

GOOD WORK NEWS

The Working Centre, 58 Queen St. S. Kitchener, ON N2G 1V6

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June 2020

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Special Issue on Rethinking the Growth Economy

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“We now know that every piece of coal, every drop of oil, and every cubic foot of natural gas that twelve generations of human beings have used to create our carbon-based industrial civilization have had consequences that are now reshaping the dynamics of the Earth.

What we are learning from climate change is that everything we do affects the workings of everything else on earth and has consequences for the well-being of all the creatures with whom we cohabitate this planet.”

Jeremy Rifkin, The Green New Deal

Responding to Disruption

By Stephanie Mancini

We humans are creatures of habit, and we can follow these habits long after rational thought proves they are flawed. When our habits become disrupted, we seek the comforts those habits gave to us. This is an evolutionary survival technique – by seeking comfort and habit we reinforce the safety of the tribe. Now we face a time where our typical ways of relating lead to the spread of COVID-19; where our sacred supply chain and shopping habits are disrupted; where our many ways of distracting ourselves become tiresome and unsatisfying; where we have been forced to pause long enough to rethink the things we thought were important; where we recognize that our habits are in fact harmful to others, to the earth, and

to ourselves.

This issue of *Good Work News* peels these layers back even further – encouraging us in this time of transition, of disruption, to see the opportunity to reinvent some basic premises around growth and climate change. We will want to shut these thoughts out, but perhaps we also have to listen to the growing feeling of dissonance in our bellies, or the growing appreciation of bird song and gardens, and chalk drawings on the sidewalks. Reminding us to listen in new ways, helping us to see the opportunity in disruption. To reimagine together. Virus, flooding, riots, sickness – these images flood our brains while the birds sing and summer begins.

At The Working Centre, we have

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The Social Recession Lessons from COVID-19

By Joe Mancini

Before Covid-19, we were already in a Social Recession. For example, each year mental health or addiction issues affect 20% of the population. We tolerate that 34% of Ontario high-school students deal with moderate-to-serious distress like anxiety and depression. Our culture has a radiating frustration that you see in those angry protests against the shutdown. The Social Recession is not new; it is the consequence of an increasing dependence on materialistic values as the foundational organizing principle for society.

What is the Social Recession?

The Social Recession is the weary feeling we have that our culture turns its back on supporting important underlying personal and social connections. In our culture, is enough time given to truly support families and the raising of children? Do we have time to reflect and integrate the Indigenous world view which calls us to protect the forests, air, water and soil? Do we have the patience to allow for a sharing culture to emerge in neighbourhoods? Do we have the ability to promote a culture of mutual aid, where each person is responsible for putting the community above themselves? Do we support cultural mechanisms to teach the use of tools wisely for building our neighbourhoods and community? Can we cooperate together to build or share housing to reduce homelessness?

The Covid shutdown has been unprecedented, putting a halt to almost all commuting, shopping, schooling, working, vacationing and traveling. This situation is completely unique and it's a revelation, like being on a retreat from daily distractions. This new reality offers time to think about the meaning of family, community, work and the natural world we depend on.

The flashing signs all around us call for a rethinking of our economic direction. Our model of growth is leading to increased ecological degradation and the decline of community and social connections. We need a renewed commitment to enhance well-being at the community level.

An Overproduction of Negative Social Outcomes

It puts into perspective the machinery of society that overproduces commuting, shopping, travelling etc. The revelation reveals a society of disconnections and misplaced priorities. In this lull we have to think about the overwhelming negative social outcomes. We have time to rethink why we have acclimatized ourselves to a constant Social Recession in the midst of abundance and busy work.

A retreat is a perfect mechanism to uncover the problems of materialism and why our reliance on making money, increasing status, purchasing bigger and better things, are barriers to good relationships. Materialism skews our values, we lose our sense of purpose, autonomy and the benefit of social connections. Our potential wellbeing diminishes in a flood of goods and services.

Precarious Work Dependent on Consumerism

At the heart of materialism is the desperate necessity for the economy to produce work hours. The result is a cycle of consumerism with jobs that are precarious and non-satisfying. For example, data from the US economy shows that about twenty million jobs were created after the 2008 Great Recession. Yet in three weeks, more than twenty

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Thirty Sixth Year

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Good Work News

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Responding to Disruption

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had the opportunity to engage this re-imagining, as we have had to reinvent our work in a COVID-19 world, closing many of our congregate spaces, yet still finding ways to respond with integrity and justice for many people who do not have a home in which to self-isolate, do not have supports around them. So many people have had their typical income streams disrupted, need help in new ways, or do not have access to the technology that has brought so many others together.

COVID-19 has laid bare the cracks in our social system – issues that were festering long before the virus outbreak. For the last two years (and the 36 years before that too!) we have been trying to draw attention to the impacts of homelessness and poverty on our community. Our cities have experienced economic growth but we have left behind a group of people becoming increasingly dislocated, frustrated and unwell. These past weeks, in the States, have reminded us of the price of systematic exclusion. We have joined within the community partnerships that make us stronger, contributing in significant ways to support the Inner City Health Alliance collaborative work, and to re-align our spaces and projects to respond collectively, and to add new partners into this growing effort. Community partners have leaned-in in new ways – achieving concepts we could only dream of before:

- We have integrated our health teams in the Inner City Health Alliance, joining with partners to provide more integrated and responsive healthcare options for those in shelter, those on the street, in a mobile context, and for those in supportive housing; aligning our protocols, practices and record keeping.
- We trained front-line staff in

shelters, housing, food programs on appropriate use of PPE, made sure we had a good PPE supply, shifted our cultures and practices to promote safe distancing and alert COVID practices.

- We created a 24/7 call number for medical consultation, and implemented an isolation ward for those with symptoms, with a rapid testing response for symptomatic people and our staff.
- We hold tactical calls several times a week with broad healthcare and community service partners, aligning our work with in the wider Region of Waterloo COVID strategy, and with Public Health.
- Working Centre staff have spread out to work in a number of community settings – supporting the work of House of Friendship to provide 24/7 shelter and healthcare, supporting the YWCA and the Region in hosting the Kaufman Y 24/7 shelter for another 60 men, continuing to work on the street, in motels (we have over 30 people supported in motels outside of the formal shelter system as we support their intense healthcare needs).
- At St. John's Kitchen we are serving meals in the parking lot of Worth A Second Look right now – some 150 to 200 per day. People standing in the heat/rain/sun/cold (all within the last month), just to collect a lunch... such a long way from creative community space at St. John's Kitchen.
- St. John's Kitchen is now operating as a collaborative Daytime Drop-In space for unsheltered, providing showers, laundry, washrooms, food – seeing over 70 people per day now. A beautiful collaboration with the Region and with redeployed workers from the City of Waterloo, the Region of Waterloo, Thresholds and Ray of Hope, where we are together

33rd Annual Mayors' Dinner

Catastrophe and Resilience: Pathways to a New World



COVID-19 limited our capacity to gather, a stark contrast to our annual tradition of gathering with close to 1,000 people in Marshall Hall at Bingemans.

This year, we arranged a virtual event focused on conversations that help us to make sense of the changes in our world – how can we learn from this moment in ways that help us to foster good work, work that calls us forwards to new ways of understanding our world and the changes needed to foster community resilience and support those who are most vulnerable.

The Virtual Mayors' Dinner includes:

Welcome by M.C. Neil Aitchison

A reflective blessing by Clarence Cachagee

A joint greetings message from **Cambridge Mayor Kathryn McGarry, Kitchener Mayor Berry Urbanovic, and Waterloo Mayor Dave Jaworsky**

Remarks by **Joe Mancini** on behalf of The Working Centre

Keynote Address presentation by **Frances Westley**

Reflections on the collaborative work of the **Inner City Health Alliance**

An introduction to **Fresh Ground Online** - an invitation to ongoing conversation and discussion

Our **Mayors' Dinner Program** outlined this year's theme, and recognized our many generous contributors, patrons, and supporters

Find links to the Virtual Mayors' Dinner on our homepage:

www.theworkingcentre.org

or by visiting:

donate.theworkingcentre.org/mayors-dinner

seeing clear evidence of the need for more housing locally.

All this is good work, but in spite of it all, we see the needs of some 150 more people without shelter in our community. We are already heading into a world of re-opening spaces, where the efforts we have invested for those needing shelter seem complicated to maintain, but we need to be working now on more housing/shelter for people still left outside. Summer is short; it takes time and invested effort to build resources where people have access to shelters. In a COVID-world it is hard enough to imagine bathroom access, never mind shelter.

Let's hold on to our dissonance. We need much deeper thinking to move forward. Our rich society needs ways to commit resources to the building of community.

- We need a serious, strategic effort to add affordable housing – shared

housing, smaller units, secondary suites, congregate settings – there are some good models from which to choose.

- Unemployment and work will require serious consideration – our work worlds are changing, possibilities are emerging, and jobs for low-income workers are becoming more risky and different; we have a new interest in filling our supply-chain needs locally.
- How do we build more capacity for bike shops, growing food, urban agriculture, creative re-use of housewares and furniture.

The opportunities are possible if we embrace the dissonance; nudge ourselves into staying in uncomfortable spots while we figure out new ways of working and being together. The ecology of the earth is demanding this attention, our human spirits are longing for it.

A Moral Philosophy of Limits

By Kiegan Irish

The effects of human activity on the climate has resulted in massive biodiversity loss, increasingly volatile weather conditions (including hurricanes, flooding, wildfires, etc.), and many other adverse effects which impacts the daily lives of more and more people. In this article I want to consider what effect this has on our understanding of freedom.

In North America, freedom is commonly understood to refer to the absence of limits on our actions. Any constraint or rule represents the limits of freedom. In philosophical circles, this understanding of freedom is usually referred to as “negative freedom.” It is defined by what it is not.

A Negative Freedom

A recent media narrative has captured a caricatured version of this idea of freedom. Namely, reactions against government action to restrict movement of the population to prevent the spread of Covid-19. Despite physical distancing recommendations, some people have gathered publicly to protest the shutdowns of businesses, claiming that any restrictions on their habits are an infringement of their freedom. These protests have included armed militias at the Michigan State Legislature.

Most people see the sense of restrictions in place for the sake of public health. As such, I mention that these protests are a caricature of negative freedom. They are based on a misunderstanding: it is difficult to exercise any kind of freedom if you are unable to breath or if you die. Most people observing these proceedings would come to the conclusion that these protesters are not standing for a very robust notion of freedom.

Freedom and Climate Change

A more complex freedom issue is the effects of climate change on human activity — we cannot pump gasses into the atmosphere at the current emissions rate or we will destroy the ecological balance necessary for living. Similar to the shutdown protesters, many people have complained that some natural and objective limits on human action represent constraints on their freedom. Or if they do not make this argument explicitly, they continue to act as though they

I want to turn now to another question: what would freedom look like if it were informed by the real limits of ecology, and if those were understood not as constraints but as the character of a relationship in which we can grow and flourish?

are free to transgress these natural limits. Actions which transgress the natural limits therefore put actors in the deeply unethical position of valuing their “freedom” above the ability of their neighbours and future generations to enjoy the support of the ecological world which has given life to every previous generation.

But what can you do? There are consequences, yes, but you cannot constrain the freedom of someone else. We can no more constrain the polluters than we can prevent willful ignorance about virology. Human beings are free to do as they wish.

While it is true that I lack the power to constrain my fellow citizens (to say nothing of the moral justification) what I can do is to point out that they are badly misunderstanding freedom.

A Proper Freedom

To follow the logic here, imagine a jazz musician, perhaps a saxophonist. She has been studying her craft for years and now her performances are sublime. She evinces a mastery over all the old standards and the theory of music itself, yet she is free to emote and to give the standards new life through her playing. But more than that, she is free to solo and compose, to create music that has never been heard before, that can speak to the soul and move listeners to tears or laughter.

Contrast this saxophonist with someone who has never played saxophone before. This person is formally unconstrained by the discipline of music and the conventions of jazz which have informed the saxophonist’s years of study—they are, in the negative sense, free to solo or compose on the saxophone however they wish. But the practical reality is that they are unable to play a single note. They are constrained by their ignorance of the instrument’s character—its limits.

So it is with freedom, if we cannot

understand the context of our freedom and what it is for we are trapped in the negative understanding of freedom. This understanding is ubiquitous in our culture, which postures as free “but everywhere is in chains.” The civilization which exists today on Turtle Island is like the ignoramus with the musical instrument who loudly proclaims his musical freedom while causing the saxophone of ecology to gasp in pain. Or like the lockdown protestor who callously values their superficial freedom to go out and eat chicken fingers over the right to life of the rest of their community.

While there is much more that can be said about the impoverished concept of freedom which pertains today, I want to turn now to another question: what would freedom look like if it were informed by the real limits of ecology, and if those were understood not as constraints but as the character of a relationship in which we can grow and flourish?

Freedom and Virtue

In offering a provisional response to this question it’s relevant to consider two different cultural ideas about what it is to live a beautiful and virtuous life.

The first comes from the ancient Greeks, articulated by Aristotle, that one is truly virtuous when one does not experience acting virtuously as a struggle, when one is free of the desire to transgress into evil action. Virtue becomes a “second nature” which provides the foundation for a beautiful life. By this line of reasoning, what we need is such a civilizational virtue so that we do not constantly transgress the limits

of the natural world, but instead we learn these limits and recognize them as the foundation of our freedom, as the terms of a relationship with the world through which we can develop beautiful lives.

But perhaps this sounds hopelessly abstract. What model is there for such a way of life?

Natural Limits: Thankfulness & Relationship

And on this point, I will invite you to consider the second idea, which comes from indigenous cultures in Turtle Island. Some version of this principle is practiced by many different peoples, but Potawatomi writer Robin Wall-Kimmerer articulates it effectively. She explains that when harvesting the gifts of the earth—which she considers a living being, a loving mother—her people abide by the principle never to take more than half of what is given. This is done out of a spirit of thankfulness, and a recognition of responsibility in relationship. If we only take half of nature’s gift, the earth can replenish itself, stewarding the gifts for the future. In her telling we can catch sight of a way of life where natural limits are understood not as constraints but as invitations to thankfulness and relationship.

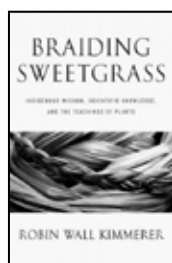
As we continue to wrestle with our impoverished understanding of freedom, and as we run up against the limits of what the earth can endure, let us reimagine these limits not as constraints but as invitations to be in relationship—with the earth and with one another—and as a challenge to learn virtue, such that our lives can become more beautiful and free.

Working Centre Updates

The Working Centre is a place-based community that brings people together in common settings – where we offer, food, clothing, bike repair, gardens, cafes, housing, access to technology and job search support. At this time in early June we are moving slowly to re-open as we consider the work of these projects in light of COVID-19.

- **The Job Search Resource Centre** has been offering employment counselling, job search help remotely and some daily supports through the door. By mid-June we will open with a limited but robust service to help those without access to technology, or who have language challenges with technology.
- **Money Matters and Income Tax support** will be expanded in mid-June. This is possible because we have worked with CRA and Prosper Canada to devise a community system that will still respect private information. The process will require completion of a drop-off package that will be used by staff and volunteers to file returns, with limited in-person appointments. Community partners can help distribute and prepare the drop-off packages.
- **Our public spaces** remain closed down for now, including Queen Street Commons Café, Fresh Ground, Worth a Second Look, Recycle Cycles, Computer Recycling. We are preparing to re-open in these new circumstances to have the ability to receive, process and sell household items, clothing, and bicycles.
- **Hacienda Sarria Market Garden** is well into the season with a sold out CSA membership. We have designed safe pick-up practices for weekly food shares.

Stay tuned to our website as we build on opportunities and expand access to services.



Braiding Sweetgrass Indigenous Wisdom, Scientific Knowledge and the Teachings of Plants

Robin Wall Kimmerer

As a botanist trained to ask questions of nature with the tools of science and as a member of the Citizen Potawatomi Nation, Kimmerer embraces indigenous teachings that consider plants and animals to be our oldest teachers. She shows how other living beings—asters and goldenrod, strawberries and squash, salamanders, algae, and sweetgrass—offer us gifts and lessons, even if we’ve forgotten how to hear their voices. In a rich braid of

reflections that range from the creation of Turtle Island to the forces that threaten its flourishing today, she circles toward describing the awakening of a wider ecological consciousness and the acknowledgement of our reciprocal relationship with the rest of the living world.

408 pages \$26.95 softcover

The Environmental Cost of Growth and Debt

By Isaiah Ritzmann

Our economy is burdened and vulnerable to increasing debt. The COVID-19 shutdown has people deeply concerned about the economic effects. Before the virus arrived alarm was already being raised that the growing debt burdens of corporations, governments, and households was becoming increasingly unstable. It wasn't just the size of debts but their size relative to the rest of the economy. The Institute for International Finance in April of this year estimated that at the end of 2019 global debt-to-GDP ratio is over 325% (or the world owes \$3.25 for every dollar it makes). Furthermore they estimate that total global debt is 40% higher than it was before the financial crisis in 2008. COVID-19 is adding trillions to this collective debt.

High Corporate Debt

The most widely recognized risk is corporate debt. Since the last financial crisis corporate debt has grown tremendously. Aside from some tech giants almost all corporations have debts far greater than assets or revenues. In many cases unprofitable corporations are issuing bonds and then using the money raised either for executive compensation or to buy back some of their own stock (creating the appearance of company profitability). In 2009 the average US company owed \$2 for every \$1 in earnings. Now the average is \$3 owed for every \$1 earned. Some major companies – especially auto manufacturers, oil producers, and airlines – owe \$8 to every \$1 earned. More and more loans are being given to corporations that either have poor credit histories or large amounts of existing debt. Some estimate that more than half of corporate debt, particularly in the United States, is subprime and at serious risk of defaulting.

High Government Debt

Government debt, in contrast, is seen as more stable. Yet government debts themselves have grown disproportionately relative to their revenues and respective economies. In Canada our federal government has a debt burden of about \$770 billion, which is more than double annual government revenues or about 35% of Canada's GDP. Besides the federal government each individual province has considerable debt obligations. Ontario, for example, has a debt expected to rise to \$350 billion this year, which again is more than double annual government revenue. On top of federal and provincial burdens Canadian municipalities also owe debt, an estimated collective \$61 billion across the country. Unlike their provincial and federal counterparts, however, municipal debt is subject to legislation that significantly limits it.

High Household Debt

Which leads us finally to household debt, both in Canada and abroad. The

The earth is teaching us an elemental lesson: nothing in a finite world can grow forever – including the economy. It is time to rethink our collective relationship to debt.

OECD estimates that households in the developed world on average owe more than a dollar for every dollar they earn. Canada's average household debt-to-income ratio is much higher, at over 175% (that is Canadians owe almost \$2 for every \$1 they earn). The Bank of Canada estimates that Canadian household debt is about \$2 trillion, most of which is tied up in mortgages.

Until recently analysts were ambivalent about whether household debt was risky or not. On the one hand Canada's regulatory framework is trusted as a stabilizing force. On the other debt-to-income ratios have been growing and with it vulnerability to outside shocks and disruptions. The Bank of Canada points out, for example, that about 8% of indebted households have a 350% debt-to-income ratio. The repercussions if they default, on themselves & then everyone else, could be staggering.

Belief in Economic Growth

Reviewing this landscape of liabilities begs the question: why are some debts risky and other debts safe? After all what strikes the average person is how in all these cases - household, corporate, and government - debt out-sizes income by quite a considerable degree. In such a situation all debt could seem precarious. Why is it then that economists trained in the dynamics of debt & risk see some of these debt burdens as more or less stable?

The simple answer is belief in economic growth. As long as the economy grows every year, and grows faster than debt, things can remain stable. Governments can carry sizable debts relative to their revenues as long as the economy keeps growing because a growing economy means more money in the future to pay off debts. Large corporations manage in a similar way. As long as there are realistic possibilities of future profits they can afford to take on more and more debt, their creditors trusting that future growth outweighs future liabilities.

Limits to Growth

The problem is we have reached the limits to economic growth. Economic growth for three centuries has meant the expansion of the money economy. It has meant that each year more money is spent on goods and services than the year before. This compounding growth means the size of the economy doubles every few decades. The economy is currently ten times larger than it was in 1950. Juliet Schor in her book, *The OverWorked American*

notes that this growth means we could produce our 1948 standard of living by working a four-hour day or working six months of the year. Instead all we have to show is more debt and the need to work harder for more growth.

Long before the introduction of the GDP people questioned the perpetual nature of the growth economy. In the mid 19th century John Stuart Mill noted that in the real world everything grows but nothing grows forever. Since limitless growth is impossible at some point the growth economy has to come to an end. When GDP was first introduced even its creator, Stanley Kuznets, warned that growth in the amount of money was not the same as the growth in human welfare. Other critics noted that sometimes growth in GDP comes at the cost of human happiness and health.

The Cost of Growth and Debt

The growth economy and GDP are critiqued by environmentalists because the contributions of nature

are ignored and not counted. Worse destroying nature tomorrow is counted as a benefit if it makes a dollar today. Thus all over the world economic activities that raze forests, exhaust soils, pollute water, deplete fisheries, and warms the atmosphere are counted as positive as long as they make a buck. The economy has grown in size by ten times since 1950, but ecologists estimate that 60% of the ecosystem has been degraded.

We may have more money in the world than ever, but we also have less clean water and air, less trees and less fish, more eroded and depleted soils, and a less stable climate.

The earth is teaching us an elemental lesson: nothing in a finite world can grow forever – including the economy. It is time to rethink our collective relationship to debt. Rather we need to expand thrift, sharing, debt forgiveness and interest-free loans. It is this ethical repertoire, applied at various scales and in creative ways, which can pave the way forward. What other choice do we have?



Reflections on Debt, Economic Growth and Reducing Carbon in the Age of COVID-19

- In two months, the debt of developed economies has exploded, creating more debt than after the 2008 Economic Crisis.
- The caution is the belief that debt can only be paid with more economic growth. But that kind of growth only creates more carbon pollution, worsening the effect of Climate Change. The choice of more consumerism and increased oil/gas production will make the climate situation worse.
- Even before COVID-19, growth was anemic. Between 2009 – 2016 American growth has been stuck at **0.6 percent** annually. Even with debt spending, tax cuts and financialization in the last decade, there has been minimal new growth because of the deep structural issues of the economy. (see Robert J Gordon, *The Rise and Fall of American Growth*, Princeton University Press, 2016, p 656.)
- The COVID-19 shutdown has seen plummeting growth but the good news is a **17% reduction** in carbon emissions worldwide.
- This means that reduced commuting, travelling, shopping has started us on a path of learning how to reduce carbon use. This proves there are ways to reduce carbon and they do effect the excesses of our lifestyle.
- There is a long way to go, it is estimated that a further **60% reduction** in carbon use is needed to reduce the chances of catastrophic climate change.
- More good news comes from the **25% reduction** in electricity use. For countries that have installed a high percentage of solar and wind energy, these renewable sources have continued producing for free, while the coal plants have been shuttered, as they are costlier to operate.

Why Reducing Consumption by Sharing Tops New Technology

By Isaiah Ritzmann

In our efforts to avoid climate catastrophe better technology will be helpful but belief in technology will be disastrous. It is the true that many carbon-emitting technologies continue to become more efficient. Yet, in recent decades, more efficient technology continues to result in greater carbon emissions and worse levels of climate instability. This is because climate change is not simply a technical problem. It is also a social problem. It is a problem that we have normalized and idealized a way of life that is inherently unsustainable. As a society, we need an absolute reduction in consumption in order to reduce carbon emissions.

As Efficiency Increases So has Carbon Emissions

Economist Tim Jackson, in his book *Prosperity Without Growth* (2009), points to the apparent paradox that as efficiency has increased so have carbon emissions. One would think that better technology would mean lower emissions. Yet Jackson points out that this is misleading. Due in large part to improving technology global carbon intensities (that is the amount carbon emitted per unit of GDP) have declined by 0.7 per cent annually since 1990. If efficiency translated directly into a decline in carbon emissions this would mean, we would be now emitting about 25% less CO₂ than in 1990. Yet in the same period of time our annual carbon emissions have growth considerably. It may be hard to acknowledge but we now emit more than 50% more CO₂ than in 1990.

Why has our belief in more efficiency proven unreliable so far? The reason is relatively simple: whatever is "gained" in efficiency is usually "spent" somewhere else. Imagine a type of car that, year over year, becomes less polluting per unit. At the same time more people each year buy this type of car and the people who own it use it more and more. Overall pollution increases, even though the model itself is more efficient, because so many more people have the car and use it more often. Growth in use has

Growth in use has cancelled out growth in efficiency.

cancelled out growth in efficiency. What we have here is a case of the Jevons Paradox. The Jevons Paradox suggests that as technologies become more efficient they are used more so that, paradoxically, efficiency can increase wastefulness.

William Stanley Jevons was a 19th century British economist who first made the argument that growing efficiency leads to growing use of a resource or energy source. "It is wholly a confusion of ideas," he argued, writing about coal, "to suppose that the economic use of fuel is equivalent to a diminished consumption. The very contrary is the truth." Not only do we "spend" somewhere else what is usually "saved" through efficiency, sometimes we "spend" much more than we have "saved." Jevons' argument about coal went like this: if better technology allowed blast furnaces to make more iron with less coal profits would rise. This in turn would attract new investment. This new investment would could cause prices to fall, inducing additional demand. This would eventually mean, Jevons concluded, that "the greater number of furnaces will more than make up for a diminished consumption of each."

Consider Air Conditioning

Since Jevons first made this argument his famous paradox has proved itself over and over as technological marvels have rapidly accelerated human consumption and use of natural resources. Take air conditioners as another example. Between 1993 and 2005 the energy efficiency of air conditioners improved by 28%. Yet, during the same period of time, energy consumption by air conditioners in the average household grew by 37%. In a situation where you would have expected energy consumption to decline it has actually increased instead. The Jevons Paradox is shocking but it is also surprisingly simple to understand: wastefulness comes



from people not from technology. The story that wastefulness is only a technical issue allows us to evade responsibility. Growing technological efficiency allows us to continue telling that story: if we keep on changing our tools we don't have to change ourselves. The belief is that all we need is better tools, even as we become more wasteful people.

To avoid the worst effects of climate change we have to reduce our carbon emissions drastically, especially over the next decade. Better technology can help in this effort. Yet better technology alone will not be enough. In the past three decades' global carbon intensities have declined significantly, mainly because of better technology. Yet, over the same period of time, carbon emissions have increased. Whatever help better technology has offered has been eaten up by further economic growth. It is clear that the kind of economic growth we think we depend on, makes the tasks of reducing carbon emissions through technology alone a virtual impossibility.

Moving Towards a Sharing Economy

In *Prosperity Without Growth*, Jackson argues that if the economy keeps growing as projected and even if the amount of carbon produced from different technologies is reduced, we will end up with CO₂ emissions 80% higher in 2050 than they were in 2010 – with all the climate consequences that entails. This is because, concretely, a growing economy means more people using

the technologies more often. That means we have two choices. If we want the growth economy, we would need technology to improve about ten times faster than it is now. Or we would need to transition away from the growth economy. Given the sheer difficulty and unlikelihood – even impossibility – of technological improvement at that speed it seems like the only choice we have is to reformulate the economy not based on growth but on changing the way we work, the structure of our institutions, and how each of us can learn to live more simply.

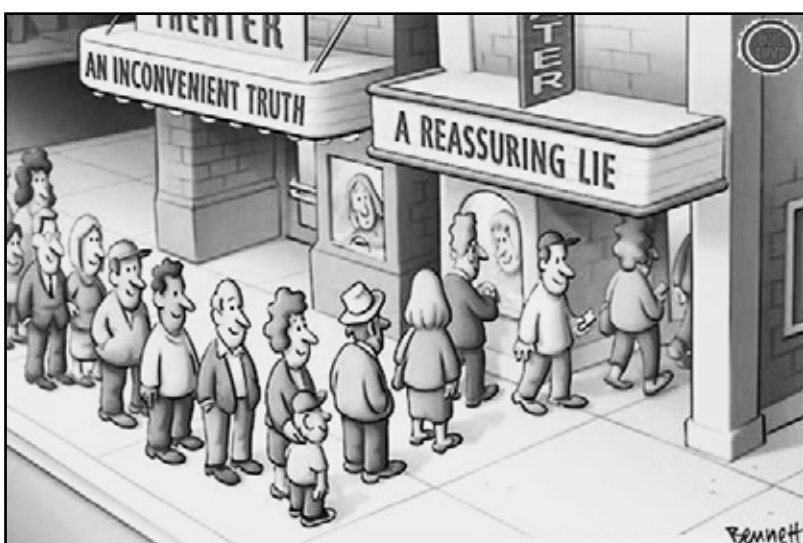
Let's be clear: The alternative is not ignoring technological efficiency. We still need better technology in our efforts to avoid climate catastrophe. But growing carbon emissions will not be solved by technology alone. As individuals and communities we need to pursue simpler ways of living that honour nature by living within our limits.

Now is the time for our culture to question an economy built on perpetual growth. A time to work on the "moral disciplines of sharing" (as Herman Daly put it). To reduce carbon, the solutions we need will involve a wider social commitment to sharing similar to what we have experienced during the Covid shutdown. This would mean personal sacrifice, living simply, and sharing. These are shared solutions that can be promoted by our political and community leaders. This is the challenge for all of us: to bring about the collective revolution of the heart that will save us from climate catastrophe.

The IPCC estimated that human activity has caused the temperature to rise 1 C (Celsius) above preindustrial levels and predicted that if it crosses a threshold beyond 1.5 C, it will unleash runaway feedback loops and a cascade of climate-change events that would decimate the Earth's ecosystem. There will be no return to the kind of life we know today. **The IPCC concluded that to avoid environmental abyss we would have to cut the emissions of global warming gases 45 percent from 2010 levels.**

For each one-degree rise in the temperature on Earth attributed to the increase of global warming emissions, the water-holding capacity of air increases by approximately 7 percent, leading to more concentrated precipitation in the clouds and the generation of more extreme water events: frigid winter temperatures and blockbuster snows; devastating spring floods; prolonged summer droughts and horrifying wildfires; and deadly category 3,4 and 5 hurricanes with untold loss of human life and property and destruction of ecosystems.

Jeremy Rifkin, *The Green New Deal*



The Iron Cage of Consumerism

By Kiegan Irish

What is consumerism? It is a slippery term to define as it has been used in a variety of ways over the years. It is rare to hear anyone explicitly defend consumerism, and yet since it has become a meaningful political and economic reality every so often the mask slips and those holding leadership positions will make some revealing comment about the relationship between buying products and the stability of our entire social order. For example, in the aftermath of the 9/11 attacks president George W. Bush urged Americans to go shopping. What could have prompted this seemingly incongruous exhortation?

To begin with, there is nothing inherently wrong with consuming energy and material. Consumption of some sort or another is necessary to our survival. But the way in which we orient our entire lives around consumption and perpetuating consumption today has deep impacts on who we are as people as well as the life supporting systems of our planet.

Economist Tim Jackson outlines the economics of consumerism in his book *Prosperity Without Growth*. He describes “the iron cage of consumerism,” an economic process which keeps the production and consumption in our economy locked in a forward motion, moving inexorably towards climate collapse. This process is driven by the profit motive on the one hand, generating ever greater levels of production, and a consumer culture on the other, generating ever greater levels of demand.

Firms seek constantly to lower costs of inputs in order to increase their profits. This in turn puts more and more people out of work who then depend on economic growth for their survival. At no point are inclusion or social goods considered in this process of expansion.

Consumerism is all consuming, from work which is designed to enhance it, to the spending that is its goal. It creates people who are competitive and resentful towards each other. It erodes the bonds of community.

Increasing Scale of Consumerism

“The iron cage of consumerism” grows the size of the economy, increasing its scale and the amount of material throughput. The continual growth of the economy becomes the only way to ensure its stability—lest too many people are left out of labour markets, threatening unrest. The added material for increased production mostly becomes waste of one form or another and has significant environmental impacts. Jackson argues that there is no evidence to suggest that economic growth of this kind will ever become environmentally sustainable.

Most energy and resource use is not taking place at the level of the average consumer and the household, however. Industry and the military remain by far the largest emitters of greenhouse gasses. Most people have no say in the use of fossil fuels and natural resources, nor in the kind of goods and services the economy produces. They are limited to (consumer) choices between the economy’s products.

This does not prevent consumerism from having a profound impact on people. It needs to enlist support from the population at large and implicate them in its operations in order to win their consent and generate a sense of identification and complicity.

Jackson claims that culture drives consumer demand and therefore increased production. People living in western capitalist economies have become uniquely disposed to expressing their desire for human connection, but also for status and distinction, through the purchase and consumption of goods and services on the market.

Unconscious Shaping of Desire

“Our enormously productive economy demands that we make consumption our way of life,” wrote the US marketing consultant Victor Lebow in 1955, ‘that we convert the buying and use of goods into rituals, that we seek our spiritual satisfactions, our ego satisfactions, in consumption.’” All of our deepest desires and needs, by the logic of consumerism, can be satisfied through making purchases and using commodities.

The marketing of consumer goods has been enormously effective at shaping the desire of individuals. Control over human desire is at the heart of the consumerist project. Advertising and policymaking induce us to desire a future of greater material wealth, greater status and recognition, and a more fully realized identity. The advertising industry spends billions of dollars yearly to shape and condition what it is we want out of our lives.

People do become invested in the system of production and consumption as Jackson says. Tim Kasser in his book *The High Cost of Materialism* carefully documents the impacts such emotional investment has on the psychological life of individuals. It affects their mental well-being; strong investment in materialistic or status-seeking values is linked to depression, anxiety, and substance abuse, among other ills.

Social theorist Mark Fisher provides useful context for these insights. He links the causes of epidemic depression and anxiety in our society today to the way capitalism has taken control of time and the future. Digital technologies have taken the logic of consumerism to the extreme. People are constantly submerged in a “capitalist cyberspace” through their devices. They are constantly exposed to ever more narrowly targeted advertising and data collections, producing an experience of life revolving around constant pleasure seeking. They desire the future advertisers and financiers have invented and they are incapable of imagining alternatives. Consumers

are locked into the capitalist future through the burden of debt.

Fisher describes the difficulty his students experience in being parted from the “stimulus matrix” of cellular phones, instant messaging, video and music streaming. They have fallen into a kind of dull narcosis, a condition he describes as “depressive hedonia.” He writes, “Depression is usually characterized by a state of anhedonia, but the condition I’m referring to is constituted not by an inability to get pleasure so much as it is by an inability to do anything else except pursue pleasure. There is a sense that ‘something is missing’—but no appreciation that this mysterious, missing enjoyment can only be accessed beyond the pleasure principle.” This experience is common to most people today, not only students or young people.

The conditions of consumerism have led to a steady increase in mental distress, producing our society in which depression, anxiety, and a breakdown of the sense of meaning and purpose are widespread.

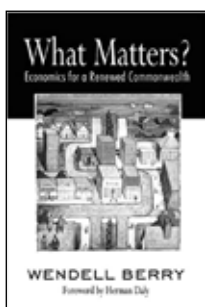
Mental Distress and Environmental Degradation

The culture of consumerism, according to this analysis, is less a driver of the economics of consumerism as it is its effect. It is an effect intended to produce in people a sense of desire for and investment in the economic order as it is—with its incredible scale of resource use threatening all life on earth.

Between the proliferation of mental distress and the environmental degradation caused by our economic system, the destructive impacts of the consumer society are clear. In the era of Covid-19, we have seen small reductions in environmental impact through decreasing consumption on the part of average consumers and households. And yet emissions from industry have continued apace. Both our desires for the future and the fate of the climate now depend on our disinvestment from the economic order of consumption and a struggle for the power to decide what goods we produce and what resources the economy uses in the first place.

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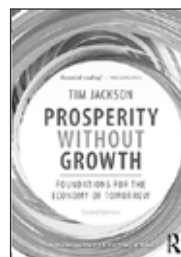
What Matters?

Economics for a Renewed Commonwealth

Wendell Berry

Over the years, Wendell Berry has sought to understand and confront the financial structure of modern society and the impact of developing late capitalism on American culture. There is perhaps no more demanding or important critique available to contemporary citizens than Berry’s writings - just as there is no vocabulary more given to obfuscation than that of economics as practiced by professionals and academics. Berry has called upon us to return to the basics. He has traced how the clarity of our economic approach has eroded over time, as the financial asylum was overtaken by the inmates, and citizens were turned from consumers - entertained and distracted - to victims, threatened by a future of despair and disillusion. For this collection, Berry offers essays from the last twenty-five years, alongside new essays about the recent economic collapse, including “Money Versus Goods” and “Faustian Economics,” treatises of great alarm and courage. He offers advice and perspective as our society attempts to steer from its present chaos and recession to a future of hope and opportunity. With urgency and clarity, Berry asks us to look toward a true sustainable commonwealth, grounded in realistic Jeffersonian principles applied to our present day.

256 pages | \$26.50 softcover



Prosperity without Growth

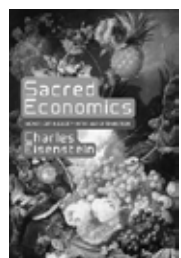
Foundations for the Economy of Tomorrow

Tim Jackson

What can prosperity possibly mean in a world of environmental and social limits?

Prosperity without Growth was a landmark in the sustainability debate, challenging conventional economic goals: the continued pursuit of exponential economic growth. Its findings provoked controversy, inspired debate and led to a new wave of research building on its arguments and conclusions. In this updated and revised edition, Jackson demonstrates that building a ‘post-growth’ economy is a precise, definable and meaningful task. He sets out the dimensions of that task: the nature of enterprise; the quality of our working lives; investment and money supply. Can the economy of tomorrow protect employment, facilitate social investment, reduce inequality and deliver both ecological and financial stability?

350 pages | \$30.95 softcover



Sacred Economics – Charles Eisenstein

Money, Gift, and Society in the Age of Transition

Charles Eisenstein

Sacred Economics traces the history of money from ancient gift economies to modern capitalism, revealing how the money system has contributed to alienation, competition, and scarcity, destroyed community, and necessitated endless growth. Today, these trends have reached their extreme - but in the wake of their collapse, we may find great opportunity to transition to a more connected, ecological, and sustainable way of being. Eisenstein also considers the personal dimensions of this transition, speaking to those concerned with “right livelihood” and how to live according to their ideals in a world seemingly ruled by money.

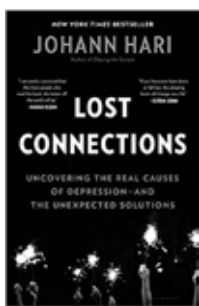
496 pages | \$26.95 softcover

Lost Connections: Uncovering the Real Causes of Depression and the Unexpected Solutions & The High Price of Materialism

Book Reviews
by Adrianna Woodburn

How do we understand depression and why is it so prevalent in our society? Johann Hari's *Lost Connections Uncovering the Real Causes of Depression and the Unexpected Solutions* explores how community can save our depressed culture and give us a fighting chance in a materialistic world. Beginning with his own decade long struggle with anti-depressants Hari sparks discussion around what even constitutes an anti-depressant. He encourages us to understand how depression can cause heartache, especially when we live in a

skyscraper of depression and reality in a materialistic world while conveying that community can form the foundation of psychological health. He explores how depression isn't merely a chemical imbalance in one's brain but rather cause for much bigger concerns. He writes, "you are suffering from a social and spiritual imbalance in how we live" (257). Our very accumulation of possessions and independence has pushed us far away from a meaningful life and right into depression. So how do we navigate a solution out of depression? Well, this will require a lot of work and exploration of our understanding of life and community.



Lost Connections: Uncovering the Real Causes of Depression and the Unexpected Solutions

Johann Hari

When Johann was a teenager, he had gone to his doctor and explained that he felt like pain was leaking out of him, and he couldn't control it or understand it. Some of the solutions his doctor offered had given him some relief - but he remained in deep pain. As an adult, he went on a forty-thousand-mile journey across the world to interview the leading experts about what causes depression and anxiety, and what solves them. He learned there is scientific evidence for nine different causes of depression and anxiety - and that this knowledge is about how we connect to one another. Read about ground breaking research on moving past depression.

336 pages | \$24.50 hardcover

materialistic world. Hari encourages a radical rethinking. This isn't your everyday depression text as it sparks meaningful and thought-provoking discussions. Hari reflects on western culture and how it has negated foundational concepts of life producing an utterly disconnected culture to the point where we can't comprehend human suffering (43). Hari begins this skillful unraveling of depression and anxiety and how truly, both are human responses to life going wrong (53). Hari returns to ideas throughout the chapters building one by one, crafting a

Through several intriguing case studies Hari demonstrates the foundational problem of depression and our western way of digesting it. An aspect that stood out the most was a study exploring obese individuals. Hari notes the obese individuals for one particular study developed depression/anxiety not from their weight. Instead, their weight was a coping mechanism or solution for their depression and other mental health problems sometimes arising from abuse. Moreover, obesity only covered up what Hari terms as "junk values" (97) which when broken



The High Price of Materialism

Tim Kasser

A scientific explanation of how our contemporary culture of consumerism and materialism affects our everyday happiness and psychological health. Other writers have shown that once we have sufficient food, shelter, and clothing, further material gains do little to improve our well-being. Kasser goes beyond these findings to investigate how people's materialistic desires relate to their well-being. He shows that people whose values center on the accumulation of wealth or material possessions face a greater risk of unhappiness, including anxiety, depression, low self-esteem, and problems with intimacy -- regardless of age, income, or culture.

165 pages | \$30.50 softcover

down suggest an overtly materialistic culture leads to depression. Further, said depression turns into more spending, and more depression. As these junk values come to the surface even more problems are illuminated and, as this study demonstrated, sometimes those problems are covered up with obesity. Hari urges us to consider not what is wrong, but what has happened to us (115). Tim Kasser writes in *The High Price of Materialism* that materialism burdens the soul which eventually creates strain and stress (xi). As we exist in a culture based around materialistic goals, depression reaches new heights and feelings of isolation rise. Through a newfound community these individuals were able to bridge connections and recognize that their feelings and experiences were "normal". As we establish a sense of community self-love can emerge and reconfigure our culture.

Additionally, Hari explores a community in Berlin which sought out more affordable rent. The neighbourhood was on the verge of collapsing but through a street protest a remarkably diverse community was born. In a neighbourhood where people originally ignored one another, a young man became friends with a strict retired teacher and devoutly religious individuals opened their homes to LGBTQ+ people. This protest brought forth autonomy for the individuals. Their homes and neighbourhood was brought back to life through community. Neighbours opened their doors to one another and accepted each other and Nuriye (the first protestor) chose

not to take her own life. Once this neighbourhood began to value community, their lives were altered completely and many opened up about their depression. Through their community the neighbours were able to become happier people. This just furthers the notion that those with less materialistic ideologies and deeper relationships are happier (Kasser 5). The neighbourhood became something more than a strip of houses.

Hari's biggest take away is not something simple or necessarily easy to encapsulate, yet it boils down to a comprehensive idea: if we want to live a fuller life we need a greater sense of control, a strong fulfilling community, happiness and security. Hari demonstrates through several unique examples that when individuals have more control and a strong community, depression and anxiety was treated or was very low to begin with. Kasser supports these notions as well by demonstrating how materialism actually works against our very conception of satisfaction and psychological health (3). So, instead of embracing the attitude of working for the weekend and filling our homes with stuff, a community and living within our means presents an even greater beauty: a life with less depression and more connection. Depression will not be something we can solve overnight, and it won't be something we can do alone. In fact, it will require a complete rethinking of our culture. Hari writes, "My desire for a solution that was private and personal - the psychological equivalent of a pill - was in fact a symptom of my depression and anxiety in the first place" (183).



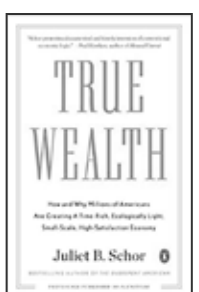
The Green New Deal

Why the Fossil Fuel Civilization will Collapse by 2028, and the Bold Economic Plan to Save Life on Earth

Jeremy Rifkin

A new vision for America's future is quickly gaining momentum. The Green New Deal has caught fire in activist circles and become a central focus in the national conversation, setting the agenda for a new political movement that will likely transform the entire US and world economy. Although the details remain to be hashed out, it has inspired the millennial generation, now the largest voting bloc in the country, to lead America on the issue of climate change. In *The Green New Deal*, New York Times best-selling author and renowned economic and social theorist Jeremy Rifkin delivers the political narrative, technical framework, and economic plan for the debate now taking center stage across America. The concurrence of a stranded fossil fuel assets bubble and a green political vision opens up the possibility of a massive global paradigm shift into a post-carbon ecological era, hopefully in time to prevent a temperature rise that will tip us over the edge into runaway climate change.

304 pages | \$37.99 hardcover



True Wealth

Juliet Schor

In *True Wealth*, economist Juliet B. Schor rejects the sacrifice message, with the insight that social innovations and new technology can simultaneously enhance our lives and protect the planet. Schor shares examples of urban farmers, DIY renovators, and others working outside the conventional market to illuminate the path away from the work-and-spend cycle and toward a new world rich in time, creativity, information, and community.

272 pages | \$24.00 softcover



The Curse of Bigness

Tim Wu

We live in an age of extreme corporate concentration, in which global industries are controlled by just a few giant firms - big banks, big pharma, and big tech, just to name a few. But concern over what Louis Brandeis called the "curse of bigness" can no longer remain the province of specialist lawyers and economists, for it has spilled over into policy and politics, even threatening democracy itself. History suggests that tolerance of inequality and failing to control excessive corporate power may prompt the rise of populism, nationalism, extremist politicians, and fascist regimes. Wu warns, we are in grave danger of repeating the signature errors of the twentieth century. In *The Curse of Bigness*, Columbia professor Tim Wu tells of how figures like Brandeis and Theodore Roosevelt first confronted the democratic threats posed by the great trusts of the Gilded Age - but the lessons of the Progressive Era were forgotten in the last 40 years. He calls for recovering the lost tenets of the trustbusting age as part of a broader revival of American progressive ideas as we confront the fallout of persistent and extreme economic inequality."

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After the Gig

How the Sharing Economy Got Hijacked and How to Win It Back

Juliet Schor

The "sharing economy" was supposed to transform work—giving earners flexibility, autonomy, and a decent income. But a dark side took over: exploited Uber drivers, neighborhoods ruined by Airbnb, racial discrimination, and rising carbon emissions. The basic model—a peer-to-peer structure augmented by digital tech—still holds potential. Schor presents a compelling argument that we can engineer a reboot: through regulatory reforms and cooperative platforms owned and controlled by users, an equitable and truly shared economy is still possible.

Available September 2020 | 272 pages | \$24.95 hardcover

The Social Recession

continued from page 1

million jobs were eliminated. The same is true in Canada where three million jobs were created in the past ten years and more than three million jobs have been eliminated in a matter of weeks.

We have woken up to realize that we don't have a jobs policy. This past round of job creation has not only been precarious, but this extra work is undermining the Earth's fragile ecology. Even though important jobs in manufacturing, health, community services, and agriculture are at best prioritized as secondary. Why else are these sectors scrambling to adapt to the Covid situation.

To address the Social Recession, we need to zero in on how our economy is wasteful. We need to find savings by harnessing internal resources. We need to strengthen community at the grassroots.

Take the \$7.5 Billion that is spent on advertising in Canada, mostly through the Internet. What about the poor social outcomes that come from creating unrealistic images of wealth, status and power that will not be attained, only desired? The trick of advertising is to keep everyone on a constant consumer treadmill, while Covid has shown this faux exercising to be exhausting. Is this useful spending?

How about the time spent on commuting? In 2016 about 1.5 million Canadians spent at least 2 hours commuting from home to work and back each day. How many others spend an hour commuting each day? What about the loss to personal time, the constant stress of driving, and the cost to relationships? Covid gives us time to rethink the cost of commuting, Climate Change makes it imperative.

Homelessness Rising

Homelessness is the opposite problem. In cities across North America and in our own city the number of homeless people continues to rise. This is a misallocation of resources, leaving many without access to shelter. There is a significant cost to police, health, municipalities and social services who spend

If we want to change the conditions of the Social Recession, we have to triple our community building efforts

precious resources blocking access to buildings, moving people around, dealing with drug addictions and worsening physical health, and playing musical chairs with limited housing units. The worst is the drift to criminality for those shut out. In the midst of gangs, drugs, abject poverty and violence, the homeless are dispossessed without the means to flee or find alternatives. Each year, in downtowns the social cost keeps adding up and the response is not up to the challenge.

The excesses of a consumer society do little to build the common good. Why attempt to build community when everyone is distracted by the anxious need to be entertained. Communities don't hold together, so why root and invest one's energy into a neighbourhood, especially when there is always a better one around the corner. Who bothers to search out work where pay is secondary to the quality of the relationships and the service to the community. As Tim Kasser points out in *The High Cost of Materialism*, people's fragile self-worth, their poor relationships, their insecurities, these are all to be exploited by the consumerist system hoping for people to choose rootlessness over building the community around them. This is the root of the Social Recession.

How to Build Community in a Covid World?

Growing carbon emissions, increasing debt, poor social outcomes are all pointing us to recommit to reworking the economy. How do we exit from what Tim Jackson calls "the iron cage of consumerism?" The transition will integrate environmental protection with a deeper focus on building families and neighbourhoods by asking these kinds of questions. How can we strengthen communities? How can we burn less carbon? How can we

strengthen the connections between each other? How can we lessen the material waste of overconsumption?

Here is a short list of immediate projects. We have learned from Covid and Climate Change that we must reduce commuting and especially travel by air until real carbon alternatives are found. If we work less hours, there is more time to get around by bike, to cook at home and to produce food in our neighbourhoods. Working less results in freed up hours that can be used to develop new skills and interests. This is a positive way of building neighbourhood connections and social trust.

We need to reinspire job creation aimed at expanding urban agriculture, jobs focused on making buildings more energy efficient, jobs to create community resources to help people live in the community with less money, jobs that plant forests and naturalize paved over environments. These are all jobs that meaningfully start to address Climate Change and make our communities better. This the work we can do to overcome the Social Recession.

Recommitting to Building Relationships

If we want to change the conditions of the Social Recession, we have to create time to support each other. The goal of the economy and consumerism is to keep our relationships guarded and on edge. During the lockdown, where shopping was almost prohibited, it brought into focus meaningful family connections. The lockdown demonstrated the importance of building a society where trust and companionship is a primary goal. There is a great deal of room to expand our ability to help people through troubled times. We need is to reduce the demands of the economy for the sake of building our communities. At The Working Centre we see the importance of allowing people the space to problem solve together. Each day, in all our public spaces, we combine useful tools with a community commitment to listen and support people to overcome issues that get in the way. This is the kind of work that builds community and enhances our social relationships.

The Work Ahead

The flashing signs all around us call for a rethinking of our economic direction. Our model of growth is leading to increased ecological degradation and the decline of community and social connections. We need a renewed commitment to enhance well-being at the community level.

Juliet Schor in *True Wealth* (2011) noted that, "we will not arrest ecological decline or regain financial health without also introducing a different rhythm of work, consumption and daily life, as well as alterations in a number of system-wide structures.

This week, countries around the world are making renewable energy investments. For example, the European Commission is creating a euro-recovery plan focused on promoting electric vehicle sales, renewable energy projects and making new, green technologies economically viable. The U.K. will invest \$2.4 billion to promote cycling and walking. South Korea plans to double solar incentives to promote rooftop systems in homes and commercial buildings. China will build more than 78,000 electric-vehicle charging stations. Renewable energy is a softer path towards creating a society that is distributive, regenerative and where limits and relationships are central.

In the next edition, we will look at positive ideas that will substantially reduce our dependence on the burning of fossil fuel and also create wider and deeper community. We have to work together to find the savings to invest in a different future. How can we quickly replace carbon burning vehicles with bikes, trucks, and cars, while investing in solar and wind renewable energy? The same kind of thinking has to be applied to urban agriculture and as well, developing alternatives to our overprocessed food economy. We can apply the same thinking to building sustainable structures of connectedness in our neighbourhoods.

The Covid shutdown has opened up immense possibilities for a new future. We can overcome the Social Recession with new thinking, acting and building relationships towards a better common future.



Fresh Ground Online Workshops

We invite you to join us for a weekly online discussion where we explore the ways that each of us can take action and help to create a hopeful and regenerative future. Come and swap ideas, gather resources, and build solidarity and creativity as we sort through these complexities.

All are welcome!

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June 25th | *Food as Ecology and Nourishment: Regeneration, Reconnecting to Soil and the Outdoors*

July 2nd | *Getting Around the Slow Way: Transportation, Community Bonds, Changing our Relationship to Space*

July 9th | *Building Resilient Communities: Developing the Strategies our Communities Need in Climate Insecurity*

If you are interested in participating, please send us an email to:

freshground@theworkingcentre.org