

AN ALTRUISTIC & COMPETITIVE ECONOMY

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An economic model based upon an altruistic relationship with our shared planet does not mean that there is no competitive economy. It can be based upon competition between altruistic endeavours to maintain the quality of our biosphere, a better and sustainable economic model can emerge in a global age of green collar workers and green industries.

The Greenhouse gases have built up and we cannot simply turn off the tap, so to speak. An economy of boom and bust as we experienced in the twentieth century should give us the impetus to re-evaluate the insane and truly de-pressing need to increase GDP based upon the rape of nature and labour year on year. If we look at any graph since the dawn of the Industrial Revolution, the depressions - e.g. the 30's are mere blips in an inexorable growth of economies of those who happen to have the natural resources beneath their feet to exploit, or to raid other countries resources under the pretext of helping them develop. Trade deficits come down during recessions and depressions simply because less is imported, and then go up again when growth returns.

What is the real issue? Will we, in the west, ever be able to accept that we have a standard of living that is quite acceptable? Why do we have to keep plundering to grow? Can we not develop new ways of looking at the economy of the world which registers a positive rather than negative impact upon our biosphere? When will we realise that we are comfortable, very comfortable, and we need to begin to recognise with some urgency that being generous to others will be repaid with a safer and more secure global society and planet.

It seems that we usually achieve some progress in ways to better produce energy and manage our planet when we sense that growth is strong. This means we feel more comfortable and perhaps allow generosity to be an agent for change. There is little distribution of wealth generated from the oil and gas fields. It remains in the hands of so few, and they seem incapable of generating new industries or investments in a new environmentally intelligent age - reference the United Arab Emirates, particularly Dubai and Abu Dhabi. Playing with the 'scarcity' of oil and gas distorts the world economy and produces the most horrendous results. If these oligarchs and city states were to invest into the new biospheric industries rather than stockpiling wealth by exploiting the money-markets, buying into banks and real estate in heavily dependent fossil fuel countries, or building unnecessary cities, then they and we, the consumers of these cities, could begin to look at a new economy. Unfortunately, and regrettably, at present we are not.

The economic model of "growth no matter the cost or consequences" has to be challenged, and we need to find new ways by which we can become economically creative in a benignly positive way.

Equally, carbon emissions have to stop 'growing' through less consumption and more environmentally benign industries. We have to encourage 'living within our means' and in ways that our planet can tolerate and support. There is an urgent need to begin making major investments in biospheric products, industries and management techniques on a level that will eventually replace the old industrial processes. The growth of 'green collar' employment is both necessary and intelligent.

Politically, periods of bust, depressions and recessions are not helpful to environmental ambitions.

Biospheric concerns will be replaced by the political concerns of unemployment and stimulating growth. But why not stimulate growth by creating strong investment

opportunities in environmentally intelligent industries, and encouraging employment in these industries.

Regrettably, and probably inevitably, when dole queues lengthen, the politician's sight shortens. They will not be looking very far ahead. Government incentives and the markets should be capable of reacting to incentives to promote those industries that are benign, or even better, positive towards our planet.

I wrote back in 1993 in (well) Connected Architecture that a new economic model was required, and that the whole point of the study of economy and purpose of economists was to help us 'better manage the world'. We can surely reconstruct our economy based upon an altruistic model, but doing so slowly may prove to have huge repercussions for all mankind.

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