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# The future of HCI and Sustainability: Championing Environmental and Social Justice.

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**Abstract**

In this SIG, we propose a gathering of the *HCI and Sustainability* SIGCHI community to strategise future initiatives. This gathering is open to all attendees of CHI'18 and aims to foster an inclusive dialogue about the myriad challenges stemming from the intertwined issues of digital technology design and use with environmental and social justice. As a sustainability-focused SIGCHI community, it is our duty to remain committed to promoting environmental and social justice—a commitment that is particularly timely given the number of digitally mediated global events challenging those entwined notions of justice. In the midst of our rapidly changing and globalised context, this SIG offers space for CHI'18 attendees to strategise about the goals, directions, and initiatives of *HCI and Sustainability* community. We aim to develop draft outcomes as a seed for ongoing collaborative discussion and development of the HCI and Sustainability community for the next 2-5 years.

**Author Keywords**

sustainability; environmental and social justice; climate change; transformation

**ACM Classification Keywords**

H.5.m. [Information Interfaces and Presentation (e.g. HCI)];  
Miscellaneous

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## Introduction

As 2017 came to an end, countless news stories examined, exposed, and critiqued the socio-political and environmental effects of our digital technologies. Bitcoin's large and growing energy consumption became a viral news story [8]. Pundits debated and uncovered Facebook's increasing influence on international elections and political matters [10]. James Bridle highlighted some of the alarming trends in YouTube's child-friendly content [3]. So-called "sharing" and "gig economy" companies began facing backlashes and regulatory controls, especially in Europe (e.g. [5, 11]). Social justice issues similar to that in the "gig economy" are prevalent in parcel delivery forces where worker practices are strongly linked to carbon emissions and air quality [1].

Throughout the past decade, the *HCI and Sustainability* SIG and broader Sustainable HCI (SHCI) community have tackled challenges related to digital technologies and environmental sustainability, including across numerous SIGs and workshops (e.g. [4, 6, 7]). A number of people attend CHI because of these activities and this community—sustainability is our research focus, not a side hobby. This SIG is crucial for ensuring that there is space in SIGCHI to discuss and transform sustainability issues relating to climate change, the environment and resource consumption. This year's SIG lifts the game by bringing *HCI and Sustainability* back to its roots and invites CHI attendees to discuss how sustainability research as a whole and the community in particular should evolve in the future in order to tackle new challenges.

This SIG—coordinated and hosted by members of the *HCI and Sustainability* community<sup>12</sup>—is part of our ongoing

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<sup>1</sup><http://plone4.sigchi.org/communities/hci-sustainability/>

<sup>2</sup>Community Nomenclature. 1. *HCI and Sustainability* community refers to those active or interested in sustainable HCI, those in the *HCI*

response to the socio-political and environmental effects of digital technologies [2, 9, 12, 13]. We seek to unite members of the *HCI and Sustainability* community, as well as interested members of the broader HCI community, to strategise about our goals, directions, and initiatives.

With this SIG, our aims are to: 1) build upon our previous gatherings and recent efforts, bringing together people interested in broad notions of sustainability; 2) discuss what the community can do in the face of these growing issues; 3) discuss how the community can strengthen its international and multidisciplinary bonds, and; 4) strategise about becoming more ingrained in the fabric of SIGCHI. This SIG also provides the *HCI and Sustainability* community with an opportunity to maintain and recruit new members from the growing number of CHI attendees inspired to tackle global and societal challenges.

## Description of Activities

We see this SIG as the primary venue at CHI'18 for those interested in *HCI and Sustainability* to come together, discuss the community issues outlined in this document, and develop a road map of actions around community evolution, growth and greater SIGCHI engagement. To do this, we propose an initial introduction to *HCI and Sustainability*, and a quick round table intro of the SIG attendees, followed by a group breakout session. During the breakout session, we will generate draft documents as the basis for wider engagement beyond the attendees of the SIG. To enable participation from those who are unable to attend the SIG of CHI 18 we will host a digital forum for each topic (e.g. google drive shared document, Slack channel). Each of the following five topics will be

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*and Sustainability* SIGCHI Community and those who are subscribed to the Sustainable HCI Google Group, 2. *HCI* community refers to all HCI researchers.

championed by an author of the SIG. Groups of attendees will rotate every 10 minutes between topics.

**1. Developing a shared vision.** This discussion topic will focus on *HCI and Sustainability's* commitment to promoting environmental and social justice within SIGCHI. We will ask attendees to envision how we can more strongly link climate change and environmental sustainability with social justice and socio-political issues (e.g. racial justice, economic justice, health inequality, inclusive design) within HCI, as well as what our community can do to encourage those stronger links. This will help us to map where we see ourselves in the next 2-5 years.

**2. Methods for steering and driving discussion.** During this discussion, we will focus on how the *HCI and Sustainability* community can pursue and support activities related to social and environmental justice. We will discuss how the community can actively support workshops, SIGs, and working groups who are interested in environmental sustainability and climate change themes. We will also consider existing digital platforms for enabling debates and organising events, such as through the SHCI knowledge base<sup>3</sup> or through official ACM channels.

**3. Strategising about our institutional presence.** This discussion focuses on raising the profile of the community and its interests within the ACM SIGCHI conference. We believe this starts by discussing where our community currently is and developing a road-map for where it wants to be. We envision that in the long term sustainability-focused research at CHI will move towards a subcommittee in its own right. As such, we will discuss the requirements for a SIGCHI subcommittee and the advantages or disadvantages of having a subcommittee.

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<sup>3</sup><http://scc-shci-wiki.lancs.ac.uk/wordpress/>

**4. Stronger connections across SIGCHI.** One area that the current community sees as having potential for improvement is its involvement in SIGCHI and engagement with SIGCHI executive board. Given the age of the community we are interested in playing a more central role in SIGCHI to help engage SIGCHI in issues pertaining to environmental sustainability and social justice. We will focus on how to form stronger links with the SIGCHI executive committee to help steer environmental and social justice issues relating to SIGCHI events and digital technologies.

**5. Stronger connections beyond CHI.** Given the global nature of climate change, we will focus on how the community can become more inclusive and promote sustainability at sibling conferences and chapters (e.g. NordiCHI, OzCHI, AsianCHI, AfriCHI). We will also discuss how to better connect with related conferences (e.g. ACM LIMITS, ICT4S, ACM COMPASS) as places for subcommittee members to meet, promote and discuss *HCI and Sustainability*. Other academic disciplines—such as Environmental Media Studies, Science and Technology Studies, and Political Ecology—might also offer new communities with whom we may wish to connect.

## Expected Outcomes

We will work to develop a community road-map, outlining actions and responsibilities for and with interested community members. We will develop an initial advisory board for driving and steering the community, ensuring that we reach out to those who are unable to attend CHI 2018. We would also aim produce an *interactions* article—for its regular sustainability forum (e.g. [2])—to share our discussions, goals and actions with the breadth of the *HCI and Sustainability* community. The the outcomes of the SIG will be shared through mailing lists and community Wiki.

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