

# GAP: CONSUMPTION

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Degrowth Conference Leipzig 2014

Summary of Stiring Papers & Discussion

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# Outlook

- **Stiring Questions** by Dietmar Scholz
- **Where does responsibility begin and end?** by Anke Schaffartzik (Institute of Social Ecology (SEC), Alpen-Adria University, Vienna, Austria)
- **Empowering the Willing – Practicing the Transformatio** by Ben Toussaint & Christiane Schwausch
- **Self-providing as a motor for Degrowth** by Dieter Haselbach / Corinna Vosse
  - Questions for the GAPm
- Summary of discussion topics:
  - Definition of consumption
  - PR and information overload
  - quotes

# Stiring Questions by Dietmar Scholz

Mayor consideration on quality (tolerable impact) and quantity ( footprint) of consumption:

1. *To whom should we attribute or allocate the responsibility for environmental and social impacts which are caused by the production and consumption of a given good?*
2. *What criteria should be applied for the allocation of responsibility? (e.g. revenue as the author asked? State level? Individual consumer? Importing country?)*
3. *How can the parties/stakeholders involved into the production-consumption chain be brought to one table? How can the differing interests of the stakeholders be negotiated?*
4. *Can the allocation of responsibilities effectively reduce the systemic forces to grow and if so, how?*

# Where does responsibility begin and end? by Anke Schaffartzik

- Environmental accounting of upstream flows: problem if a good bio-tomato from abroad is better or worse than a non-organic regional one. By science answered with accounting methodology.
- But: hidden activities e.g. logging in other countries, Kuznet curve (?), displacement activities (?), strict environmental legislation makes production leave
- Should a country be held responsible for all of the direct and indirect impacts associated with its final consumption?
- ...
- Common but shared responsibilities! Metrics of upstream requirements

# Empowering the Willing – Practicing the Transformation by Toussaint & Schwausch

- Many people want a change. Anyway Reality shows that the economic framework essentially remains unchanged and the collective as well as the individual resource consumption is increasing steadily at a high rate.
- Thus, the will alone does not provide a person with the prerequisites required.
- To break with a habit is not an easy task; what is more, the acquirement of alternative patterns of behavior often requires the acquisition of new skills.
- On top of that, human behavior is always to a certain extent determined by **social, economic and psychological constraints** on the individual.
- Guidelines for a good life, training programs to develop habits, mainstreaming: making people come to gather share together new lifestyle.

# Self-providing as a motor for Degrowth by Dieter Haselbach / Corinna Vosse

- Organising consumption mainly via capitalist markets with long value chains results in inefficient use of resources and forces growth.
- The more people rely on monetary exchange and industrial products, the less they know about self-providing.
- Who selfprovides makes an experience which satisfies needs and will lead to more sustainable ways of consumption.
- Impact: micro: all I have will slightly change, meso: Economy around me makes me a b2b partner, and I change to the role of producer, which influences a lot on my consumption! Macro: less demand, but more divers demand, leading to more local markets (why????) only if scaled with impact (how???)
- Questions:

# Self-providing as a motor for Degrowth by Dieter Haselbach / Corinna Vosse Questions:

- How to create opportunity and infrastructure for self-providing and for sharing
- knowledge and experience in society at large?
- How to cultivate networks to support, grow and diffuse such practices and needed structures?
- How to scale these practices and structures?
- The underlying goal of our proposal is to formulate well grounded policy recommendations as well as to devise concrete tools for a diffusion of self-providing as part of production and consumption in a post growth society.

# Discussion: What is Consumption?

- . Haselbach et al. begin very broad: “*Consumption* we define as the bundle of social practices exercised in order to provide the desired way of living.”
- “consumption” is when money or anything in return is involved. In other cases, let’s talk about eating, drinking, producing, self-providing, self-sufficiency .
- Neoclassical: only a final purchase of goods and services
- ...



# PR and information overload

- There's a distinction between "i want this" and "i need this". Without a shadow of a doubt. [...] We might like to believe that our needs and actions are not influenced by media and marketing, but marketing is a science...
- But I do feel that the ability to actually go from realizing there's a problem to taking some positive remedial/preventive action is greatly influenced by the sensory inputs we are constantly bombarded with these days.
- Do we have to give up the idea of a possibility to change (our? our neighbour's? the society's?) consumption behaviour, since we've lost our ability to think and decide intentionally?
- But in this age of 24\*7 connectedness and social media immersion, how much liberty do we still have over our thoughts and decisions ?
- How to roll back on micro and on macro level?

# Quote

- I am not demanding people to break their habits and patterns, but I remind them of what they really need, I remind them to **enjoy life. And you cannot do this with money** What about money as the provision of liberty spending it, which somehow brings freedom?
- obstacles must be dismantled in order to get a sufficient number of people who are willing to change to actually implement the transition towards a sustainable resource friendly lifestyle... provide them with helpful incentives, guidance and support. (Toussaint et al.)
- Thanks for listening!!!