

“Every time you spend money, you’re casting a vote for the kind of world you want”

Anna Lappé, activist and writer.

All human beings consume things to meet their fundamental needs. We all eat, wear clothes, furnish our homes, travel to work or visit friends, use healthcare and other social services. But in a world of finite resources, today’s neo-liberal consumer society has moved away from the old traditions of consuming only what we need and repairing what is broken, to a society of “must-have” era of industrial production where food, goods and services are all part of a fossil fuel-based, excessive society of waste and over-exploitation of our planetary resources. This model is based on unsustainable production, and profitmaking that has no regard for the impacts on humankind or the planet. Land-grabbing, over-exploitation of natural resources, privatisation of the Commons are all leading to massive poverty, migration and ill-health. The hard-won social services are being dismantled in the on-going multiple crises. These key issues are deeply embedded in the capitalist paradigm and how it operates at global level today.

Yet solidarity economy is a road that can provide the necessary way forward by building a paradigm change. It is a multi-faceted complex approach. One of the key levers that has emerged as an answer is responsible consumption. From public procurement to Community Supported Agriculture, solidarity purchasing groups of all sorts, community-driven and empowered local services, buying local ethical products and community banking, to (re)learning to repair and not just throw away and replace things are all part of this approach. Several networks such as Transition Towns, RIPESS and its various members are already on this road.

This workshop seeks to address the following questions:

- What exactly is responsible consumption?
- How does it work?
- How can it be addressed by organised civil society?
- What is the role Local Authorities, national and international institutions?
- How can we have a positive impact on policy-making and legislation at local, national and international level through advocacy and other actions?
- How can SSE change the existing paradigm?
- What kinds of solutions already exist, and what need to be created?
- How can we achieve a higher level of joined-up thinking?
- How can we influence consumer attitudes and raise public awareness of the urgent need to change the paradigm?

The methodology of the workshop will be based on that used in Lux'09, (illustrate, discuss and propose), and will be interactive.

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