Abundance & Equality

Mauritz Kop

1 sentence synopsis: This chapter connects good governance to the end of scarcity and unifies equality with technology driven abundance, by introducing the Equal Relative Abundance (ERA) principle of distributive justice.

Abstract

1. The technology driven post-scarcity society is upon us. Ubiquitous technologies are eradicating scarcity in many industries. These macroscopic system trends are causing our economy to transition from relative scarcity to relative abundance. For many people in the world however, in both developed and underdeveloped countries, the notion of an Age of Abundance will sound utterly bizarre. There is a tension between abundance and equality.

2. Good governance considers in what manner the state conducts public policy, manages public resources and promotes overall prosperity. This chapter connects good governance to the end of scarcity and integrates equality into abundance.

3. The chapter critically examines the normative justifications of our scarcity based legal institutions, such as property and intellectual property (IP) systems, in light of 10 exponential, Fourth Industrial Revolution (4IR) technologies, and the post scarcity economy.

4. Starting point is that absolute and relative abundance are not utopian. Technology will erase scarcity in more and more economic areas in the foreseeable future, but not everywhere or for everybody. The chapter views relative scarcity and relative abundance as temporal socio-economic categories at two opposite sides of a continuum.

5. The way in which we design our systems of property, fair competition and IP influences many aspects of how our society operates. The same applies to the architecture and infrastructure of our technology. As IP and ownership arrangements shape technology, technology shapes IP. As society shapes its legal institutions, legal institutions and traditions shape society.

6. The chapter explains orthodox economic theory based on scarcity, the different phases of capitalism, the stages of development of government systems and the importance of the separation of powers (EU) as prescribed by Montesquieu’s trias politica, or a system of checks & balances (US).

7. To shape and clarify our thinking about the transition from scarcity to abundance, we investigate whether ideas and theories of great philosophers and economists including Marx, Kant, Hegel, Hume, Mill, Keynes, Demsetz, Schumpeter and Rawls are applicable to the structure and organization of society during the Age of Abundance.

8. Principles of distributive justice offer moral guidance for the political frameworks and legal institutions that influence the distribution of benefits, risks, rights and responsibilities across members of society.

9. The chapter unifies good governance with equality and abundance, by introducing a post-Rawlsian Equal Relative Abundance (ERA) principle of distributive justice. This includes defining a set of material and immaterial primary goods, warranting adequate, sufficient levels of relative abundance (which depend on technological evolution), and equitable results per region or group. Crucially, ERA

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1 Mauritz Kop is Stanford Law School TTLF Fellow & Visiting Research Scholar at Stanford University and is Managing Partner at AIRecht, Amsterdam, The Netherlands. Correspondence: advies@airecht.nl. The author is grateful to Suzan Slijpen, Mark Lemley, Deven Desai and participants of the April 22 2022 Abundance Roundtable at Stanford Law School for helpful insights and comments on earlier versions of this article.
integrates desert-based principles to the degree that some may deserve a higher level of material goods because of inequality in contributions, i.e. their hard work, talent, luck or entrepreneurial spirit, only to the extent that their unequal rewards do also function to improve the position of the least advantaged.

10. The chapter views the concept of society through a broad, interdisciplinary lens. The abundance society evolves into a large, networked sphere in which Earth's nations, and people's socio-cultural identities are united. In that sense, the abundance society is a macro model of a world system.

11. A society governed by the ERA principle should in theory be able to solve the poverty trap on a global level. As lifting people from poverty in Europe is a different thing than achieving ERA in the US, applying equal relative abundance techniques in Asia and Africa each have their own specific challenges and dimensions.

12. The chapter argues the need for reform and reimagining existing legal institutes based on the philosophy of canonical thinkers, as well as concepts such as the post-work society and a new social contract based on equal relative abundance.

13. It then offers an overview of 10 disruptive 4IR key technologies that are rapidly propelling and shaping the transformation to a post scarcity model. These are artificial intelligence, big data, quantum technology, nanotechnology, biotechnology, 3D printing, nuclear fusion, DLT/blockchain, virtual & augmented reality, and hyper-accurate positioning.

14. An Age of Abundance requires a government system tuned for abundance. The chapter looks at contemporary principles of distributed justice for answers, including the notion of the market as a self-correcting mechanism in concert with the equalizing effect of central planning, and government adjustments such as taxes and antitrust regulation.

15. The chapter posits that it is urgent to start experimenting with prototypes of systems that mix the best parts of acceptable, forward thinking socialist and post-capitalist paradigms, built on participatory democracy. In the Age of Abundance, we are all developing countries.

16. This chapter views historic, contemporary, and future property paradigms as stages in growth of social responsibility. When addressing access versus excludability dilemma’s in a relative abundance setting, policy makers should not be afraid to experiment with different modalities of property. In practice, decoupling property from status will be a quantum leap.

17. The chapter advocates for awareness of the mental, ethical, social and cultural shifts essential for change. It discusses postmaterialist values fitting the post-scarcity economy, such as altruism, solidarity, and truth. Critically, post scarcity values have to be actively embedded in our technology. As society shapes technology, technology shapes society.

18. Human nature keeps striving for more (wants) even when its needs are fulfilled. Negative sum games must be solved, positive sum games pursued. The chapter lists 15 barriers and 15 enablers of abundance.

19. The central thread through this chapter is the role of technology as an engine of change. The chapter concludes that the reforms necessary to balance the socio-economic effects of 4IR technology now, fit the trend of a shift from scarcity to well-managed relative sustainable abundance for all. Naturally, technology is not the prime cause for all our difficulties, nor is technology our only salvation.

20. The chapter ends with the utopian realistic prediction that during the Age of widespread relative Abundance, having mastered the art of good governance and equality, people will be free to spend their time on understanding the art of living, and on what it means to be human.

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