

From cowboy to astronaut: How can we limit the destructive force of the tech leaders' vision of competition?

The development of the tech industry, through the growth of digital equipment and services, is responsible for significant carbon emissions and environmental damage (GIEC 2023). Digital services rely on high levels of energy consumption, are predatory in the use of natural resources and generate large quantities of electronic waste. For this reason, and in order to achieve an effective ecological transition, it is essential that tech leaders commit themselves and steer their companies towards a development consistent with the challenges of sobriety.

Based on a qualitative survey, this article aims to shed light on the contradictions between the objectives of environmental issues and the ideology of American tech leaders. Interviews reveal a Darwinian vision of competition, with the underlying idea that there is no monopoly. Tech industry leaders are therefore driven by a logic of conquest, a logic of "always more".

Vision and values represent the most powerful lever for transforming our societies (Abson et al 2017; O'Brien 2018). This article highlights the need to design institutions that limit the destructive power of tech ideologies, particularly the obsession with competition. The first step in this institutional transformation should be to implement a better regulation to use the power of legislation and force tech leaders to stop thinking of themselves as cowboys in the days of the Wild West conquest, where resources were perceived as unlimited, and instead consider themselves at the heart of Spaceship Earth (Boulding 1966; De Graaf and Jans 2015).

Keywords : climate change - ideology - institutional economics

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