



## CALL FOR PAPERS

# THE ECOLOGY OF ECOLOGICAL INNOVATIONS

## OR: ARE ECOLOGICAL INNOVATIONS ECOLOGICAL?

*EDITOR OF THIS SPECIAL ISSUE: Frantz Gault, Ultra Laborans, [frantz@ultralaborans.org](mailto:frantz@ultralaborans.org)*

In the aftermath of the Second World War, the developments and implications of technology began to raise serious concerns in academic and intellectual circles. Although their interpretations were sometimes divergent, most authors at the time — Leroi-Gourhan (1945), Heidegger (1954), Marcuse (1963), Schumacher (1973), Jonas (1979) and many others — agreed that Modernity was synonymous with unprecedented technological innovations and applications, a trend that could produce irreversible damages to the environment.

Since then, countless works have documented these damages, and everyone is now familiar with the dark ecological dynamics with which life on Earth must now contend. Yet, technology plays an ambivalent part in this tragedy. Being a remedy and a poison at the same time — Arendt (1956), Ellul (1977), Stiegler (1994) —, technology provides a set of tools that can admittedly lead to the destruction of life, but that can also heal it. Incidentally, this ambivalent impact applies to both human and non-human life. The problem thus lies in the uses to which technology is put, and in the motivations behind these uses.

More recent works have consequently focused on the ontological foundations that lies behind the acceleration of technical innovations over the last few centuries, and the uses to which they have been put by Moderns. This has led some authors to locate the fundamental causes of the ecological crisis not in technology, but in a "new thinking about nature" (Merleau-Ponty 1968), marked by its devaluation and commodification, to the benefits of an exacerbated anthropocentrism — some authors attributing the paternity of this dynamic to religion (White 1967), to science (Latour 1991) or even to aesthetics (Descola 2021). In any case, it is a change in the representation of what is now referred to as "nature", that could be at the root of the great technical and ecological transformations at work in Modernity.

Based on this new understanding, numerous initiatives have tried to change the way we look at technology and innovation, starting with a more in-depth transformation of the way we

look at nature. Natural sciences have played a major role in this respect, as they have helped objectifying the ecological catastrophe as early as 1972 (Meadows) — these sciences have since invited us to take a cautious approach to technology and progress, in contrast to the role they had played before. The social sciences, for their part, have produced numerous philosophical and anthropological studies that have contributed to a renewal in our ethics of nature, and have invited us to reevaluate the status of "non-humans", or to reconfigure our relationship with the "living" — see, in particular, Bookchin (1982), Taylor (1986), Callicott (1989), Rolston (1994), Ingold (2000) or Descola (2005). On an more operational level, this paradigm shift has stimulated a variety of innovations aimed at emancipating nature from its condition as a "thing", and upgrading its status in fields as varied as law (Stone 1972), politics (Latour 1999, Eckersley 2004), economics (Georgescu 1971) or work (Gault 2024).

Are these various innovations producing the expected results? Are they contributing to a greener future? In a forthcoming issue, the journal *Technology and Innovation* aims to address this question by providing an overview of these innovations, and examining their ability to transform the axioms of Modernity. To this end, we are calling for papers on 7 themes that have been selected in order to tackle, from different angles, the way in which natural entities are "put to work" — that is, the way in which humans appropriate and transform their environment to meet their own needs. Contemplating technology in the wider context of the uses to which it is put and the philosophies that govern these uses, technology is here apprehended in a broad sense, following an approach that blends theory and practice.

**With this in mind, the expected contributions will simultaneously provide:**

- a case study of an innovation contributing to the upgrade of the status or the value of natural entities, following one of the seven themes (see below)
- an analysis of the ethics of nature, its ontological and axiological background, structuring or motivating the actors involved in this innovation\*
- an analysis of the practical effects of this innovation, with particular regard to the impacts on natural entities and on technological usages
- cases can come from any part of the world, but their timing must allow for a recent assessment and feedback
- the natural entities involved in the case study may be non-human organisms, global ecosystems or in between entities such as forests or rivers\*
- the practical effects of the case study can be considered from a technical, ecological or sociological angle
- the analysis of these practical effects should be based on a documented and rigorous investigation method

\* For details on the diversity of natural entities and ethics of nature, see: [Gault 2024](#) or Descola 2005

**THEME 1 - SCIENCE** - Whether it is demonstrating that some animals have consciousness, objectifying the damage inflicted on ecosystems, or devising eco-friendly technical processes, natural sciences now play a major role in reformulating our understanding of nature and the way we interact with it. To what extent does this reformulation change the axioms of Modernity? What effects do environmental sciences have on the way we perceive or relate to natural entities? Do they result in techniques or uses that are more respectful of nature?

**THEME 2 - BELIEFS** - Recent decades have witnessed the emergence of many alternative communities — like the Findhorn Foundation or the "Colibri" french movement — which are attempting to build more sustainable practices and territories, against an ecospiritual backdrop generally described as "New Age". What are the axioms structuring the ethics of nature and the ontological foundations of these communities? What are their practices, particularly in terms of stewardship and care for natural entities? What is the fate of that other component of the natural world: the human?

**THEME 3 - ANTHROPOLOGY** - In recent years, several indigenous communities — the Kogis of Colombia and the Kayapos of Brazil, for example — have set themselves up as guardians of nature. These peoples are appealing to a growing segment of the Western population, and their messages are being disseminated even in major international institutions. The journal *Technology and Innovation* would like to understand how these communities — those mentioned above or others — are putting their messages into practice on a daily basis, in their own living environments.

**THEME 4 - LAW** - The rights of nature are currently the subject of a great deal of interest. Here, a river or glacier is being reclassified as a subject of law, or even as a legal person. In other cases, Mother Earth is being granted rights within the framework of a new kind of constitution. The journal would welcome feedback on these initiatives. How are the rights of natural entities interpreted and applied? What uses or restrictions do they entail in production methods? How do these new legal subjects interact with traditional legal entities? How are they represented and how do they manifest themselves in a broader political spectrum ?

**THEME 5 - ECONOMY** - The orthodox approach to economics is one of the most contested axioms of Modernity in this age of ecological collapse. This critique has given rise to a number of innovations — extra-financial accounting, securitization of ecosystem assets, carbon and biodiversity credits, etc. — aimed at building a more eco-friendly economy. The journal *Technology and Innovation* would like to publish an assessment of the ecological effects of some of these innovations, as well as a more general discussion on how the concept of value — in the broad sense of the term — is being reformulated in economics studies.

**THEME 6 - ORGANIZATION** - Nature invited to sit on the boards of companies such as *Faith in Nature*. Nature represented by eco-friendly trade unions like *Printemps Écologique*. Nature becoming a shareholder of multinationals like *Patagonia*, and sometimes even becoming an incorporated company... Bold initiatives have recently been reshuffling the cards of corporate governance, in order to give nature a voice. Is this changing the way natural entities are treated? How are these innovations transforming the companies adopting them? Who are the representatives of natural entities? How does the dialogue between humans and non-humans take place? This is another area that the journal would like to investigate.

**THEME 7 - PROPERTY** - The revaluation of the natural entities ontological status could legitimately lead to a reconsideration of the way in which property is conceptualized. In this

respect, the theory of the Commons has recently gained renewed interest, but is this approach challenging the *usus, fructus* and *abusus* axiom that characterises the modern property regime? On this topic, the journal *Technology and Innovation* would therefore like to include case studies — like the Whanganui River case — where the concept of ownership is more fundamentally reconfigured.

## TERMS AND CONDITIONS OF SUBMISSION

Papers are to be written in French or English, and are intended for the journal: *Technology and Innovation*. Recommendations to authors are available on our website: <http://www.openscience.fr/Technology-and-Innovation>

- **Receipt of abstracts:** October 31, 2024
- **Details:** submit an abstract — 2 pages in Word format, Times 12 — outlining the importance of your case study, the investigation method and the expected conclusions. Please send questions and abstracts to [frantz@ultralaborans.org](mailto:frantz@ultralaborans.org)
- **Response to authors:** November 20, 2024
- **Deadline for submission of full papers:** February 25, 2025
- **Text evaluation process:** February to April 2025
- **Receipt of final items:** mid-September 2025
- **Publication:** first half of 2026

## REFERENCES

- Arendt H. (1958), *The Human Condition*, University of Chicago Press.
- Bookchin (1982), *The Ecology of Freedom: The Emergence and Dissolution of Hierarchy*, AK Press.
- Callicott J.B. (1989), *In Defense of the Land Ethic*, State University of New York Press.
- Descola P. (2005), *Par-delà nature et culture*, Gallimard.
- Descola P. (2021), *Les Formes du visible*, Éditions du Seuil.
- Eckersley R. (2004), *The Green State: Rethinking Democracy and Sovereignty*, MIT Press.
- Ellul J. (1977), *Le Système technicien*, Calmann-Lévy.
- Gault F. (2024), *La nature au travail*, EPFL Press.
- Georgescu-Roegen N. (1971), *The Entropy Law and the Economic Process*, Harvard University Press.
- Heidegger M. (1954), *Essais et conférences*, Gallimard.
- Ingold T. (2000), *The Perception of the Environment*, Routledge.
- Jonas H. (1979), *Das Prinzip Verantwortung*, Insel-Verlag.
- Latour B. (1991), *Nous n'avons jamais été modernes*, La Découverte.
- Latour B. (1999), *Politiques de la nature*, La Découverte.
- Leroi-Gourhan A. (1945), *Milieu et Techniques*, Albin Michel.
- Marcuse H. (1963), *L'homme unidimensionnel*, Les Éditions de Minuit.

- Meadows D. *et al.* (1972), *The Limits to Growth*, Potomac Associates.
- Merleau-Ponty (1968), *Résumés de cours. Collège de France 1952-1960*, Gallimard.
- Rolston H. (1994), *Conserving Natural Value*, Columbia University Press.
- Schumacher E.F. (1973), *Small is Beautiful*, Blond & Briggs.
- Stiegler B. (1994), *La Technique et le Temps*, Galilée.
- Stone C. (1972), « Should Trees Have Standing? », in *Southern California Law Review*, 45.
- Taylor P.W. (1986), *Respect for Nature: A Theory of Environmental Ethics*, Princeton University Press.
- White L. (1967), « The Historical Roots of Our Ecologic Crisis », in *Science*, 155-3767.

\* \* \*