

Learning from H. Simon and W. Wenders

growth mania and environmental degradation as a product of 'fast' information

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Growth mania and environmental degradation as a product of 'fast' information:
 learning from H. Simon and W. Wenders

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ABSTRACT

Some important reasons can be alleged to justify growth as a policy goal. Growth mania is however less justified. As Georgescu Roegen emphasised, in spite of our addiction to the comfort of the exosomatic energy and instruments, there is room for reducing dissipation of the rich economies. This would both improve the quality of natural environment, thereby enhancing our welfare, and help justice, both at intra- and inter-generational level.

In traditional rational choice terms, the persistence of growth-mania can be easily conceptualised as stemming from unregulated greediness in the presence of market failures (free-riding, free appropriation of open access resources ...). A complementary explanation rests on how people actually choose. The 1978 Nobel Prize for economics Herbert Simon, who dedicated his life to the study of decision making, highlighted that both time and attention are needed to process information. Similarly, the film director Wim Wenders argued against crowded and quick scenes which provide an information overload that the spectator is unable to process.

This paper highlights the similarity between the ideas of Simon and Wenders. Their contributions are used to offer an explanation to growth-mania and environmental degradation: the quick speed of our life together with the information overload we are exposed to, make us scarcely aware of the consequences of our life-styles. 'Fast information' becomes then an obstacle for "using reason and science for the exploration of goals and as a basis for judgements as to the kind and direction of action to be followed" (Kapp 1965).

The act of seeing



idea!

I know because I saw



Wim Wenders

distension of the mind

vast landscapes



mobility of the seeing

slow and bare scenes

GROWTHMANIA, WHY?

resources appropriation

AND / OR

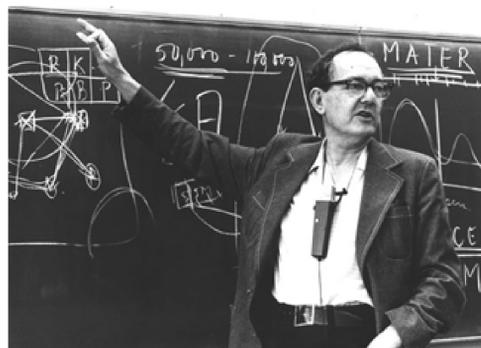
WRONG decision making?

BUSY and FAST life,

⇒ fast decision making & UNAWARENESS !!!

The act of thinking/deciding

Herbert Simon



too much information

scarcity of attention

satisficing



CONCLUSIONS

'Fast information' becomes an obstacle for "using reason and science for the exploration of goals and as a basis for judgements as to the kind and direction of action to be followed" (Kapp 1965)