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Unraveling the Root Issues of Material-based Success: Growing Options for Sustainable Change

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Hyperconsumption is not working. The current paradigm for success in the United States rests heavily on the laurels of material wealth. However, research and data show that material wealth is in fact not improving our quality of life. Moreover, this consumption “as if we have infinite resources” is not sustainable economically, socially or ecologically. As the presence of concerns about our material-based model of success gains prominence in the socio-political stage, we must begin to imagine new paradigms. I set out to deconstruct our current scenario of hyperconsumption and to look for sprouts of ideas and projects that lend themselves to sustainable change. Following this critique we can better understand the economic, sociological and ecological demand for making sustainability a structural goal and measure of success. I argue and try to demonstrate that the most promising pathway towards such institutional change revolves around community interaction and a re-grounding of civic participation. Finally, we consider the potential to construct these community-oriented changes into our built environment and technological and political frameworks.

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