



THEME WORK

SUB-THEME:

TECHNIQUE, TECHNOLOGY AND MANAGEMENT

TITLE OF WORKSHOP

**WS 35. Interdependencies of Technology and
Degrowth — Some Cultural Foundations**



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Interdependencies of Technology and Degrowth — Some Cultural Foundations,

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ABSTRACT

Work, economy and growth nowadays are fundamentally linked to technology, technological progress and the handling of our world by and through technology. If we are talking about degrowth as a passage of civilization we have to keep in mind that our (modern/Western) civilizations are technological ones: At present, we all are living in a world which is strongly formed and deeply affected by technology. Technology is dominating the global forms and ways of production. But how will production beyond post-Fordism and the industrial society look like: a return to handicraft with a new spiritual awareness or a cultivated and restrained high-tech-production by machines satisfying our basic needs? Technology nowadays can be seen as an expression par excellence of a “logic of quantitative multiplication” and a main key to the “yoke of labor”. So when talking about work and degrowth, we have to deal with technology, and moreover a shift to degrowth implies a fundamental shift in understanding, dealing, handling and developing technology.

In my paper I want to take a closer look at the cultural conditions of technology and their interdependencies with degrowth by providing input from the perspective of the philosophy of technology and cultural theory. An understanding of what is culturally inscribed in and transported by technology opens doors for discussion and agreement and for (slowly) changing the deeply rooted attitudes towards and carried by technology, and thus may help designing technology that meets the needs of a degrowth society.

Degrowth implies a different way or alternative ways of dealing with nature and consequently technology is involved and affected, too. This brings us to technology as a medium: technology as an intermediary between us and

our (natural/cultural) surrounding. While we are more and more recognizing and understanding our world by technology, we are increasingly modifying and designing it via technology. In addition, as an intermediary technology separates us from nature, fellow men, etc. Technology expedites alienation. How does this fit in with the ideas of “mutual, creative and loving partnership” in division of labor and with the aim of improving the “conditions of life on this planet”? Technology and degrowth: In general and especially from a historic perspective,



growth, wealth and civilization are directly linked to technology and technological innovation. What about degrowth? Is this vision a fundamental shift in human history — or is it inhumane? Where will the transition to degrowth lead to: a world with less or no technology, to other technologies, to the same or similar technologies like today but with other attitudes, concepts, significance, and importance in our (everyday) live?

Here my understanding of “degrowth” is closely linked to the concept and political vision of sustainable development (cf. Jonas 1986; Hauff 1987; Kopfmüller et al. 2001; Bundesregierung 2002; Ott/Döring 2004; UN 2012) and, furthermore, to the sufficiency strategy — the culturally most scaring and revolutionary point of sustainability.

Giving inputs from cultural theory and the philosophy of technology and asking questions as mentioned above shall prepare the ground for discussion of various interdependencies of technology and degrowth at the workshop. This contribution is intended to present some ideas that may stimulate discussion and understanding of visions and examples of technology (or non-technology) in a degrowth society, which hopefully will be presented at the workshop more thoroughly.

Eco-innovation as a Development Tool: Evidence from Latin America and Asia by Mario Pansera.
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ABSTRACT

In the near future the access to basic needs in a world of 7 billion people will be strongly influenced by the 80% of humanity living in the so-called ‘developing world’. Their consumption patterns and their approach to sustainability will undoubtedly reshape the scenario of global economy. The understanding of the evolution of eco-innovation in the South of the world is crucial to achieve a global sustainability. In the growing literature about eco-innovation scant empirical work is dedicated to explore the potential of the lowest levels of social pyramid. This paper attempts to provide useful insights on innovation and development debate with a particular attention to eco-innovation creation, transfer and diffusion at the “Bottom of the Pyramid (BoP)”. The aim is to begin to dismantle the idea that “poor are too poor to eco-innovate”. The fascinating point in such a debate is whether or not emerging countries will be



able to trigger a change of paradigm on a global basis pioneering alternative development models. In order to understand the implications of De-Growth thinking on a global scale it is crucial to understand how emerging economies are dealing with sustainability and especially with eco-innovation. The study illustrates, through the analysis of cases in Asia and South America that eco-innovation occurs at different levels at BoP by exploiting local potential, traditional knowledge and international connections. Moreover the cases suggest that new business models based on frugal innovation and new policy to foster the grassroots level might be relevant in time of crisis also for developed countries.

Rethinking development under conditions of uncertainty: The case of EU chemicals management,
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ABSTRACT (Paper not presented)

In the near future the access to basic needs in a world of 7 billion people will be strongly influenced by the 80% of humanity living in the so-called 'developing world'. Their consumption patterns and their approach to sustainability will undoubtedly reshape the scenario of global economy. The understanding of the evolution of eco-innovation in the South of the world is crucial to achieve a global sustainability. In the growing literature about eco-innovation scant empirical work is dedicated to explore the potential of the lowest levels of social pyramid. This paper attempts to provide useful insights on innovation and development debate with a particular attention to eco-innovation creation, transfer and diffusion at the "Bottom of the Pyramid (BoP)". The aim is to begin to dismantle the idea that "poor are too poor to eco-innovate". The fascinating point in such a debate is whether or not emerging countries will be able to trigger a change of paradigm on a global basis pioneering alternative development models. In order to understand the implications of De-Growth thinking on a global scale it is crucial to understand how emerging economies are dealing with sustainability and especially with eco-innovation. The study illustrates, through the analysis of cases in Asia and South America that eco-innovation occurs at different levels at BoP by exploiting local potential, traditional knowledge and international connections. Moreover the cases suggest that new business models based on frugal innovation and new policy to foster the grassroots level might be relevant in time of crisis also for developed countries.



TACKLED ISSUES

Technology versus Culture (“Music”)

- cultural roots of technology
- collective attitudes implemented through technology
- culture sensible development of technology
- bottom up technical innovation in the global south
- embeddedness in local context of eco-innovation
- selection future de growth and sustainability of technologies within this contest
- shift from technological to actors (state, NGOs, ..)
- shift transition management

GIVEN ANSWERS

Technology Versus art? It is also an academic matter, arts are slower but important for our inner growth

Technology vs culture: just an European project? No it isn't

We have to think all the reasons behind all kinds of innovation, in the future we need a co-working society supported by universities research groups and governments.

UNANSWERED QUESTIONS, COMMENTS, MESSAGES

Statement to think about Technological development should be: participatory, de-coupled from current economic system, re-usable, “ hacking of technology decentralized, assessed

What role can participation play in the shift? Culture - technology — sustainability?

Are these frugal technological innovation patented?

Is “need” the basic motive for innovation?

How can we assess/distinguish between useful, functioning, good technology or innovation and the rest? What are the attributes?

Concept of responsibility in technology. Responsibility of who “work”, “use”, “act”, “ research”, “develop technology”

Shall we understand technology as “neutral” in respect to growth/de growth debate? Is the technology paradigm that matter?



How is scaling up frugal innovations? Does market represent the best way to do that?

How long could and should a degrowth society test a new product or idea before put it in action?

Technology Research and Degrowth often takes place in private companies. How should this be tackled (especially with regard to PR issues) in order to overcome the current separation between culture and technology (or humans and nature)?

Doesn't green leapfrogging make a North-South dialogue mandatory, how should the North approach this?

How could technology help to improve the sense of membership?

Technology ignorance creates social divisions. How the knowledge of technology could arise a more democratic and horizontal society?

Human being is losing his sensibility, because he uses and needs technology always more, how can we preserve our senses and our sensibility according to a new technological society?

If the aim is to reduce material and energetic flows, shouldn't we focus on decreasing such indicators, instead of economic indicators as GDP?

If GDP is a wrong indicator, is degrowth a wrong objective?

Is the "contradiction" between technology and culture rooted in the view of the science in our culture? Does the distinction between social and natural science a cause of dominant technological paradigm?