

Redefining People in Sustainable Economies: The “consumer” has to go !

Sabrina Chakori and Dr Peter Daniels

The concepts of “production, and especially “consumption”, do not sit easily within the activities, motives and socio-economic structures required for sustainability and the generation of real and sustained levels of human wellbeing. A prime example is the central notion of “consumers” in the depiction of the economic systems that play such an important role in directing contemporary, high-income societies. The idea of a “consumer” as perhaps the central actor in the economy comes from an inappropriate mindset or ideology founded on a assumption that wellbeing is mainly derived from transforming “raw materials” from nature and consuming or using up these resources and their products. “Production” also reinforces this idea that wellbeing tends to necessarily involves transformation and substantial intervention often with high entropy and dislocation from nature as major outcomes. Both “production” and “consumption” imply destructive actions and losses from natural capital that will easily be replaced, regenerated or technological fixed.

In this workshop, we aim to think about the need for reconfiguring these roles given to humans in society and the powerful economic sub-system.

We will have an interactive session to help

- (1) Identify what motives, goals and desired outcomes actually lie behind people’s collective quest for wellbeing (versus just a desire for “consumption”)
- (2) Discuss how to mobilize social movements bringing back awareness on our role in a new economic system with particular attention to the “consumer”-citizen nexus.
- (3) Identify dimensions that can help us propose and promote a new term to replace “consumers” as the central actors in the economy – with a notion of people that is more compatible with sustainable societies.

Conference Themes: exchange, money, care

Bio:

Sabrina Chakori holds bachelor in Biology from the University of Geneva and a Master in Environmental Economics at the University of Queensland. She redirected her interests from science to economics, convinced that to solve the interlinked social and ecological crises that we are facing, we need to change the root of our economic system. Sabrina is the youngest certified Caring Economy Advocate in Australia (Center for Partnership Studies – USA) and in the last 10 years she has been active in many NGOs, in politics in Switzerland and she volunteered in many parts of the world such as in Europe, Australia, Kenya, Mexico and Ecuador.

Dr Peter Daniels is a Senior Lecturer and member of the Environmental Futures Centre at Griffith University in Brisbane, Australia. His major expertise lies in the field of ecological economics. Dr Daniels' research interests centre upon ethical aspects of economic systems and the scientific analysis of the economy leading to appropriate and effective strategies for achieving a sustainable society. Peter is internationally recognised for his work exploring the relationship between ethics and values (especially Buddhism), economic systems, and the environment and has presented keynote and general presentations at numerous related conferences and events.