

# Serious Pleasure. Motivation in fun-emphasising social movements

## Short-Paper-Submission for the Degrowth Conference Leipzig 2014

One main agreement in the public as well as the scientific sphere states, that global society is recently facing major tasks and challenges. Recent discourses of crisis (financial, fiscal and economic crisis, climate change, shortage of resources, global social inequality and so forth) are permanently present in public media and helped forming a common consensus of the need of action – even though the acuteness of action is interpreted differently. Concerning possible solutions for the crises, a substantial gap between awareness and effectively considerable adaptation of every day practices and behavior can be observed. A possible cause for the tough-flowing change in social practices could lay in the fact that, consequently implemented sustainability in everyday life usually implies abstinence (for example in mobility and consumption) and permanent self-monitoring (practicing new and sustainable daily routines, preventing ‘rebound effects’). Moreover these are oftentimes communicated ‘preachy’ and with ‘wagging forefinger’ and are often acknowledged with latent reluctance or open defense. In our modern western societies, in which entertainment advanced to the guideline of our life, in which thrill and adventure penetrate religion and sport, habitation and consumption and even divorce, in which the process of ‘eventisation’ can be considered in almost all societal fields, a discourse of abstinence seems out of time.

‘Critical Mass’, ‘Schnippeldisko’ (‘Disco Soup’), ‘Nachttanzdemos’ (‘Night-dance-demonstrations), ‘Slow Food’... In the previous years divers phenomena have been experienced with, that lay within this tension between short-term thrill-seeking and serious action. These are presently being investigated in an ethnographical sociological research project funded by the German Research Foundation (DFG). In particular protest events and social movements are being researched, in which motives of fun, amusement, joy and pleasure go along with political seriousness and social responsibility. The outcome of the project shows, that participants as well as organisers of protest explicitly expect a positive, pleasing, fun including approach to tackle social and political problems. However the combination of thrill and adventure with political seriousness also causes tension within the constellation of players as well as concerning the external communication of aims.

In my presentation I will explore these events and analyse the motivation of participants, the characteristics of performance and the (real and mediatised) social construction. I will thereby describe the role of short-term thrill- and fun-motivation as well as long-term social and political goals. Furthermore I will identify the observed tension between fun and seriousness, between thrill and politics and analyse, how players handle these. Objective of the presentation is to find empirical evidence for opportunities and limitations of ‘serious Pleasure’ for the change of social practices in general.