Citizens of western societies are facing what Nathan Stegall (2006:57) describes as a complex sociological dilemma; the lifestyle that we have adopted is rapidly eroding our ability to survive. We have not yet been up for the task of large-scale lifestyle changes. Despite a growing number of climate change mitigation policies the annual emission of greenhouse gases grew more quickly from 2000-2010 than in the three previous decades. The G20 countries represent 2/3 of the world’s population and applaud the new economic opportunities to come when the middle class swell to 3.2 billion by 2020 and to 4.9 billion by 2030 in recent policy notes, but there is a need for alternative models than the short-term pleasures of unlimited market growth. How could education build the capacity of new generations to rethink consumption culture and transform deep-rooted structures of society towards ways of living within the capacity of our supporting eco-systems? I explore three key texts on reflective inquiry: How We Think? (Dewey 1933), The Reflective Practitioner (Schön 1983), The Pedagogy of the Oppressed (Freire 1970), and look into how each of them could inform the education of aware, critical and empowered consumers. I propose a generic model on which learning experiences could be designed to enhance critical literacy. The point of departure is the students beliefs and habits of consumption. Introduced to a disorienting dilemma that challenges their personal encounters with the world the students use systemic design methods to identify ethical dilemmas and inequities of consumer culture and explore new modes of production, trade and consumption.

*Keywords: systemic design, critical literacy, citizenship, consumer education*