change: The Global South Facing the New Geopolitics of Innovation“** authored by Green Screen Strategic Advisor Lori Ragattieri confirms this approach, and argues for multilateral, pluriversal, and multisectoral approaches to digital infrastructure and industrial policy.

Context-Specific Learning and Knowledge Exchange

The Catalyst Fund also played a crucial role in facilitating **context-specific learning**, particularly in “hot zones” such as Brazil, Chile, and Mexico. Through case studies examining the intersections of agroindustry, energy policy, and technology, grantees were able to surface insights that challenged Eurocentric narratives. These projects revealed that solutions and tactics developed in the Global North cannot simply transfer beyond territories and are often not suited for Global Majority contexts, where socio-political realities differ profoundly.

Importantly, these learnings did not remain isolated. The Fund encouraged **knowledge exchange** between regions, enabling European allies, for instance, to better understand the dynamics in Latin America before intervening or forming partnerships. This kind of cross-contextual dialogue not only enriched advocacy strategies but also deepened mutual respect and solidarity.

Cultivating a Mycelial Network of Trust

Perhaps the most profound impact of the Catalyst Fund has been in movement-building, nurturing a network that operates less like a hierarchy and more like a **mycelium**: interconnected, adaptive, and trust-based. **This network structure** allowed information and resources to flow organically among participants. When urgent moments arose (e.g. a joint statement before the **AI Action Summit**) the pre-existing trust among grantees enabled rapid, coordinated action. Similarly, our flexibility allowed for timely research[1] to feed into existing debates and for Green Screen to support indigenous public campaigns and clear calls to action[2].

> “before [the Catalyst Fund] I felt so alone in trying to explore these intersections, there weren’t many people thinking about environmental racism or making the connections to extractive capitalism”
>
> - Catalyst fund grantee

Such collaboration extended beyond formal projects. Participants shared legal arguments, campaign strategies, and capacity-building resources. **Organisations** like European Digital Rights - EDRi, for example, created learning and coordination spaces, while **individual**

1 greenscreen.network/en/blog/report-ai-climate-change-global-south-geopolitics-of-innovation/

2 greenscreen.network/en/blog/cop30/

leaders (e.g. Marie Therese Png, Xiaowei Wang, members of the Decolonial Feminist Coalition of Latin American activists on Digital and Environmental Justice,) served as bridges between communities, translating ideas across academic, activist, and policy spaces. Over time, this trust-based network demonstrated that effective collective action **depends not just on shared goals, but on shared relationships.**

The “How” Over the “What”

Throughout the Catalyst Fund’s work, a recurring insight emerged: **the methodology of engagement mattered more than the specific topics addressed**. Whether the focus was on semiconductors, AI governance, misinformation, or environmental justice, the enduring impact lay in how the work was done, the processes of connecting leaders, scholars, and activists in reflective, relational ways.

By centering the “how,” the Fund modelled **a different kind of philanthropic practice**, away from fixating on a specific programmatic topic such as AI. Instead, it built a model that resists extractive or transactional approaches to funding, and invests in the social fabric that underpins sustainable change. The relationships built through the programme have continued to bear fruit long after individual grants concluded, manifesting in ongoing collaborations, solidarity actions, and shared advocacy across continents.

03 Analysis: Collective impact and emerging

Recommendations

In many ways, the Catalyst Fund's greatest achievement has been to show that **trust itself is a form of infrastructure**. Just as digital or policy infrastructures shape how societies function, relational infrastructures determine how movements grow, adapt, and endure. By prioritising relationship-building, embracing complexity, and facilitating genuine exchange among diverse actors, the Fund has helped lay the groundwork for a more connected, resilient ecosystem of change-makers. Ultimately, the Catalyst Fund demonstrates that meaningful transformation arises not from imposing uniform solutions, but from **nurturing the spaces where differences can coexist, so individuals can learn and act together**. Through invisible threads of trust and solidarity it has helped weave, it enabled its grantees to move collectively, with purpose, in pursuit of a more just and interconnected world.

Funding strategies should focus on funding established organisations but also grassroots groups, coupled with a strategic choice of geographical focus. As issues of national security increasingly become intrinsic to the debates around digital and climate, funders must also allocate funds for the development of **safety mechanisms to be put in place when convening frontline defenders, activists and researchers**. Resources can also be mobilised towards **enabling individuals with stories of lived experiences** who transcend different forums, as well as towards **participation in different community spaces but also in high - level decision-making spaces**. Through storytelling and personal connections, trust can be seeded as a foundation of further expanding the community built by the Catalyst Fund.

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Catalyst Fund Grantees Report