Abstract

Harald Katzmair, Founder and Director, FASresearch, Vienna

Disconnected Worlds – on bridging the technology gap between the local and the global scale in climate policy

The new is the domain of inventors and early adopters who are most of the time not part of existing power zones. Inventions and disruptive new ideas are born at the (semi-)periphery of networks. Watching the current stage of many new ideas in the field of energy- and climate related technologies we are witnessing the prototypical chasm between inventors and early adopters at the one side and the early majority at the other, typically manifested in a gap between local solutions at the regional scale and ignorance or active resistance at the national/global scale.

In order that inventions become actual market innovations the new has to cross the chasm from the stage of being local, peripheral, subcultural, prototypical to the stage of being adopted by opinion leaders and the early majority of existing elites and power cores. Innovation, as A. J. Schumpeter pointed out, triggers frequently a manifest power struggle between the social group representing the old status quo and the network of newcomers and challengers. By capturing more and more share of mind and share of market the newcomers weaken the established center through "sucking energy and attention from the core" (A. J. Schumpeter). That's how new power centers emerge, that´s how disruptive new ideas overcome established paradigms and the networks that reinforce those paradigms. Power centers that are disconnected from their periphery and blind towards it´s emergent ideas and technologies sooner or later will be replaced, due to lack of openness and adaptability. Hence power centers who are capable of surviving many cycles of "creative destruction" show an openness towards activities of the (semi-)periphery and are capable of integrating the new again and again.

To overcome the chasm between the early local adopters and the national/global majority is a multidimensional, complex enterprise. Obvious factors, as the perception of the amount of relative advantages, compatibility, complexity,

trialability and observability of the new solution are in resonance with much more fundamental factors, as cultural values and their deeply rooted frames in the consciousness of people (G. Lakoff). Egocentric, ethnocentric and world centric views are clashing in climate policy and are overshadowing and limiting the perception of the manifold local solutions and blocking their diffusion. A completely new approach is required to help local solutions succeed faster at the global scale: to create "bridging stories" need to be created to link the issue of climate change and existing inventions with the deeply rooted moral frames of different groups. Effective bridging and communication between the local and the global, the pioneers and the mainstream of adopters not only requires robust networking strategies, linking the periphery with the open and adaptive segments of the core, but also profound knowledge about values and frames of target groups as well as people capable to address and translate the "climate solution story". Overcoming top down technocratic-scientific approaches seems to be mandatory. Without innovation in the cognitive-cultural realm, bridging moral frames in a different way, the current deadlock in climate policy will not be changed. The concept of resilience could be a robust frame to broker between egocentric, ethnocentric and world centric views and might provide a more relaxed context for negotiations between vested interests at the local and global scale.