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Measures of Saving the World

It is a lot easier to imagine the world ending than to changing for the better

John Jordan

The presently dominating model of human “management” of planet Earth has reached the end of the line. Capitalism in the form of neoliberal market economy has resulted and is still resulting in a plethora of crises: “financial bubbles, unemployment, crisis of distribution, climate crisis, energy crisis, hunger crisis, crisis of consumerism, crisis of meaning, crisis of democracy” (Christian Felber). A system geared to profit maximization and competition with no regard for human and natural resources is a permanent hazard for social and ecological peace on earth.

It is becoming more and more apparent that we have reached a dead end and many of us are deeply thinking about viable alternatives, reflecting their own position, and their own thinking and action. Already some time ago, Susan George, a political scientist based in France, revoked a dictum of neoliberalism. In opposition to the knockout argument of *There is no Alternative* she phrased the slogan *TATA—There Are Thousands of Alternatives*. The slogan that has accompanied the worldwide Social Forum since right from the beginning, which is since 2001, communicates a similarly hopeful and activating spirit: *Another World is Possible*.

It is within each and everyone’s discretion to make a start on this by him- or herself and not to wait for regulations from whatever authority, or to wait and hope—after all, the questions and challenges are also too complex for one big universally valid solution.

We’ll save the world by ourselves, each and every one of us. To critically examine your own position is the starting point for this, to analyze how your own work affects the world around

you. Does it primarily focus on your self-interest or does it keep the big picture in view? Preferably, your own aspirations should serve the general public, in the truest sense of the phrase ‘common good’—to the benefit of all.

Christian Felber, a writer working from Austria, is one of those who work at a concrete alternative. The model of the *Economy of the Common Good* he formulated “promotes and rewards the same qualities of behavior and values which make our human and ecological relationships successful: confidence building, respect, collaboration, solidarity and sharing”. The model starts from the assumption backed by scientific research that man is essentially “a social being liable to collaborate that is inherently emphatic and ready to help, and has a highly developed sense of justice”.

From the part of artists too, there are continuously significant and serious impulses in the discourse circling around alternative approaches to our behavior in the world. The artist and activist John Jordan, who has acquired renown for his activities as a critic of globalization, is one of these visionaries and takes up the concept of *Nowtopianism*—the art of the future performed in the present. According to him, a fundamental rethink is necessary for a new, conscious and careful way to deal with the world and as a consequence thereof art that affects every area of life—art that “embeds itself in our homes and offices, shapes our meetings and gatherings, suffuses our bedrooms and kitchens, designs our celebrations and resistance, organizes our villages and cities”.

Apart from wording utopias (or nowtopias), art can first and foremost communicate responsibility and permanent protest against the status quo. Radical thought, analysis and criticism of civilization, solidarity action, empowerment and individual directions—realized in both contextually and esthetically powerful artifacts may rightly be expected from artists dealing with questions of alternatives in their works.

The range of topics the artists will work on is diverse and encompasses ecology and economy, politics and society with a focus on the following aspects:

* resources * environmental protection * recycling *sustainability *energy *mobility * consumerism * responsibility * redistribution * empowerment * self-organization * solidarity

Margarethe Makovec & Anton Lederer