

# Technological Iatrogenesis (TI)

## Progress is perhaps largely ... behind us!

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**L**ike any progress, technological progress also implies having a direction, from "a to b(etter)", to a utopian worthwhile. Slowly but surely the idea comes to my mind that such a heavenly state can indeed be better dreamed outside this world than in it. In our world, "progress" has become the business model of an unstoppable global economy that promises infinite progress through finite resources. That sounds unreal and heavenly, and therefore fits seamlessly into various, in the meanwhile more and more abandoned, religions. But what are we aiming for with our technological "belief in progress"? What does our technological heaven look like?

No matter how hard I try, my imagination does not go beyond WALL-E. A deserted world, because all sources have become exhausted and life became increasingly impossible. Consequently we live our artificial lives in outer space, where machines have taken over lots of human functions, just because it was possible and was once part of economic progress (business models). Back to earth. What is missing is serious political and scientific interest which consider technologies on their possibilities and threats for both the present and the future. In other words, we miss political and scientific interest in technological "iatrogenesis" (TI).

Iatrogenesis is the doctrine that deals with the harmful effects of medical treatment. A substance that, for example, tackles the pathogen may also weaken the body. If it weakens the body and does not address the pathogen sufficiently, it may well be that the resistance of the body itself becomes insufficient precisely because of the treatment, with all conceivable consequences. Our technological world is full of these kinds of dilemmas: if you tackle something, do it firmly, so that you have the maximum chance of success. If it does not work properly it might be that immediately the previous status quo starts to lag behind.

Switching to a new technology (methodology) is often not possible in a careful manner. Doing something new is often full of risks. You can't just try to fly a little bit. Either you integrate tablets in education, or you leave them (largely) at home. Either you switch to electric driving or you continue with the conventional techniques. However, while short term effects are already hard to foresee, long term effects are impossible to predict.

An important reason that there is no political and scientific interest in technological iatrogenesis (TI) is that it does not yield any money. This makes it clear that economic thinking dominates everything. On the contrary, TI (coincidentally very symbolically a reversal of IT) would dampen the economy. And that is necessary. There is no right-minded person who does not know that infinite growth from finite resources is impossible, and that therefore the economy must be tempered.

Let's face it, many wonderful things that have been invented are still waiting (crying out) for further development. Take, for example, the bike. In principle, we have had the technology to make a bicycle for at least three thousand years, but the bicycle in its current form is less than 150 years old. For the elderly and people with a disability, these days bikes can be equipped with a third wheel or an electric motor. Or take the train, after two hundred years still new possibilities can be explored in mobilizing humanity in a more sustainable manner (London-New York by train, for example).

However, on the other hand, aviation, of which we know that it has in fact crossed the line of sustainability and defensibility by far, is constantly being pushed by politics and science in the context of the belief in economic progress. Because it is fun, maybe, but mainly because we cannot dispel our economic psychosis. Time for TI! Who dares?