DE-GROWTH, PRO WHAT?

Backcasting a sustainable society without economic growth

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My thesis

- Tentative title: Alternative futures of a society without economic growth
- Inspiration from my master’s thesis (Haapanen 2013, Haapanen and Tapio 2016)
  - Critics of growth describe clearly what they oppose, but what do they promote?
- Creating multiple scenarios by backcasting
- Interviews and a Delphi study to gather data
- 2016-2019
- Currently under work:
  - Questions, not answers!
  - Literature review
Basic concepts and methods of futures studies

- **Image of future** (see e.g. Rubin and Linturi 2001): describes a static state of future
  - Futures table (Seppälä 2013 [1993])

- **Scenario** (see e.g. Durance and Godet 2010): describes a pathway between present and a future state
  - Forecasting: from present to future
  - Backcasting (Robinson 1982, 1990): from future to present
    - normative
    - especially suitable when dominant trends are problematic
Materials

- First step in backcasting is to determine the preferred future end-state.
- What kind of a future does growth critique promote?
- A literature review:
  - Buen vivir (9)
  - Degrowth (13)
  - Philosophy of sufficiency economy (11)
  - Steady-state (11)
  - Transition movement (8)
A common vision?

- Common core:
  - Ending nature-human divide
  - Reinventing economy/economics
  - Holistic perspective on well-being
  - Openness to variation

- Equality, democracy, technology?

- Post-growth, post-economism, post-consumerism, post-development, post-westernisation…
  - different aspects of the same problem?

- The question whether all post-growth movements should unite forces globally was not discussed in the material. What are the pros and cons?
Ulvila & Pasanen (2009):
Class Perspective on Sustainability of Cultures
3 phases of transition

• From the perspective of overconsuming class:
  • Kerschner (2010): degrowth + steady-state
  • Daly (according to O’Neill 2015): ”we cannot go into reverse without first coming to a stop”
    ‡ 3 phases: 1) stop, 2) degrowth, 3) steady-state

• From the perspective of struggling class:
  • 1) build to enable, 2) towards good life, 3) steady-state

• From the perspective of sustainable class:
  • steady-state in 3 different situations
Common challenges 1/3

- Investments in eco-efficient technology are vital (although not sufficient alone)
Common challenges 2/3

- Smooth transition or crisis?
  - Multiple critical periods within a short timeframe
  - Society and economy form a complex network of specialized institutions.
  - Synchronous or asynchronous alteration of nodes?
- Rules of the game change 3 times. How to keep well-being, livelihoods and investments in eco-efficiency stable?
Common challenges 3/3

- How to scale up?
  - What would trigger the general public to change its values and mind-set?
  - How many compromises could or should be made?
    - “the mud of real life politics” (Gómez-Baggethun 2015)
    - risk of co-optation or becoming watered-down
Five scenario sketches

• Triggering effect as a starting point for scenario construction
1) DIY Social Policy
   • People lose their trust in democratic institutions
2) Free Time Society
   • Robotisation endangers livelihoods and meaningfulness of working life
3) Work-place Revolution
   • A financial crisis leads citizens to question current economic policies and business practices
4) New Consciousness
   • Change of values and mindsets due to overwhelming cognitive dissonance
5) Prosumer Society
   • Escalating ecological crisis
THANK YOU!

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References of the presentation:


References of the presentation:


References of the literature review

**Buen vivir:**


References of the literature review

Buen vivir (continued):

Degrowth:
Garcia, E. (2012). Degrowth, the past, the future, and the human nature. Futures, 44(6), 546-552. doi:http://dx.doi.org/10.1016/j.futures.2012.03.015
References of the literature review

Degrowth (continued):

Philosophy of Sufficiency Economy:
References of the literature review

Philosophy of Sufficiency Economy (continued):


References of the literature review

Philosophy of Sufficiency Economy (continued):


Steady-state:
References of the literature review

**Steady-state (continued):**


References of the literature review

Steady-state (continued):


Transition movement:


References of the literature review

Transition movement (continued):

