

Excessive Consumption Is a Real Issue

We cannot become sustainable if we do not reign in our consumption



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Today I was moving rooms. Since I came back to Germany and lived with my dad, I have been staying in the smallest room in the apartment. Everything in there screamed of temporary dwelling. The reality is, however, that I am not in Berlin temporarily. So, my dad suggested switching rooms. I get his old office. And his office moves into my current room. I am a kind of minimalist. I am trying to reign my consumption wherever I can. But I am happy with a bit of extra space. And I did invest in some decent furniture.

The sofa, which had been my bed had to go. Some thrift store employees will pick it up in a few days. It is in mint condition. But I am no longer 25. Sleeping on a sofa for long periods takes a toll on my health. So, I bought a new bed. That is not a crime. That is the point of buying things. They should serve some very concrete and real needs. A good bed is a very important need.

Today was the big day. We made the move. Or, at least we tried. We did not finish. I realized, how big of a difference there is between me and my dad when it comes to consumption.

Consumption Mostly Fills Emotional Needs

There is just so much stuff. 8 shelves, 3 dressers. All of them are full of stuff. My current room took about 20 minutes to pack down. We did not finish the office. We moved all the furniture. But all the stuff needs to go back into the drawers and shelves. I tried urging him to get rid of some of the stuff. He did, but only reluctantly.

As I said, I understand where he is coming from. He grew up in East Germany. Back then, most people did have their material needs covered. But many regular items, which people in the west took for granted, they could not obtain. Not because they couldn't afford it. They just were not available. Once the wall fell, many East German citizens were all too happy to embrace the consumerist culture. My parents are not an exception.

I guess the memories from those times make it much harder for him to let go of stuff. I, on the other hand, find it easy. But I also know that I can get what I want anytime. If I am willing to throw some money after it. Most consumption fills emotional needs.

We Cannot Continue Like This



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The inconvenient truth is, however, that we cannot continue like this. Our planet is dying. The path to sustainability is laced with unwilling politicians and greedy capitalists. But we cannot continue to hope that they will eventually come around. They will not. So there is just one thing we as individuals can do. Educate ourselves about stupid greenwashing scams. And severely reduce our consumption. We need to hit this system, where it hurts the most. If we don't consume, they will not make profits.

Does that mean we should live like hermits? No. But we do need to become minimalist. Minimalist in the sense that we only buy things, if they solve a real problem for us. Like having a real bed. But we cannot buy into the bullshit consumption. Like buying machines to solve a non-existing problem. You know what I am talking about. Electric mug-warmers. Electric self-stirring cups. New mobile phones that offer no actual new features.

We really need to think about what we need. And how we can cover this need in the best way. If you are privileged and do not need a car, don't get one. If your computer does the job, don't buy a new one. Same with your mobile phone. And for heaven's sake, stop falling for the temptation to buy weird stuff at your supermarket.

Personally, I dread the day when my parents will leave this earth. I know that it is likely to happen in the not-too-distant future. Even then, they

might still be around when shit really hits the fan. Either way, I fear that I will have a massive garbage-hauling job in front of me. But I still love them all the same.