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"Decentralized Production and Affective Economies: Theorizing the Ecological Implications of Localism"

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In this paper I examine the contemporary trend toward de-industrialized and decentralized production with a view to its implications for ecological sustainability. Specifically, I suggest we can understand the potential positive ecological implications of such trends by reconceptualizing "incomplete information" in markets, which is often understood as a key way in which markets fail to solve or forestall environmental problems. One promising aspect of decentralized production is its ability to facilitate greater flows of "information" in the market, as consumers bring themselves into closer proximity to production processes. However, posing the problem and the promise of different regimes of production in terms of information assumes fixed preferences and desires on the part of individual consumers and producers, and it ascribes to the non-human components of the production process only the potential to meet preexisting human desires. I argue for expanding the logic of "information problems" to consider how affects as well as information flow alongside materialities in cycles of production and consumption. Rather than seeing consumer "preferences" as desires inherent in individuals, I claim we should understand affects—including different modes of acquisitiveness as well as ecological and social sensibilities—as the emergent properties of specific assemblages of humans and non-humans that comprise and perform processes of production, distribution, and consumption. To help explicate this claim I first explore the ecological implications of the local food movement, and a specific attempt to capitalize on emerging technologies to decentralize production: Marcin Jakubowski's Open Source Ecology project. (Text from author's abstract)

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