

"Faced with a food and energy crisis, how can society improve its well-being?"

Summary

At a first glance it might seem that food and energy crisis can only disable our efforts of improving human well-being. On the second look though, we might perceive the coming crisis as an incentive of improvement. Our well-being can be improved in days of crisis by understanding what well-being really means and by developing its aspects that have been, due to our emphasis on material side, neglected for a long time. But the material side can be improved as well, by developing efficiency at every aspects of our private and public life.

Essay

At first I assume we need to try to answer one basic question: What exactly is well-being and how can we achieve (and preferably improve) it? Well-being is tightly connected with standard of living, but we can not link it directly to material satisfaction. It is rather a combination of factors that are able to fulfil our needs and contribute to our happiness. Including such aspects as for example satisfaction coming from work, successful relationships, personal security and others; each contributing to development of our creativity, diversity of our individual potential.

The food and energy crisis certainly seems to threaten our well-being, or at least its material part, but on the other hand it also brings lots of positive incentives alongside. We might try to understand the situation as a chance to find new, more human and environment friendly ways to bring well-being for every human being on our planet. One of the greatest obstacles that prevent us from thinking about current crisis in broader scope is that the crisis is often considered in material Neo-Malthusian way. Sometimes we seem to forget that most of earth natural resources (be it non-renewable, renewable as well as human one) are consumed by developed countries and that the western consumption is accompanied by huge wasting - visible and a hidden one, which might be better to describe as a structural inefficiency.

The inefficiency is embedded in most of the ways we use natural resources and it touches production and consumption at every stage of their lifecycles. Energy inefficiency is accompanied by material inefficiency and has a great impact on whole environmental efficiency. A great contributor that enhances manifestations of inefficiency is our global economical system (which should respond to human value system and human needs, but seems to be concerned more with economic growth than fulfilling human needs). In fact by unconscious agreeing with the economical we subsidize inefficiency in global trade as well as in technologies and whole industries. We need to understand that lots of things we produce are created per se or maybe for sake of rise in GDP.

We have been able to observe global economics practices such as outsourcing, sub-contracting and their implication in the race to the bottom to observe destroying local economies and undermine community coherence and self-subsistence. One of the solutions in economical

sector might be to rethink our attitude towards and bigger emphasis on localisation a short circuiting that could bring more efficiency and could also contribute to non-material side of well-being.

To make use of the current crisis for improvement of our well-being we need to solve two interrelated spheres: private and public sector. In the public sector we need to develop more efficient industries as well as cut the ones those have been built mainly for the sake of economic growth. We also need to change institutions so that they would operate in favour of human beings and their well-being.

At a private level the solution is no sacrifice. We should try to rethink our attitude towards life. Find new, attractive sustainable lifestyles that could bring us more satisfying life with less resources demand. To achieve it we need to try to distinguish our needs from our greed, unmask them, understand their implications and if needed to get rid of them. We have to try to be more compassionate and efficient in our everyday life. That way we might be able to understand what a real well-being means to spread it hopefully throughout the whole world. As an example of rethinking our daily attitude might serve our attitude towards food. The way western society consumes is a way from sustainable pattern and is in every way inefficient – from energy, environment the economical point of view. Dietary pattern that emphasis long distance trade and consumption of large amounts of tropical fruits as well as animal products is far from being sustainable and implies great resources wasting. One part of the solution of this problem is to descend on the food chain and try to consume locally grown organic products. The other part is to change the food production system to more environmental and people friendly. I believe we also need to understand that food and energy crisis is very much related to equality and global consciousness. We need to place emphasis on our communities and through global society raise thought emancipation of people all around the world. Our well-being can be improved in days of crisis by understanding what well-being really means and by developing its aspects that have been, due to our emphasis on material side, neglected for a long time.