

Peer Review

Review of: "Carbon Inequality: Resolving Contradictory Results From Two Different Approaches"

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This article compares CO2 emissions per individual based on their level of wealth, regardless of their nationality (Chancel 2022, Nature Sustainability), and CO2 emissions per country, regardless of inequalities within countries (Tamburino, Cafaro, and Bravo, TCB below). As TCB show, the results are significantly different. That's the whole point of this paper, and it makes the paper interesting.

TCB have chosen to point out the weaknesses of both methods. Personally, I would have preferred them to explain the reason for the differences they found. We are in the presence of two accounting approaches that cannot be equivalent, but it is necessary to explain why they cannot be equivalent. Once these differences are explained, it is possible to say which is the most relevant accounting approach. Chancel's (2022) idea is to use individual data to calculate the distribution of national spending (national consumption + national investment + national public spending + net exports) between groups of individuals with different wealth. To make this calculation, Chancel (2022) chooses a very questionable assumption: he attributes the emissions generated by national investment to the private owners of these investments, i.e., to the shareholders of the means of production, rather than to the consumers of the goods and services produced by these investments. It is the same type of assumption when CO2 emissions from goods produced by China and consumed by Western residents are attributed to China. Highly debatable. Without Western demand, China would not export as much and would therefore not generate as many CO2 emissions.

Consumption and production are two sides of the same coin. Both producers and consumers are responsible for CO2 emissions.

Suggestion to TCB: add a third distribution to Figure 1: CO2 emissions per individual from consumption data only. In the end, all that is produced is consumed.

Declarations

Potential competing interests: No potential competing interests to declare.