

Topic:

Assume the Worst: Reducing Consumption While Generating Local Goods

Convener:

Margaret Thomas

Room:

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### Discussion Summary:

Inherent contradiction between consumption (with adverse environmental impacts) and local economic growth, jobs, income. Still need jobs and income to make communities work. How can we rethink our networks and maintain economic engine of community?

George Soros says we need to reconstruct our social structure or there's no point in reconstructing economic structure. Need common goal – organize ourselves around global warming. Miguel Roca says growth is a quantitative measure, development is qualitative measure. Jane Jacobs says all development occurs when need is identified that has to be shipped from somewhere else.

The Right to the City. Need to reconstitute the city, where major social and physical structures exist.

**Focus on sufficiency.** Our whole economy built around “getting more.” **Shift thinking towards “enoughness” and focus on fulfillment in life.** Some argue that human development occurred because of agricultural surplus, which has driven economic consumption. Actually due to social networks and trade. (Jane Jacobs)

Everyone needs role in society to contribute to greater good. Jobs and incomes necessary for organizing that. Instead of jobs and income, considering thinking about “roles.” Some other societies retire sooner and work fewer hours and put more focus on social good. Burden to work in order to consume. In U.S., no time to think about politics, economic structures, social good, etc.

New ways of thinking about food, shelter, clothing, health care – step out of the system we know. Recreate from bottom up in local communities. Meeting basic needs, fulfilling from social structure standpoint. Victory gardens, grow food not lawns, urban homesteading, house sharing.

Need to educate people about costs. Externalizing the cost, we're paying for it in other ways. Idea that we must get things at lowest possible price endemic in our culture. Mentality that everything is disposable. If everybody understood that buying local, would be willing to spend more because they would understand how money circulates. Local currencies help keep money locally.

Trying to buy U.S.A.-made products. Deffenbaugh sends recyclable materials elsewhere to be recycled. Put emphasis on recruiting recycling-based manufacturing firms. Health care provided locally, but corporations that manage things are located elsewhere. Why not local? Missouri has wood industry, but very little comes to Kansas City to be made into products.

House sharing – obstacles include zoning ordinances. Penn Valley CC and rehab facilities have done it successfully locally. Empty nesters and students or young recent grads make sense. Going to face more homelessness in near future. Make it more socially acceptable to move in with friends, neighbors, etc.

Glad to see faith communities finally stepping up to see their role in common good and not just individual moral issues. “Live simply so other can simply live.” Need can-do attitude, right here, right now. Idea that doing what's best for you is best for community is failed philosophy.

Meeting time:

Session 2: 10:30 a.m.

Recorder:

Julie Wittman