

Reinvention for sustainability

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1 Content

Reinvention of forgotten technologies has a role to play in the introduction of new technologies, as around 1% of reported inventions are reinventions. At the current time the process by which reinvention occurs is random, relying on erendipity rather than through directed activities. Earlier work with a proprietary research archive demonstrates that reinventions can be successfully and efficiently identified through a methodical interrogation of research records. Between 5 and 7% of the identified research areas yielded a possible reinvention. This figure indicates that reinvention could have a larger impact in technology development if research is actively managed, rather than the current practice of relying on serendipity to initiate a reinvention. The question is what open data can mean for sustainable innovation, and how proprietary research archives can become more open.

2 About the Author

A social scientist by training with an interest in environmental issues, Niels's core expertise is in innovation studies. Most recently he was to be found in Kenya analysing barriers to the adoption of wind energy technologies for electricity generation. Before this he worked on the United Nations University Open Course Ware project at UNU-MERIT in Maastricht. Niels boasts Masters degrees in Environment and Resource Management (Vrije Universiteit, cum laude), and from the European Program on Society, Science and Technology (Maastricht University). His first degree was a BA in Social Sciences at University College Maastricht (Maastricht University, cum laude). Niels is committed to the Open Educational Resources movement and has been volunteering at Peer 2 Peer University (p2pu.org) since its inception, where he created and organised various courses.