Design, quality and consumption

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According to the Waste Framework Directive (2008/89) released by the European Union, waste reduction will be the most efficient contributor to a sustainable future environment. Movements like the French décroissance have embraced this initiative by challenging the economic system, by demanding no growth; meanwhile, the “cradle-to-cradle” movement seeks out a different solution by designing more environmentally friendly and sustainable artefacts. Waste reduction puts the economy and consumer culture at the core of the world’s environmental problems. The ideals of anthropocentrism which is deeply rooted in the Western culture of consumerism will be questioned in this paper and linked to educational paradigms.

The prevention of waste has basic cultural implications; it also challenges the economic system of growth. As such, the waste problem is both a cultural challenge and a technical one. Some leading low-price companies have understood the growing interest for environmental sustainability, and they have sought to align themselves with this movement by branding themselves as environmentally friendly (e.g., Gina Tricot, H&M). This seems like an antagonistic contradiction, as the main task for such companies is to sell more goods, not less. Their “we are environmentally sustainable” rhetoric has, however, not damaged their market share; rather, quite the opposite has happened.

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