Developments in technology cloud our judgement from time to time. Excitement and eagerness are byproducts of such advances, and many jump the gun, so to speak. With so many new devices it can be hard to resist applying them to the real world right away. Thus, technology is not always applied in a fashion that provides the best results. The potential is inarguably there, however – it is the potential that brings about impatience in applying the new technology.

Joshua Blumenstock speaks on the abovementioned impatience in his article, “Don’t forget people in the use of dig data for development.” To summarize, a sizable proportion of data scientists focused on international development wish to do completely out with the old and in with the new. But especially when trying to map regions within a country based upon wealth, for example, the poor go underrepresented in these new, state-of-the-art methods. Regions in poverty are less likely to have the internet access needed in order to be included in studies. When the goal is to push development in third world countries, we cannot think as citizens of first world countries. We are accustomed to seeing everyone with smartphones and high-speed internet. That is not the case in the areas suffering from poverty in developing nations. And those are the areas we want to analyze and aid. The way forward for human development with data science is a balance between the new and the old.

This brings me to a quote from a fellow classmate, Kayla Seggelke: “In lieu of such drastic potential for promoting applications yet demoralizing hinderances, the balancing act can become difficult.” The balancing act is indeed difficult, and it is easy to criticize the current balance from the outside looking in. Data scientists are ultimately moving in the right direction when it comes to human development, however their innovative ideas are coming at a quicker pace than the rest of the world is ready for. The timetables for technological advance and mass distribution must be in alignment to do out with the old completely.

A couple other classmates of mine, Anna Raymond and Nira Nair, have spoken on the meaningfulness of good intent and transparency, respectively, regarding the future of human development with data science. Raymond claims good intent is not enough when handling problems that directly impact one’s day-to-day life. Good intent does not hold meaning if harm is done to those we wish to help. Nair envisions a world where greater transparency allows data scientists to fulfill their dreams of processing and comprehending big data. As with anything, there will be less miscommunications with more transparency between all the parties involved.

Human development with data science must be approached deliberately. Our instinct is to run fast with our new technologies. But, as highlighted by Blumenstock and my classmates, many more issues arise if we do not take the time to ensure that our ideas stem from more than merely good intent.