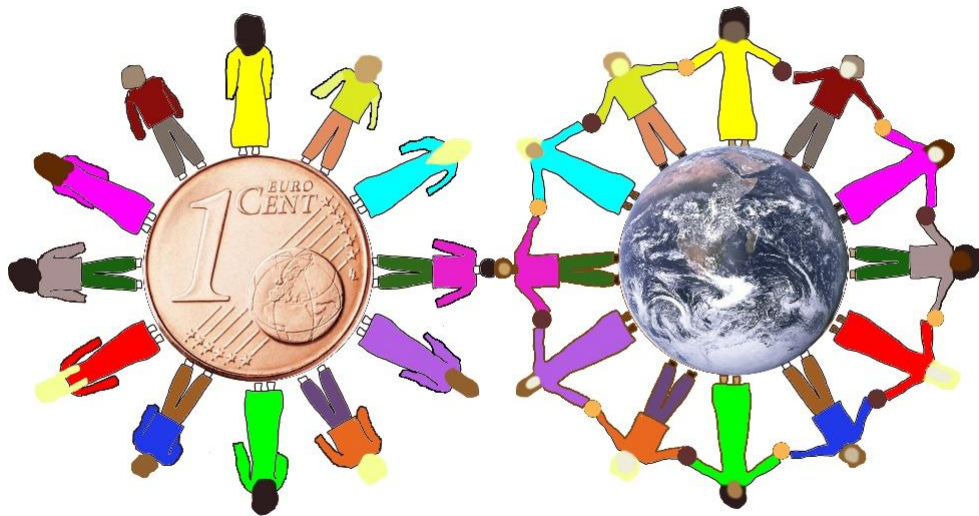


Eberhard Licht

The simple economy



**A guide
for the peaceful and rapid
transition of the economy**

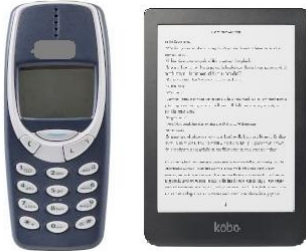
Berlin, 1 March 2026

Eberhard Licht

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1. Foreword

Every year, a few weeks before Christmas, the fifth season begins: the Christmas shopping season. The gift-giving holiday is used to really boost sales once again shortly before the end of the year.

Gifts are a must, so it's not difficult to sort out things that could actually last quite a while longer and make room for something new. We don't treat ourselves to anything else.

What actually motivates the economy to start beating the advertising drum in September? Of course, the primary goal is to secure profits.

Let's get to the bottom of this growth spiral. Politicians tell us that we have to work more, but everything we produce also has to be sold.

If not enough is sold, there is a shortfall in revenue and profits, and there is not enough money available for wages and social security contributions. In the worst case, jobs have to be cut. So we are forced into excessive consumption.

Actually, it's nice to buy something new. We like to ignore the fact that the production of all these things also consumes raw materials and energy. We grudgingly accept the ever-increasing average temperature of the oceans and the Earth's atmosphere due to ever-increasing greenhouse gas emissions.

However, when I look around my circle of acquaintances, I notice that more and more people are opting for second-hand goods. The willingness to buy cars also seems to be waning, as the car industry is suffering from sales difficulties.

Lower consumption and, as a result, lower wages and declining social benefits pose an acute threat to the prosperity promised by governments, and this jeopardises the stability of society.

This is why the arms industry is increasingly having to step in, because what it produces is not intended for immediate consumption. As soon as an enemy image is in place, it is relatively easy to approve large loans to enable the production of large quantities of armaments.

The purpose of military equipment is war. What happens when the arsenals overflow? Combined with unpredictable heads of state, this creates a dangerous potential.

This destructive spiral of growth cannot be stopped because there is no regulatory mechanism in the system of competition and the market that can curb growth. Some economists would like to see stronger regulation by the state, but recent history shows that this is becoming increasingly difficult. Neoliberalism and globalisation mean that the economy is becoming less and less amenable to control.

But do we still need the market at all?

Until a few years ago, there was no other option but to bring goods to market, where they had to be purchased with wages, as had been the norm for thousands of years. The market was the only means of communication.

Technological developments have overtaken the market. For several years now, global networking has made it possible for everyone to communicate their needs directly to producers, who can then provide goods on demand.

If exactly what people need is produced, then there is no longer any need for surplus production. Raw material shortages would come to an end and greenhouse gas emissions would decrease significantly, meaning that climate targets could be achieved quickly. This has nothing to do with the paternalism of a planned economy, in which what each person is allowed to take is determined in advance.

Today, we can finally abandon our centuries-old concept of economics – and if we want to avert collapse, we must do so.

The big question is: how can we quickly switch to demand-driven supply?

We know that the economy does not allow for intervention. But with a coup de main, the existing physical economy could be freed from today's financial control instruments. All we would have to do is ensure that production costs are no longer claimed worldwide, i.e. that no more costs are incurred in production.

Social reproduction, which is almost the same in scope as production, but where neither invoices are sent to family members nor pay slips are issued, could serve as a model for us. Social reproduction does not require any accounting whatsoever; it simply produces what is needed. With care for people and the environment.

What would happen if we did the same in the economy? Worldwide, from one day to the next? Just as food is free on the table in all families worldwide, all products in the economy would then be free of charge.

The moment we stop accounting, there are no more costs and the products produced from nature's originally free gifts can therefore be given to everyone free of charge.

This may sound completely unrealistic at first, but in the following we will see that this also fundamentally changes the boundary conditions of our society, so that it is a real possibility and not a utopia.

The vast majority of business relationships in the economy are tried and tested and stable; even without accounting and financial influence, the economy would continue to produce. Because this also eliminates the pressure to consume, consumption no longer needs to be stimulated, so that after a short time, only what people really need for a dignified life is consumed. Once again, this has nothing to do with a planned economy.

We would hardly notice this transition to a post-growth society, because it does not require socialisation. Property would lose its exclusive function all by itself, because all 'capitalists' would also be automatically provided for and would no longer be able to buy anything at all with the income from capital and property. What remains is only responsibility.

Instead of overproduction, competition would focus on the development of durable and recyclable products. If no costs are incurred, it does not matter how long something lasts. Products can be designed so that they can be easily recycled at the end of their useful life. This creates a true circular economy.

As a result, production would decline significantly after a short time and long-term climate targets would be quickly achieved.

The reduced consumption of raw materials would also eliminate the allocation function of the market.

And what would happen to the people in banks, insurance companies and tax offices? If nothing needs to be bought anymore, money would lose its role and no longer need to be managed.

They, too, are part of the great celebration of giving and receiving gifts, and they will want to reciprocate by helping where there is still much work to be done.

Tax offices? We no longer need them, because everyone – teachers, firefighters, university employees, artists and cultural workers – is provided for free of charge. No one is excluded.

No one would then be cut off from the essentials of life, there would be no more rich and poor, and the cause of gender inequality would be eliminated because there would no longer be any difference between paid and unpaid work.

The day when accounting is abolished and the market is eliminated will be a great celebration, from which point on we will be given everything we need for a happy and contented life. It will be a celebration like Easter, Christmas or a birthday, with the only difference being that this state of affairs will be permanent.

This festive atmosphere will also ensure that the transition goes smoothly.

Ever since the publication of the Club of Rome's work 'The Limits to Growth', politicians have known that things cannot continue as they are. We can be sure that they too are looking for alternatives, but decision-makers actually believe that they are acting rationally within the framework of the best available order.

Capitalism does not appear to them as an ideology, but as a state of nature. Anything that questions the market does not fit into the model.

Let us simply assume that global problems will get worse, that the threat of war, climate-related weather events and the scarcity of raw materials will become unbearable. Let us consider the idea presented here so that we can perhaps use it as a last-resort 'emergency brake'.

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2. The necessity of transforming capitalism

Capitalism has reached its internal and external limits.

It destroys nature, people and social bonds because it can no longer resolve its own contradictions. Growth, competition and profit force a permanent expansion of energy consumption and production – even when the ecological and social limits of the Earth have long been exceeded.

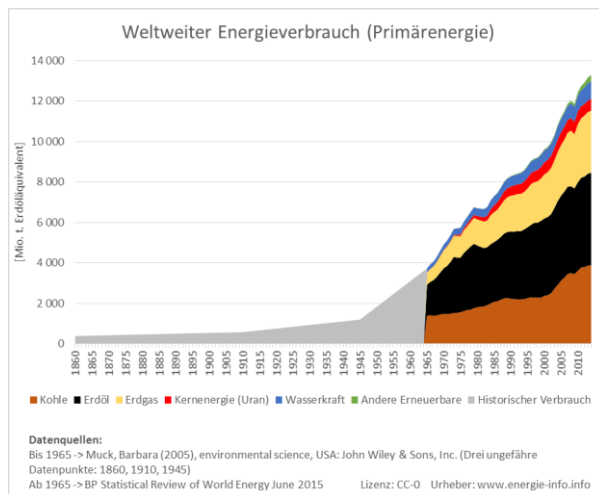


Figure 1: Global energy consumption

The steady increase in energy consumption and CO₂ concentration is not a temporary anomaly, but rather an expression of the internal logic of the system. Capitalism cannot stand still: any stagnation is considered a crisis, any pause threatens its existence. While natural feedback loops – such as the melting of ice sheets, the thawing of permafrost soils or the accelerated rise in CO₂ in

the atmosphere due to large forest fires – accelerate climate change, economic structures such as the increased use of air conditioning due to global warming themselves act as amplifiers of destruction.

The logic of endless growth

In the capitalist mode of production, the material originally provided by nature is transformed into goods through human labour. These goods must be sold so that capital can be realised. If they remain unsold, a crisis arises.

Wages and social security contributions are part of the production costs. If wages fall too much, people refuse to work; if they rise too much, the company becomes unprofitable. For wages to rise, production must therefore grow – and this in turn increases consumption. We know this from the media; the new federal government is calling for 'more work' to secure the social system. But any expansion of work also increases the amount of goods that must be consumed.

As a result, we now consume many times more than we actually need. For this cycle to work, products must be replaced as quickly as possible. Planned obsolescence – for example, a printer that breaks down after two years, even though it used to last four years – doubles the production volume for the same demand.

We call ourselves a 'society of abundance and disposability' and ignore the consequences – because consumption provides short-term pleasure, while the long-term destruction is externalised. Trust in political control replaces our own reflection on these connections.

The compulsion to grow as a systemic law

More than fifty years ago, the Club of Rome pointed out this dynamic in its report '*The Limits to Growth*' (Erich Meadows, 1972) . But the warning went unheeded. Today, we discard many products faster and faster, long before the end of their actual service life, just to replace them with new ones (Siddharth Prakash, 2016). In order for wages and social security contributions to rise, more and more must be produced – an absurd logic that makes endless growth a prerequisite for the system's survival.

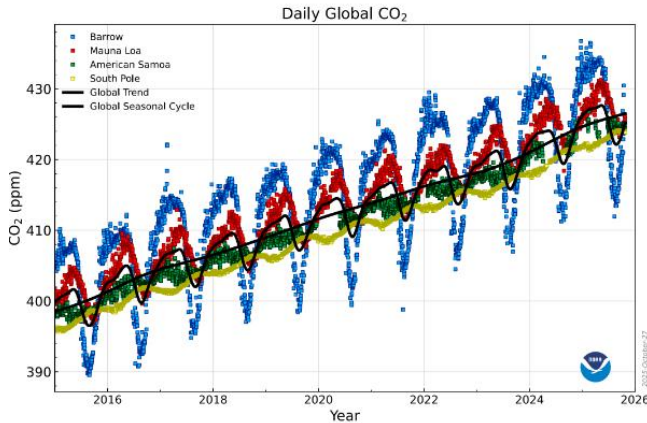


Figure 2: CO₂ concentration in the Earth's atmosphere

The increase in production is clearly evident. Production requires energy, 86 per cent of which is generated from fossil fuels (Kearney, 2025). This increases the carbon dioxide content of the Earth's atmosphere. This concentration is measured by the US government's NOAA Global Monitoring Laboratory (NOAA

Network, 2025).

Over the last 50 years, it has risen by an average of 2.1 ppm per year. In the last 5 years, this increase has even risen to 2.7 ppm/year. Growth is therefore increasing more rapidly than ever before. Due to the large forest fires caused by global warming, the increase in 2024 was as high as 3.5 ppm.

Those who demand higher wages or social benefits today are unwittingly demanding further growth. But this growth can hardly be generated in a peaceful or meaningful way anymore. The biggest revenues have long been generated by armament, arms exports and post-war reconstruction. The so-called 'economic miracle' after the Second World War shows that destruction itself became a prerequisite for new growth. The construction industry is already anticipating major contracts in Gaza and Ukraine.

As soon as one war ends, a new confrontation must be sought so that the machinery does not come to a standstill.

Even natural disasters are now becoming drivers of growth: reconstruction after the floods in the German Ahr Valley in 2021 increased Germany's gross domestic product by 70 billion euros. Repairing what has been destroyed is becoming the engine of an economy that can no longer function without destruction.

Isn't it absurd that wars could stop immediately if we were simply willing to give up a quarter of our wages?

The exhaustion of the system

Climate change can probably no longer be completely stopped. At the same time, it is questionable whether a profit-oriented economy is even capable of providing the resources necessary for global coastal protection, reforestation and adaptation measures. The situation is similar with rising social spending due to demographic change: this could only be financed by ever-increasing production.

The surplus required for this is increasingly being generated by neo-colonial structures – through the exploitation of raw materials, labour and land in the Global South.

The education of our children

If humanity has an overarching mission, then the long-term preservation and development of human civilisation and the protection of the Earth are its primary tasks. And in this case, the loving, far-sighted and holistic education of the next generations is undoubtedly the most important and effective part of this mission.

This mission is suffering under the pressure of production. More and more labour potential is being withdrawn from the care sector and transferred to production. This also poses an acute threat to our actual mission, the education of our children.

Production is taking more and more time and energy away from parents for direct care work. Education is being institutionalised (nursery, school, tutoring, media consumption).

Children are increasingly permeated by the logic of production – disciplined early on, performance-oriented, functionalised.

Children are 'looked after' but not really educated. Relationships, attention, security – everything that cannot be measured – is becoming scarce. Society is eating away at the substance of its human foundations: emotional attachment, empathy, patience.

In the long term, this results in stunted subjectivity:

- People who are functional but not quite
- productive but not supportive
- competent but empty inside

We are failing in our original mission and are not thinking about the consequences. [To the table of contents](#)

The compulsion to exploit as a central barrier

As long as the compulsion to exploit capital persists, inequality cannot be overcome. The engine of capitalist production will continue to turn – until it destroys itself and drags down the foundations of human life with it.

The rise of political liberalism since the 1970s is not merely a fad, but an expression of this systemic logic. Just as rising energy consumption is the material form of the compulsion to grow, liberalism embodies its institutional form: it organises the freedom of capital and the adaptation of society to market laws. Despite crises, populism and 'green' rhetoric, it therefore remains the dominant form of government in the capitalist world order (Harvey, 2007).

Unfortunately, the economy has slipped beyond our control. The banks control wages and profits, and the stock market resembles a giant casino. This financial system ensures that it is not people's needs that are decisive, but financial efficiency.

In this system, CEOs do not act as sentient human beings, but as the control centres of the purely legal entities that employ them. They are merely the human executors of an inhuman mathematical operation. The financial system benefits far more from tanks and warships than from 'bread for the world'.

Indirectly, of course, this system helps to secure social benefits, as many of these benefits are financed by interest income. That is why the financial system is pampered and coddled by governments.

So much for democracy.

If we want to try to convert the economy to the wage- and growth-free principle of unpaid care work, we cannot hope for help from governments. We are completely on our own.

Nor can we 'convert' the economy in advance or change it gradually – the financial system does not allow this because the two are perfectly coordinated. Nevertheless, we have a real chance of occupying the economy in the short term.

We need a similar ruse to the one David used to defeat the mighty Goliath.

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3. Concepts for social transformation

3.1. Historical conceptions of social transformation

Transition to a classless society

Around 150 years ago, Karl Marx formulated the famous vision of a classless society in his Critique of the Gotha Programme: 'From each according to his ability, to each according to his needs.' (Marx, 1875)

He named two fundamental prerequisites that must be fulfilled for such a society to emerge: the sources of social wealth and the development of productive forces.

By 'sources,' Marx meant the material foundations from which general abundance springs – humanity's ability to produce more than it needs for mere survival. Looking around us today, we can see that these sources have long since become torrential streams.

The second condition, the development of productive forces, would also be fulfilled today. Science, technology and automation have reached a level that Marx could hardly have imagined. The internet and artificial intelligence enable global networking that renders the old market logic superfluous: we no longer need a market to identify needs or distribute goods – we communicate directly, order, coordinate and share.

Marx could not foresee these technological developments. But he understood that they were necessary to create the material basis for a classless society. What he left open was the concrete form of the transition.

Today, we are at precisely this point. The material and technical conditions that Marx could only describe in rudimentary terms are now fully in place. What is still missing is the conscious step by humanity to make use of them.

At present, the transition to a classless society is not included in the programmes of many Marxist and left-wing parties. Although they recognise the international financial system as the cause of global problems, they adhere to the plan of socialisation or nationalisation of the means of production and the transitional form of socialism. [To the table of contents](#)

The Kingdom of God

The first famous do-gooder was Jesus Christ. When he spoke of the Kingdom of God, he did not mean salvation in the hereafter, but rather the transformation of the existing social order – a radical alternative to oppression by the Roman occupying power and to the internal Jewish power struggles of his time.

His words and actions describe a radical social reversal – a liberation from domination, fear and economic dependence. The Kingdom of God is not a place, but a state of being: a way of living together that is not mediated by money, property or power, but by solidarity, brotherhood and mutual giving.

When Jesus says, 'Do not worry about your life, what you will eat or drink' (Matthew 6:25–26) (Testament, 1999), he is pointing out that the gifts of creation are gifts intended for all people.

In the parable of the workers in the vineyard (Matthew 20:1–16) (Testament, 1999), in which all workers receive the same symbolic wage regardless of the hours they have worked, the capitalist idea of work and wages is abolished.

This criticism culminates in the cleansing of the temple in the same passage (Matthew 21:12–13) (Testament, 1999). Jesus drives out the money changers because they have turned the sacred into a commodity. His action is thus directed not only against religious abuse, but against the entire logic of the market.

Traces of this order can already be found in the Old Testament: the prohibition of the golden calf (Ex 32) (Bibel, 2017) is directed against the idolisation of wealth and possessions; the jubilee year in the same book (Lev 25) (Bibel, 2017) calls for regular debt forgiveness, an early model of cyclical devaluation intended to restore social equality.

However, in the course of church history, this earthly dimension of the Kingdom of God was increasingly suppressed. Christianity shifted its hope to the hereafter – and thus lost the revolutionary core of Jesus' message. Instead of transforming social structures, faith became a private matter, the Kingdom of God a promise 'after death'. [To the table of contents](#)

3.2. Socialisation of capitalism

Post-growth concepts

Since the 1970s, a growing number of economists and social scientists have been critical of the growth paradigm. Under terms such as post-growth, degrowth, donut economics and solidarity economy, a variety of concepts are being discussed that share the goal of respecting ecological limits and reducing resource consumption.

Representatives of these movements, such as Niko Paech (Paech, 2025), Tim Jackson (Jackson, 2017), Kate Raworth (Raworth, 2018), Jason Hickel (Hickel, 2023), Serge Latouche (Latouche, 2015), Giorgos Kallis (Kallis, 2018) and Christian Felber (Felber, 2018), have made valuable contributions to analysing the destructive logic of unlimited growth. Among other things, they call for a reduction in working hours, local production cycles, a move away from consumerism, ecological tax reform and a new understanding of prosperity beyond gross domestic product.

However, despite their analytical acuity, these approaches remain within the framework of the existing market order. They propose taming the capitalist economy rather than overcoming it. The post-growth economy relies on political control instruments – such as higher environmental taxes, progressive taxation of wealth or legal upper limits on energy consumption – but all these measures remain within the logic of money, markets and competition and are becoming increasingly unattainable as a result of increasing liberalism.

This is where the crucial difference lies: the post-growth economy wants to slow down growth, while Benharmonia wants to make it superfluous. Post-growth

authors hope for a more 'sustainable' market economy, while Benharmonia aims to liberate itself from market logic by refusing to play along any longer.

The post-growth movement has significantly advanced critical discourse. But it remains caught in a dilemma: it recognises the limits of growth without abolishing the mechanism that enforces growth.

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Commons

The idea of the commons takes the critique of property and exploitation a decisive step further. While the post-growth economy mostly seeks ways to correct the existing system, the commons movement questions the logic of property itself. It asks: Who owns the world – and why should anyone own it at all?

Commons are goods that are produced, maintained and used collectively – such as knowledge, seeds, water, software, but also spaces, tools or infrastructure. They do not follow market logic, but rather a logic of sharing, trust and responsibility for one another. The crucial difference lies in the principle: not exchange, but contribution. People contribute what they can and receive what they need – without price, without contract, without competition.

In recent decades, theorists such as Elinor Ostrom (Ostrom, 2015), Silke Helfrich (Silke Helfrich, 2019) and David Bollier (Bollier, 2025) have shown that communal self-organisation without the market or the state could be possible – and could often function more efficiently and fairly than centralised administration or private property.

Ostrom received the 2009 Alfred Nobel Memorial Prize in Economic Sciences for empirically proving that people are capable of managing their shared resources sustainably and in solidarity, provided they develop clear, locally anchored rules for doing so. This would eliminate the millennia-old opposition between common property and private property.

The concept of property loses its social function because everything is freely accessible – not through coercion, but through shared responsibility.

However, despite these insights, the idea of the commons has mostly remained limited to local or thematic projects: community-supported agriculture, free software, community gardens, exchange shops. Global production continues to be determined by the market, and commons projects are forced to submit to market laws.

Commons are not a modern experiment, but the original form of human economy. Every family, neighbourhood or village community that cares for one another already lives according to these principles – mostly unnoticed because they are permeated by the market. Within families, there is no exchange or calculation. One gives because one loves, and takes because one trusts. No parent bills their child for breakfast, no child demands payment for tidying up. The family care sector is the oldest example of communal production and distribution according to need.

In this sense, commons are the generalisation of the conditions that apply in most families to society as a whole. Billions of such seeds already exist – they are only separated from each other by the logic of exchange. Although many families are authoritarian or hierarchically structured, these distortions arise from the capitalist framework. Basically, families are the basis of the care sector. With the dissolution of the logic of exchange, these seeds can combine to form a global commons.

In their work 'Kapitalismus aufheben' (Abolishing Capitalism), Meretz and Sutterlütti (Meretz, 2018) describe the transition as an evolutionary process in which commons-based seeds grow from below and are protected and connected by communist politics from above until capitalist logic is abolished through its gradual obsolescence. They write: 'We can only liberate ourselves, within and with society, in and with our concrete living environment.' Much of this is in line with Benharmonia's ideas, but it is a lengthy process that could take generations. Given the dramatically escalating development of capitalism, this could take too long.

Indigo Drau and Jonna Klick take a different approach in „Alles für alle“ ('Everything for Everyone') (Indigo Drau, 2024). There, the transition to a commons-based economy is to take place as expropriation through appropriation in a revolutionary break. Property must first be appropriated by force in order to

be socialised in a second step. However, given the lack of revolutionary potential and the internal contradictions of violent appropriation, this path would also be hardly viable – because commons are based on trust and voluntariness, not coercion.

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Socialism and basic income

Even 20th-century socialism was unable to overcome this dynamic. In principle, the same form of production applied as in capitalism, with the difference that the capitalists were replaced by the state. The principle remained the same: higher wages, more production, rising consumption. The planned economy attempted to centrally control the production process, but was unable to stabilise it democratically. As early as 1953, the unresolvable contradictions led to mass protests for higher wages. Things might have turned out differently if Trotsky's favoured permanent revolution had been practised on a global scale, because the influence of consumer society was clearly felt in everyday socialist life.

However, even in the final stage of real existing socialism, there were no signs of the promised transition to a classless society.

An unconditional basic income does not solve the problem either: this money must also be generated from the production of goods and flows back into consumption. As it is limited, there is a strong incentive to increase income through market economy activities – and this creates further growth.

Socialism, socialisation and basic income can mitigate inequality, but they remain trapped in the compulsion to exploit. They remain within the logic that work is only socially valid if it is profitable.

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4. The market has done its job

4.1. Decoupling the market from production

Today, production is not primarily driven by needs, but by market logic: by prices, wages, property and profit. This logic forces people to participate, creates artificial scarcity and legitimises domination – not primarily politically, but materially. Those who have no access to money have no access to a life of dignity.

The idea presented here is simple but far-reaching: if physical production is decoupled from market mechanisms, physical production continues to function normally, but products lose their exchange value and become available free of charge to all people, including the owners of the means of production.

Production could be truly targeted if it were possible to communicate demand directly to producers. It does not need price information to know what to do. Prices merely shift this goal away from demand and towards exploitation. If this control is removed, the focus on real needs remains. Production would then no longer be chaotic and excessive, but precisely tailored to demand, i.e. more sensible.

It is crucial that such a decoupling does not happen in isolation. It would have to take place simultaneously worldwide so that wage dependency, cost pressure and cost allocation are no longer necessary along the entire production chain. What remains are material resources, limited only by ecological and energy realities – not by power.

For the first time in history, global networking allows needs to be communicated directly and production to be coordinated accordingly. For a long time, the market was a substitute for missing information.

We have long been familiar with a functioning model: social reproduction. In families, communities and solidarity-based structures, the focus is not on exploitation, i.e. maximising profit. What is needed is done. Not out of compulsion, but out of responsibility for one another. We underestimate the power of social reproduction because it is not included in gross domestic product, precisely because there is no money involved.

We also underestimate the power of social reproduction because no clear distinction has yet been made between it and production. We still assume that social reproduction is dependent on production because it is supplied with money by it. The following section aims to change this.

The moment all products are freely available, property loses its exclusive power and becomes useless. Not through prohibition or expropriation, but because no one can be excluded anymore. Domination dissolves here not ideologically, but practically.

When all people are provided for unconditionally, work loses its coercive character. Automation then becomes a relief rather than a threat. Consumption declines because no one has to compensate for what is systematically taken away from them. Advertising disappears because no one needs to be manipulated into consuming. [To the table of contents](#)

4.2. Definition of social reproduction

What is social reproduction?

There is a large area of human activity in which there is no bookkeeping and therefore no pressure to exploit. Caregiving, raising children, caring for one another and for nature form the very basis of life, and yet in capitalism they appear as 'invisible' work.

There are two reasons why social reproduction is not recognised as a productive force.

Because there is no money involved in social reproduction, it is not included in the gross domestic product.

The other reason is that the starting point of social reproduction is not precisely defined. The prevailing opinion is that the earning partner feeds the family with their wages. But it could also be seen the other way round, because doesn't the partner who runs the household feed the family?

Unfortunately, the financial contributions of the partner who provides for the family and social reproduction are often overlooked and portrayed as a passive role.

This unpaid care work is the actual foundation of production, because without social reproduction, no one would be able to work, as care for workers in this area is ensured.

It encompasses all activities and processes that enable human life and its continuation, provide for people and restore their labour power: cooking, cleaning, caring, giving birth, educating, listening, comforting, teaching, repairing (which is why there are so many DIY stores) and much more.

Three levels can be distinguished:

- Biological reproduction: giving birth to and raising our children
- Material reproduction: nutrition, housing, care, housework
- Cultural and emotional reproduction: education, culture, socialisation, emotional care

Without these activities, there would be no society, no workforce, no production and not even people.

Social reproduction is therefore the very core of society. It keeps society alive and, just like industry, it produces: Cooking, repairing, transporting, gardening, learning with children, making music, writing, dancing – activities that create value – according to need and not for profit. Anyone who thinks housework is just a minor matter should try running a household for a week: cooking, cleaning, caring – that's work. Different, but just as intensive as production work.

Around the world, several billion people volunteer their time to care work, disaster relief, associations, neighbourhood assistance, animal welfare and political movements – this work is done out of social responsibility, joy, purpose or habit, without profit or market considerations.

Voluntary and unpaid work is often the norm, especially in the Global South, where much of the work necessary for society is not regulated by the market.

Numerous experiments in behavioural economics also show that people do not only respond to market incentives. In so-called public goods games, many participants make voluntary contributions to the common good, and when market incentives are introduced, motivation often even decreases – this crowding-out effect has been studied by Fehr & Gächter, among others.

In extreme situations and crises, people often help spontaneously and voluntarily, even at the risk of their own lives. Examples of this include neighbourhood assistance during the coronavirus crisis, solidarity after natural disasters, and willingness to help refugees.

In this area of reproduction, there is no accounting and no payroll accounting. Therefore, it is hardly visible that there is no pressure to grow in this area.

We are happy about every new recipe that makes food taste better – but we don't cook twice as much and then throw half of it away, as the economy is forced to do. In this area, there are always improvements, but no artificially created surplus.

The boundary between production and social reproduction

But where does this social reproduction begin in concrete terms?

Wages are generated through the production of goods and the provision of services. Both enter the market and are repurchased with these wages. The money earned flows back into the production cycle. This completes the production cycle. The money therefore belongs to the production cycle and not to the care sector.

When the purchases are carried home, i.e. paid for, the exchange value of these goods has been settled. They therefore only enter social reproduction with their use value. Wages do not feed the family; wages are neutralised at the end of the purchasing process. Production work is thus completed and care work begins as a result.

It often happens that goods intended for the household are resold. This applies to superfluous goods or goods that are not yet worn out and are to be sold second-hand. Services are also sometimes sold from social reproduction, from the household. At this point, they re-enter the market and the money received flows back into the production cycle.

The fact that the goods flowing into this reproduction have no exchange value, no monetary value, can be clearly illustrated by the following universal correlation.

The services in social reproduction are provided to families free of charge. No family member in the world pays anything for family meals or for having their trousers repaired. This would not be possible if the necessary raw materials, such as thread and needles or ingredients for meals, were not provided free of charge, i.e. without exchange value, for social reproduction, or if wages were paid.

It is characteristic that social reproduction is provided exclusively on a needs basis. This is the significant difference to production.

If the functional principle of social reproduction were also applied to production, there would no longer be overproduction in the economy. Less would be manufactured, climate targets would be within reach, raw material shortages would come to an end and there would be no need to produce war materials. All the raw materials and energy we need are provided to us free of charge by the earth and the sun. We do not have to pay them anything. Similarly, fruit is produced by the natural forces of cell division and photosynthesis – without us having to make any financial contribution until harvest time. The water, minerals and chemical elements that make up fertiliser for crops are also gifts from the earth.

The Earth gives its gifts without a contract. Sun, water, air, soil and the fertility of nature do not follow human law, but a natural law of giving. No living creature except humans claims ownership of what it has not produced itself. In this sense, the free provision of the necessities of life is not a moral ideal, but a natural state of affairs: the Earth gives because giving is its nature.

The emergence of property and possession therefore contradicts this original natural law. When humans began to erect fences and draw boundaries, they interrupted the natural cycle of giving and taking. What was accessible to all became a commodity. Nature's free gift was transformed into exchange value, and the necessities of life began to have a price.

Since then, humanity has lived in a permanent state of artificial scarcity – created not by nature, but by social structures that block the free flow of gifts.

The reason we accept this state of affairs is that we have placed man-made law (property) above natural law (access to the necessities of life). We have

forgotten the natural law of giving and replaced it with a cultural law of ownership.

What about the land on which the raw materials lie and the crops grow?

In a wage-free and therefore money-free economy, ownership of land and raw materials loses all exclusive significance. The previous owner no longer has any reason to keep others from using his land because he himself – like everyone else – is provided with everything he needs to live.

The interest or rent that he used to derive from his property is no longer of any use because there is nothing left to buy. Money, interest and markets no longer exist, and with them disappears the reason to regard property as a source of income.

There is therefore no longer any reason to assign a value to the Earth's free gifts. They are obtained, processed and transported with the help of unpaid labour and can therefore be given away free of charge.

This creates a new relationship with nature. Land and raw materials are no longer objects of ownership, but shared resources. Those who use them do so in the knowledge that they belong to everyone – the living, future generations and the Earth itself.

The fruits of the earth – grain, vegetables, wood, cotton – also become gifts in a voluntary economy. Their free nature is not based on magic, but on the conscious decision to voluntarily provide all preliminary services and pass on all proceeds without any counter-claims.

Today's production chain is transformed into a chain of giving. Each hand passes on what it has received without the flow being interrupted by money. This chain of giving extends to the origin of the raw materials and makes us responsible for the entire process – from the earth to the human being.

This closes the circle: the unpaid care work with which people sustain life itself becomes the archetype of a new mode of production in which all action is based on care – for one another, for the community and for the earth.

Since factory buildings and machines can no longer generate profit because there is no more money and nothing can be bought in a gift-based environment, these means of production add no value.

All manufactured products have their use value, but they are no longer given any exchange value. [To the table of contents](#)

4.3. The law of free raw materials

All the raw materials and energy we need are provided to us free of charge by the earth and the sun. We do not have to pay them anything. Similarly, fruit is produced by the natural forces of cell division and photosynthesis – without us having to make any financial contribution until harvest time. The water, minerals and chemical elements that make up fertiliser for crops are also gifts from the earth.

The Earth gives its gifts without a contract. Sun, water, air, soil and the fertility of nature do not follow human law, but a natural law of giving.

No living creature except humans claims ownership of what it has not produced itself. In this sense, the free provision of the necessities of life is not a moral ideal, but a natural state of affairs: the Earth gives because giving is its nature.

The emergence of property and possession therefore contradicts this original natural law. When humans began to erect fences and draw boundaries, they interrupted the natural cycle of giving and taking. What was accessible to all became a commodity. Nature's free gift was transformed into exchange value, and the necessities of life began to have a price.

Since then, humanity has lived in a permanent state of artificial scarcity – created not by nature, but by social structures that block the free flow of gifts.

The reason we accept this state of affairs is that we have placed man-made law (property) above natural law (access to the necessities of life). We have forgotten the natural law of giving and replaced it with a cultural law of ownership.

What about the land on which the raw materials lie and the crops grow?

In an economy freed from the market, ownership of land and raw materials loses all exclusive significance. The previous owner no longer has any reason to keep others from using his land because he himself – like everyone else – is provided with everything he needs to live.

The interest or rent that he used to derive from his property is no longer of any use because there is nothing left to buy. Money, interest and markets no longer exist in a market-free economy, and with them disappears the reason to regard property as a source of income.

There is therefore no longer any reason to assign a value to the free gifts of the earth. If they are processed and transported without any costs being charged, then they can also be given away free of charge.

This creates a new relationship with nature. Land and raw materials are no longer objects of ownership, but shared resources. Those who use them do so in the knowledge that they belong to everyone – the living, future generations and the earth itself.

Even the fruits of the earth – grain, vegetables, wood, cotton – become gifts in an economy freed from the market. Their free nature is not based on magic, but on the conscious decision to provide all preliminary services in a purposeful manner and to pass on all proceeds without any counterclaims.

Today's production chain is transformed into a chain of giving. Each hand passes on what it has received without the flow being interrupted by accounting. This chain of giving extends back to the origin of the raw materials, making the entire process visible to us. This allows us to give thanks for the gifts of creation and not for the money that the seller receives.

This closes the circle: the work with which people sustain life itself becomes the archetype of a new mode of production in which all action is based on care – for one another, for the community and for the earth.

All manufactured products have their use value, but they are no longer assigned an exchange value. [To the table of contents](#)

4.4. Social reproduction as an economic form

As long as the market exists, the only thing that matters is that a product or service can be sold. It is assumed that there must be a certain benefit when something is purchased. But the signal to production is not the improvement of the use value but the optimisation of the exchange value. This leads to a deception of production, which per se should assume that it works to satisfy human needs.

Production without overproduction

When we prepare breakfast for our children, we give them exactly as much as they need. No one would pack twice as much bread just to increase 'production'. When the bathroom and kitchen are clean, we don't clean them again just to keep ourselves busy.

Social reproduction therefore does not follow the logic of the market, but the logic of needs.

It does not ask, 'What brings profit?' but rather, 'What is needed?'

In contrast, capitalist production does not produce to satisfy needs, but to generate profit. That is why it must grow, create new markets, artificially generate needs and produce excess – even when real needs have long been met.

However, the material prerequisites for production and social reproduction are not so different:

The input for production is free natural resources. The input for social reproduction is goods which, as we have shown in the previous section, enter social reproduction as free commodities.

Both production and social reproduction are supplied with free raw materials. The only difference is that there is payroll accounting in production. The abolition of payroll accounting would therefore lead to the dissolution of the market.

Unpaid care work as a model for the liberation of production

Social reproduction shows in reality that a functioning, meaningful and life-sustaining economy beyond the market, accounting, profit and growth is possible. It does not produce excess like the market economy, but exactly what is needed.

The absence of accounting in social reproduction can therefore serve as an example for production. If production were also carried out without asserting costs, i.e. without accounting, then production could also be carried out in line with demand.

The most important prerequisite for overcoming the market is already in place today: global networking. As is already the case with Amazon or Ali Express, the required products or services can be ordered directly from the producer.

What is supposed to achieve the abundance of supply today, a use value distorted by price, could be taken over with the help of AI, which already knows our exact preferences and selects the appropriate products and the most effective logistics.

Everyday goods will probably continue to be picked up at 'supermarkets' for some time to come, which will then become pure distribution centres. The technical standard there is already such that when stocks are running low, a demand notification is automatically sent to the producer, who then delivers accordingly. [To the table of contents](#)

Proportion of care work compared to production

The reason for the marginalisation of social reproduction, the lack of demarcation and its exclusion from GDP has already been described. But what about the relationship between production and social reproduction?

People worldwide perform approximately as much or more unpaid care work as paid gainful employment. If care work were remunerated, its value would correspond to approximately 40–60% of gross domestic product. Care work is the prerequisite for all production. Without care, nursing and education, there would be no functioning workforce and no economy.

Time studies (e.g. UN, OECD, Federal Statistical Office) show that people spend about as much or even more time on unpaid care work (household, nursing, childcare, voluntary work) as they do on paid work (Rudolf, 2023) (Destatis, 2016).

According to the Federal Statistical Office (2022), around 30 million people in Germany volunteer, and around 40% of the population in Switzerland (Destatis, 2016).

If you convert the value of unpaid care work into money (e.g. by using the wage you would have to pay for the same activities on the market),

The result is: The contribution of care work would be around 40-60% of gross domestic product.

Globally, the proportion is similar, and in some cases even higher in countries with low female labour force participation. UN Women estimates that unpaid care work accounts for up to 9% of global GDP – more than the entire industrial production in many countries (UN-Bericht, 2016) (OECD, 2019) (ILO, 2018).

Care work is not inferior or 'subordinate' to work in production – it is a prerequisite for it. Without care work (nursing, education, nutrition, emotional stability), no production could take place because there would be no functioning workforce. [To the table of contents](#)

4.5. David against Goliath

The transformation of capitalism cannot take place through direct confrontation. In its advanced stage, the globally dominant capitalist system has become increasingly perfected and autonomous. Its power is evident in the fact that it grows annually by more than the total gross domestic product of the Federal Republic of Germany. We know that every force requires a counterforce, and we cannot muster such a large counterforce.

A transformation can only succeed if it does not require parliamentary decisions or laws that restrict the economy, because there would not be enough time for that. Moreover, in that case, the economy would retreat to where there is less

resistance, leaving behind unemployment and crisis. No government would allow that. Because of globalisation, there are no boundaries for the economy.

It is a battle between David and Goliath. David could only win because he acted skilfully and used a ruse. To win against the capitalist economic system, we must also use a ruse.

We can act skilfully and prevent financial value from being created in production. If this exchange value is not created, then the gifts of creation remain gifts that we give to each other with our work.

Now the two laws of nature come into play.

If the free gifts of creation were processed and transported without payment, all the products made from them would remain free. It is almost too simple to believe, but it is actually true.

The proof that this principle works lies in the care sector itself. We buy the 'means of reproduction', such as vegetables and salt for the soup, at the market. Once they have been paid for, they only have a use value and form the free basis for care work. Because we do not receive any wages for cooking, we can offer the soup to our children without them having to pay for it.

In production, it would not be soup, but perhaps steel – extracted from the gifts of iron ore and coal. If everyone worked there without pay, the spade made from it would be free.

If the farmer cultivates his field, sows and harvests without pay, he can give the grain to the miller. The miller gives the flour to the baker, and the baker gives us the bread.

The owner of the field is compensated for receiving everything necessary for life free of charge – just like our children receive the soup. He does not need rent, just as factory owners no longer need profit. Because everything we need to live is then just as free as the daily food on every lunch table around the world.

They would not be able to buy anything with rent and profit anyway, because everything is free.

This transition to voluntary work does not have to happen one after the other in a specific order – it can happen simultaneously. We could simply forego our wages on the same day worldwide.

Because of globalisation, this must also happen simultaneously worldwide so that all raw materials, intermediate products and resources become free at the same time.

It would be a global celebration of voluntary work. A big celebration where all goods suddenly become gifts. We know how happy we are when we are invited to free celebrations, or think of Christmas and Easter, which – despite their commercialisation today – are based on the principle of mutual gift-giving.

This euphoria will ensure that the transition is successful.

Many people would like to see gross domestic product replaced one day by gross national happiness – as in the Kingdom of Bhutan. Today, no one knows how this can be achieved. But on the day of voluntary work, we would instantly switch from GDP to GNH. Only happiness would count.

Nothing would have to change in the economy for this transition. Just as a stove, mixing spoon and pot in a snack bar could be used without payment, the economy works just as well with paid work as with voluntary work. It makes no difference to the products – but since wages are no longer paid, all goods become gifts.

We would only have to open everyone's eyes to the fact that the old natural laws of the gifts of creation and voluntary labour still apply – just as they did in archaic society. And we would have to agree on a day when this would happen.

Perhaps 1 May 2027 could be the day of unpaid labour.

We can simply withdraw from the capitalist compulsion to exploit peacefully and voluntarily. This could happen quickly and at any time if we globally and simultaneously refuse to accept our wages, thereby elevating production to the logic of the care sector. The economy has no way of defending itself against this voluntary renunciation.

It is important that this 'secret' plan is communicated worldwide, and everyone must help to achieve this.

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It is important that this 'secret' plan is communicated worldwide, and everyone must help to achieve this. [To the table of contents](#)

4.6. The dialectic of a revolution

A revolution is not a slow change, but rather a transformation into a new quality of social reality. It condenses what has matured over a long period of time: contradictions, experiences, technical developments, processes of consciousness. When these can no longer be resolved within the old order, the form itself breaks down – and the new emerges.

Marx describes this moment as an 'era of social revolution' that begins when the productive forces outgrow the existing relations of production. The revolutionary process is therefore not the gradual construction of the new, but metamorphosis: the end of the old form of mediation between humans, labour and nature and the birth of a new social quality.

Just as a caterpillar slowly changes, gradually taking shape inside its cocoon and then emerging within a few minutes, so too does social change: long quantitative, then suddenly a qualitative leap when the butterfly emerges.

We can also look at it this way: what began 248 years ago with Adam Smith's book 'The Wealth of Nations' (Smith, 2023) is now complete.

This reversal is necessary in the short term because it marks the moment when the old loses its legitimacy. If the break drags on too long, the old reorganises itself, stabilises its power, and pulls the new back into its forms.

That is why the revolution is the moment of decision, not the time of its preparation.

Applied to the reinstatement of the old natural laws of free raw materials and unpaid labour, this means that the qualitative leap consists in the simultaneous

conversion of the entire global economy to voluntary labour, as is taken for granted in the care sector.

In this simultaneity, the spiral of 'production-wages-consumption-more production' suddenly loses its function. Then raw materials, natural products and labour can flow freely, without the compulsion of exchange.

It is a revolution, but a peaceful, rather symbolic revolution, because nothing changes in material terms. The day after the revolution will be exactly the same as the day before.

But the day after, we will receive everything we need to live as a gift. It will be a great, worldwide celebration of happiness that can last forever.

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4.7. The limits of our imagination

It is often observed that predictions about a resource-based economy are based on false assumptions. The reason for this is that we find it extremely difficult to truly imagine such a society. We usually try to understand it using concepts and thought patterns from the world we know – a world in which work, possessions and money play a central role. However, these categories lose all meaning in a society that is free from accounting and based on solidarity.

Our imagination is bound to the conditions of the present. We tend to pick out individual facts or habits and transfer them to the future, even though they will no longer be valid there. But the society that emerges will have completely different boundary conditions than today's. This society will not come about through changing the old, but through abolishing its foundations.

'No one works without money'

The most common argument is that no one will work anymore if the compulsion of wages is removed. After the transition, the motivation will no longer be the compulsion of wages, but because we will receive everything we need as a gift. Why do we really work? We work to provide for each other. We would only realise this once we are freed from the compulsion of wage labour. Then we would feel that we are helping each other by dividing up the work. Chapter 5.2, Shared Happiness, provides further explanations on this.

Many people also assume that nature will be plundered even more ruthlessly if there are no longer any prices for raw materials. They forget that there would then no longer be any motivation to take more than is really necessary and that this would lead to a significant decrease in production and raw material consumption. They also forget that working hours would no longer play a role. It would then be possible to recycle discarded products almost completely. This also raises the question of who would collect the waste.

'Everyone wants to have five cars'

When we try to imagine mobility in such a society, we automatically think of cars, roads, traffic jams and commuting. Perhaps we would think that one car per family would be sufficient.

But in a society where production is demand-driven, where every person is automatically provided with everything they need to live in dignity, there is no longer any need to commute between home and work every day. No one would have to travel long distances anymore because they might earn more money there. Mobility would not disappear, but its purpose would change: it would no longer serve the compulsion to work for a living, but rather to meet people, cooperate and enjoy exchanges. There would no longer be any 'commuting' because it would not make sense. How many people would then still bother to own a car?

The same applies to almost all areas of life. Living, working, learning, researching, travelling – all of these will lose their current, economically determined form. We will no longer ask 'how much does it cost' or 'is it worth it', but only whether it is meaningful and useful for our shared life.

'Do we all need the same amount?'

A major barrier to our understanding lies in the question of what and how much we actually need. Apart from the fact that new needs are constantly being created to increase consumption, we are so accustomed to demanding uniform wages and collective agreements that thousands of people receive the same wage.

This habit makes it difficult for us to consider that every person has individual needs and circumstances. Some need more, others less. Even family size should

actually influence the level of wages. Marx pointed out this contradiction in his critique of the Gotha Programme (Marx, 1875). Concepts such as working time accounting cannot really solve this problem either.

Nevertheless, we find it difficult to imagine a society in which wages would have to be calculated according to family size or lifestyle. And yet this is exactly what would be necessary if we want to imagine a society in which true justice is determined not by equal wages but by the fulfilment of individual needs.

'Daily bath in champagne'

It is probably most difficult to imagine situations that are characterised by high scarcity today. These are luxury items such as expensive jewellery, expensive cars, expensive holidays or expensive flats – they are unattainable for most people and therefore most desirable.

Try to imagine this needs-based provision, where everything – yes, everything – is free. Suddenly, we could simply take everything, theoretically even the expensive jewellery, the expensive cars, the expensive holidays or the expensive flats. We could even theoretically bathe in champagne every day. These goods would then no longer be 'scarce'. How desirable would they still be?

But more importantly, these things would no longer have a price. We would no longer be able to recognise that they were once luxury items. I would be reluctant to squeeze into a Maserati sports car or be responsible for cleaning a huge flat with lots of shiny surfaces.

In this society, we will prefer things that are practical. Moreover, in a supportive and fraternal environment, no one needs to stand out.

'Who does the dirty work?'

The same will apply to 'dirty work'. Today, it is done by people who depend on the money they earn for it. Anyone who has the chance to earn more money will not exactly seek out this kind of work.

This raises the frequent question: 'Who will do the dirty work then?'

Many of these jobs can be automated when the decision-making criterion of money no longer means that cheap labour costs much less than the use of robots. Once car factories have been converted for the production of robots, and

once there is hardly any waste left due to almost complete recycling, the problem of 'dirty work' will become relative. In the new society, we will deal with it in a spirit of solidarity and take turns, so that many people share the little dirty work that remains.

So if you want to get an idea of how we will live in a needs-based society, you must be prepared to question all the basic assumptions on which our current way of thinking is based. We must let go and simply trust in this security, which will then be characterised by solidarity and brotherhood.

Only when we take this step will our imagination be free enough to conceive of the new. [To the table of contents](#)

5.The Liberation – A Festival of Giving

5.1. The great celebration of relief and gift-giving

Today is the day. It is 1 May 2027, the day of voluntary work. Everyone in the world has understood that we simply need to reinstate the two forgotten laws of nature in order to set the world right again.

The law of nature governing free raw materials and the law of nature governing voluntary work work together to enable a new economic logic.

From today onwards, all products are therefore free of charge, so we can confidently do without wages, which are the cause of the spiral of destruction of our planet. But we don't notice any of this.

The first thing we notice is that there are no price tags or advertisements in the supermarkets. There are no signs saying 'Special offer!'. The checkouts are also unmanned and all the barriers are open.

At first, there may be silence, a brief hesitation – then amazement. Some people cautiously take a loaf of bread, a bottle of oil, a few apples. Others look around as if to make sure that this is really happening. And then it happens: everyone smiles at each other.

They don't take more than they need. Why should they? The urge to hoard disappears – replaced by the feeling that everything is there. Just as at Christmas, no one grabs all the presents for themselves, but rejoices in both giving and receiving.

People meet each other on the street with their shopping, often less than before, when they were encouraged to buy 'two for the price of one' – and they all have this smile, this quiet, overwhelming happiness in their eyes.

It's as if an invisible burden has been lifted. The fear of 'not enough' has disappeared, replaced by confidence in the future.

Soon, people are standing in the shops, not to sell, but to help: with distribution, with organisation, with explanations. Others bring surplus produce from their gardens, clothing, books. Everything continues to flow, but without the sound of money.

These first days will later be called the great celebration of giving and relief. No noise, no triumph, no chaos – just an infinite calm, a global harmony of giving.

From city to city, from continent to continent, this silent celebration spreads within hours. Everywhere the same picture: people smiling at each other because they have understood that the world has changed – not through taking, but through giving.

And no one asks, 'How much does it cost?' anymore. Because everything that matters is finally free.

Actually, nothing has changed at all. Mobile phones are still there, the streets are still full of cars, and tomorrow morning we will go back to work, university or school.

But in the coming days, weeks and months, there will be major changes. The economy will evolve on its own into a tool for the people. Via internet platforms, it will ask, 'What do you need?' and artificial intelligence, which will then belong to everyone, will ensure that all people are truly provided for so that they can live in dignity. [To the table of contents](#)

5.2. Shared happiness – from the emperor's bread to the gift of community

Since the early advanced civilisations, celebrations have been regarded as moments when society celebrates itself – and at the same time forgets that it is divided. When bread, wine and music are freely distributed, an atmosphere is created that transcends everyday life: people feel that happiness lies not in possession, but in the harmony of joy.

Even the Roman emperors knew that there is nothing more powerful than a shared sense of happiness. In the arenas of Rome, wine, bread and jubilation flowed – *panem et circenses* – as a staging of unity. But this unity was only borrowed. The emperor gave, the people thanked him. The celebration was pacification, not liberation. The gesture of giving remained hierarchical, the joy fleeting (Tim Cornell, 2012).

Two thousand years later, in a Berlin winter, the same gesture is repeated in a completely different sense. When Frank Zander invites thousands of homeless people to Christmas dinner every year, a cold hall is transformed into a place of warmth (Breitfeld, 2024). Here, no one gives 'downwards'. The volunteers, musicians, doctors and guests form a temporary community in which the principle of exchange value is suspended for a few hours. People who are otherwise separated by income, profession or housing share the same moment of abundance. The happiness that arises from this is not a spectacle – it is the illumination of a different social principle: giving without expecting anything in return.

Sociologically, this phenomenon can be related to two classic concepts.

Firstly, Émile Durkheim's concept of collective effervescence: when people celebrate together, they enter a state of heightened connectedness that transcends individual consciousness. This collective energy creates identity, trust and meaning (Émile Durkheim, 1995 / 1912).

Secondly, Marcel Mauss's theory of gift-giving (*Essai sur le don*, 1925): every gift creates social bonds. In pre-modern societies, gift-giving was not

economically motivated, but morally motivated – it formed community rather than competition (Mauss, 1990).

Modern empirical studies confirm this effect. A study of festivals in Southeast Asia shows that communal celebrations significantly increase subjective well-being and strengthen social cohesion (Young-joo Ahn, 2023). Research on large mass events such as Burning Man or spiritual gatherings describes ‘transformative experiences’: feelings of unity, meaning and universal connectedness (Daniel Yudkin, 2022). Even in digital spaces, gift-giving movements – such as virtual gifts – have been shown to trigger spontaneous waves of trust and generosity (Yuan Yuan, 2019).

All these phenomena point to a basic anthropological law:

When goods, time and attention are shared without price, the feeling of happiness increases for all involved – not despite, but precisely because the exchange value is suspended (Ariely, 2009).

This opens the way to a possible order in which voluntary work and the gift economy are not exceptions but everyday occurrences. The festival would then not be a special occasion, but the basic form of social existence. What is now considered a Christmas dinner for the needy will, after the transition, be the natural structure of a global, growth-free economy. [To the table of contents](#)

5.3. The decisive step: the transition

Implementation within the framework of the classic executive mode

In March 2020, shortly after the outbreak of the Covid-19 pandemic, it was implemented globally for the first time. The executive mode of governments worldwide came into force.

The core of classic executive mode consists of the sovereign interruption of existing legal relationships by means of general clause-based regulations. It is vertically organised, hierarchically enforceable and designed to take effect immediately. Its political peculiarity lies less in spectacular measures than in the shift in the place of decision-making: from the deliberative parliament to the executive branch, which is capable of acting.

In times of crisis, such as during the first COVID-19 lockdown, this mode is an effective tool. It is not an exceptional instrument beyond the legal system, but part of its architecture. However, it develops its own dynamic: once it is provided for in a law, a normative act is sufficient to intervene deeply in existing functions – not through planning, but through suspension.

The reasons for this were specific:

- Disrupted international supply chains
- Collapse in demand
- Health protection in factories
- Entry bans

This executive mode was applied worldwide. The automotive industry and aviation were shut down. We were able to ascertain that this did not jeopardise daily supplies at any time.

The legal basis in Germany was Section 28 of the Infection Protection Act, 'Hazard prevention in the event of an epidemic'. When this section was being debated, no one could have imagined that it would actually lead to partial shutdowns of the economy. This would be an opportunity to initiate the end of the market without it being the main focus. In this form, it could be initiated almost incidentally.

The decoupling of the market from production could also take place simultaneously worldwide in this way. One possibility would be for governments to include a provision in their disaster control laws that obliges all manufacturing companies to suspend payroll accounting in the event of a global disaster. The companies continue to produce, the machines continue to operate, the supply chains remain active – but the costs that previously ensured that the products had an exchange value and had to be sold on the market no longer exist. The products are effectively free of charge, monetary exchange is no longer necessary, and the usual accounting practices are simply discontinued. There is no expropriation, no interference with property rights; production facilities remain in private hands, only the accounting logic is abolished.

The special feature of this would be that in the event of an extreme disaster, all people would automatically be provided for because all products could be distributed free of charge, as there would no longer be any production costs.

The executive branch ensures that the suspension is implemented correctly. The decision takes effect immediately, is enforced hierarchically and does not require detailed parliamentary negotiation. Those who do not comply with the rules receive standardised administrative sanctions; those who do comply continue to produce without incurring any production costs.

Technically speaking, this is a negative logic: nothing new is planned, nothing is restructured – only the previous cost and accounting structure is suspended. Production systems continue to run unchanged, only the monetary constraints are removed. As with the lockdown in March 2020, the strength of the classic executive mode is evident here: fast, clear, hierarchical, without consensus procedures, immediately effective.

But while the lockdown was only a temporary interruption, this is a permanent transformation. Payroll accounting disappears, taxes and social security contributions are eliminated, and with them the monetary barriers between production and use. Products become available without money or costs being charged. The administration controls the suspension, but it does not interfere with production – the functional logic of the businesses changes by itself. Where wage costs used to limit production as part of the calculation, there are now no more monetary barriers. The change is radical, but formally simple: an executive-ordered suspension of an existing legal relationship.

In this mode, the power of the executive is revealed in its purely technical form: not through planning, not through control, not through redistribution, but through interruption. It sets a framework within which production continues, while the monetary system as a control instrument is eliminated. Products are freely available, accounting is hidden, work is done voluntarily and without pay – a direct, administratively executed transition to a new economic logic that arises from the suspension of payroll accounting. To the table of contents

Not a revolution, but a symbolic act

The transition to voluntary work is not a momentous event. It happens quietly – as a symbolic act. We must be as skilful and clever as David was when he defeated Goliath.

We go to work, school or university as usual. At first, nothing visible changes in the economy: all employment, supply and service contracts, some of which have been in place for years, remain in force. Only the payments are omitted, because we no longer want wages.

Why symbolic?

Because we are used to working many days or weeks in advance before our wages are paid. This time lag allows the transition to take place without anyone feeling that they are really having to give anything up.

Continuity and security

On the day of the changeover, there must be no noticeable change in people's everyday lives. Production must continue unchanged so that there is no uncertainty or panic.

This is a tacit agreement between employees and employers: until now, we have advanced half of our monthly work because wages are always paid later and later.

Now we work, only that from this day onwards, the work is voluntary and without pay. At the same time, the products are distributed free of charge – since there are no longer any production costs.

All existing production chains remain in place during the transition. These are mostly long-term contractual relationships. This routine is not disrupted by the transition. No factories are closed, no businesses are affected. The only difference is that payments are no longer made because they have become superfluous.

From exchange value to gift

As soon as wages are no longer paid, there is no longer any exchange value. The products and services that were previously considered commodities lose their

price and become gifts. Work is no longer mediated by money, but by habit and mutual solidarity.

When all people are provided for unconditionally, the fear of job loss, poverty and existential threats disappears. Decisions are no longer determined by competition, but by mutual aid.

A new relationship with the earth

All people, including the owners of factories, land on which mineral resources are extracted and fields, have free access to everything they need to live. For this reason, and because they would no longer be able to buy anything with their basic income or profits, they will accept that their property is used by society.

This creates a new relationship with nature. Land and raw materials are no longer objects of ownership, but shared resources. Those who use them do so in the knowledge that they belong to everyone – the living, future generations and the earth itself. [To the table of contents](#)

6. Transformation of the economy

6.1. Solving the equation system – from value to needs-based logic

Capitalism can be understood as a self-contained equation system. Its variables – labour, raw materials, property, wages, profit – are interdependent. Each of them only derives its meaning from the others. Labour is wage labour because property rights to the means of production exist; property is relevant to income because labour produces value; and value arises because raw materials and labour enter the market in the form of commodities.

This system is stable as long as its central conditions – scarcity and exchange value – are maintained. But it is precisely these conditions that are man-made and therefore reversible. If humanity collectively decides to share its raw materials and perform labour voluntarily, the old system of equations dissolves abruptly.

This process can be easily described in economic terms.

Marx described the capitalist production process in the formula:

$$W = c + v + m$$

where c denotes constant capital (machinery, raw materials), v denotes variable capital (wages) and m denotes surplus value. As long as c and v represent socially relevant costs, m can be > 0 , i.e. a profit can be generated.

If the two laws of free raw materials and unpaid labour are reintroduced into production, the need to earn wages disappears because there are no longer any costs in production and the products are freely available.

In addition, property disappears because the free availability of goods eliminates the possibility of using profit and rent for anything.

In this situation of voluntary labour and free resources, the following applies:

$$c = 0, v = 0, m = 0$$

This also means that the value of goods $W = 0$ disappears.

The categories of price, profit and property lose their meaning.

At this point, the system of equations of capitalism is **mathematically solved**, but at the same time **socially abolished**.

There are no economic variables left that relate to scarcity or exploitation.

This abolition is not merely an economic process, but a **transformation of social logic**.

As long as value is produced, labour serves the purpose of exchange.

With the disappearance of value, labour loses its function as a source of profit and becomes what it originally was: creative activity to satisfy human needs.

The transition from the logic of value to the logic of needs

The old logic of value follows the formula:

$$(c, v, m) \Rightarrow W \Rightarrow G \Rightarrow P.$$

In other words:

Raw materials and labour → Goods → Money → Profit.

It is a closed cycle that only works if it maintains inequality and scarcity.

The new logic of needs, on the other hand, reduces the entire social system to its simplest form:

$$B = f(N, T)$$

The satisfaction of needs B results from the existing needs (N) and the technical possibilities (T) to fulfil them.

The relationship between people and things is no longer mediated by exchange, but by insight, cooperation and technical organisation.

While the capitalist system of equations strives for exploitation, the new system strives for coverage:

Its goal is no longer *added value*, but *balance of needs*.

The logic of value is based on the constant difference between production and consumption, between having and not having.

The logic of needs, on the other hand, no longer recognises this difference – it replaces it with immediate availability.

What can be produced is produced because it is needed; and what is needed is available because no one has to prevent others from using it anymore.

The dissolution of the economic category

One could say:

- Marx deciphered the system of equations of capital.
- The care economy dissolves it.

Economic variables lose their social character. They become mere technical quantities.

Raw materials are no longer costs, but a common basis; labour is no longer a commodity, but voluntary activity; property is no longer a means of power, but a reminder of a bygone era.

In this new order, the following no longer applies:

Value→Money→Profit

but rather:

Need ↔ Satisfaction

A simple, transparent equilibrium replaces the complex, self-perpetuating imbalance of the value form.

Where competition once reigned, cooperation now emerges; where property once divided, shared use now connects.

Social rationality frees itself from the logic of scarcity and returns to its original form: the logic of participation.

Final thought

The dissolution of the capitalist system of equations is not a collapse, but a simplification. It resembles a mathematical reduction: superfluous variables are eliminated until only the essential relationships remain.

In the new era, these relationships are no longer called *work, wages, profit*, but *need, ability, community*.

The global economy thus transforms from a tense value system into an open, free organism of human self-organisation.

What once appeared to be an economic necessity then proves to be a historical transitional form – an equation whose solution was already inherent in itself.

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6.2. Digital infrastructure replaces the market

The role of digital mediation

In an economy based on voluntary work, however, the profit motive disappears, and with it the need to artificially stimulate consumption. Production is then no longer geared to the market, but to real social needs.

The market as a place of exchange becomes superfluous. Economists and politicians say that the market is indispensable as a means of allocating raw

materials. In a simple economy based on free labour, working time is no longer a cost factor. This makes almost complete recycling possible. In addition, production is based solely on demand and no longer on surplus. As a result, the demand for raw materials decreases significantly, eliminating the need for allocation.

The market is replaced by the internet as a space for mediation:

here, all available services, products and potential can be made visible and all needs can be reported. Democratically controlled artificial intelligence takes on the task of optimally matching supply and demand – not according to profit, but according to need and sustainability.

Just-in-time instead of five-year plans

The old idea of a centralised planned economy with rigid production targets is outdated. In a networked world where all production and consumption data can be recorded digitally, it is possible to respond dynamically to changes – in real time.

Every time goods are removed, whether it's food or a spare part, digital signals are already generated today: cash register systems, warehouse logistics and ordering systems communicate with each other. Shared flats or individuals can also use this system to register their need for services, e.g. repairs.

In a market-free economy, these signals are used further, but not for pricing or profit expectations, but purely for needs analysis. AI records what is needed, recognises patterns, balances out regional differences and provides recommendations for action to producers, right down to civil society potential such as repair cafés.

Decentralised coordination instead of the market

Instead of an anonymous, uncontrollable market, there is a transparent, cooperative network that is monitored on a grassroots democratic basis. Production facilities, warehouses, distribution points and repair centres are digitally linked. Interfaces between companies remain in place, but orders are no longer placed by 'purchase' but by reporting demand.

The supply contracts that were in place before the changeover can continue to run for the time being, but they will gradually be replaced by new cooperation agreements based on solidarity and shared responsibility.

AI can help to optimise processes, minimise waste and reduce energy consumption. It recognises maintenance requirements, coordinates transport and helps to use resources sparingly and efficiently. In areas where automation is not yet possible, people can volunteer their services, motivated not by coercion but by a sense of purpose and social recognition.

Democratic control and co-determination

Digital networking also creates new opportunities for grassroots democratic participation. Regional supply councils, platforms for setting priorities, collective feedback systems – all of this can be implemented with today's technologies. People can have a direct say in what is produced, how and where. AI serves as a tool to support decision-making.

The existing information infrastructure as a foundation

The technological basis for a market-free economy already exists. Large online platforms such as Amazon and Alibaba collect data on purchasing behaviour, preferences and usage habits. They can record in real time which products are in demand, monitor stock levels and coordinate delivery routes. All of this is currently done to maximise profits and control prices. In a money-free society based on voluntary work, however, these systems could take on completely new functions: they could pass on people's real needs directly to producers.

Price would then no longer be the determining factor; instead, criteria such as short supply chains, local production, environmental impact and social utilisation would determine distribution. Algorithms that are currently optimised for profit could be reprogrammed to distribute resources in a needs-based, resource-efficient and fair manner.

From collecting personal data to demand management

The information collected today about preferences, eating habits or mobility needs is currently used to manipulate purchasing decisions. From now on,

however, this data could be used to tailor supplies precisely to people's needs without manipulating or monitoring them.

Instead of advertising and profit interests, the focus would be on voluntary data use. Those who share their data to optimise supplies actively contribute to avoiding waste of resources, preventing bottlenecks and providing adequate supplies for all. The data would become an instrument of solidarity and efficiency, not a tool for generating profit.

Harnessing the technical expertise of stock exchanges

The financial markets also offer approaches that are of interest to the new society. Stock exchanges such as the New York Stock Exchange and NASDAQ have highly developed systems for real-time aggregation of information, predicting bottlenecks and optimising complex capacities.

The stock exchange as an institution, with speculation and returns, would of course be superfluous. What remains is technical rationality: processing data, identifying needs, managing capacities. Its logic can be adopted to organise global supply efficiently, without the destructive incentive of profit.

Blockchain: energy waste without social necessity

Blockchain technology is primarily a tool for securing property and transactions in a distrustful, market-driven society. In direct supply, this necessity no longer applies. Transactions do not need to be secured.

Democratically controlled AI replaces what blockchain was developed for: trust, traceability and security. At the same time, an enormous energy problem is eliminated. What was expensive and resource-intensive in the old world becomes superfluous as soon as society focuses on transparency, collective control and mutual responsibility.

Conclusion: Repurpose technology instead of reinventing it

Existing information systems do not need to be reinvented, they just need to be redirected. Profit control becomes demand-driven fairness, advertising becomes supply transparency, stock market trading becomes logistical intelligence. The technical means are available – all that is missing is the political and social break with the old control principle of money and property.

The transition to demand-driven production is not a vision of the future that awaits science fiction technologies, but a practical repurposing of existing systems whose moral and social mission is radically changing.

Shrinking economy – growing life

Without advertising, planned obsolescence and competitive pressure, less is produced – and only what is needed. AI recognises when demand falls and reduces production accordingly. Resources are conserved, the environment is relieved, and the climate is protected.

The shrinking economy is not a sign of crisis, but of liberation. After all, the less work there is to do, the more time there is for family, friends, sports, hobbies and civil society. [To the table of contents](#)

6.3. Progress through a desire for improvement rather than marketing

The often-heard argument that only competition can bring about innovation and progress is based on a confusion between market mechanisms and human creativity. It is true that competition within a market forces companies to improve their products in order to secure market share. But this dynamic is linked to the profit motive – not to people's actual ability to create something new.

Progress arises from necessity, curiosity and cooperation

Most of humanity's major technical and scientific advances have not come about through competition, but through joint problem-solving.

Examples:

- The internet, Linux, Wikipedia and open-source software are based on voluntary, cooperative work without competitive pressure.
- In science, knowledge is shared in open networks; progress comes from cooperation, not secret rivalry.
- Medical and technological innovations in times of crisis (such as vaccine development, disaster relief, space exploration) are based on cooperation, not market mechanisms.

Humans are not passive consumers who only become creative when under pressure, but active, curious, social beings who seek meaning and recognition. When external competition disappears, internal motivation remains: to improve something, to develop one's own skills and to contribute to society.

Market competition primarily promotes innovations that increase profits, not those that are socially meaningful.

This leads to phenomena such as planned obsolescence (products that are deliberately designed to break down early), overproduction, waste of resources, and advertising instead of genuine improvement.

Under competitive conditions, every innovation must be marketable – in other words, it must sell. As a result, many valuable ideas are never realised because they are not 'profitable'. In a cooperative, money-free mode of production, on the other hand, it is social utility that counts, not price.

Cooperation as the real driving force of evolution

Nature, too, is not primarily based on competition, but on mutual dependence. Ecosystems function through symbiosis: plants, animals and microorganisms evolve in mutual adaptation. Competition exists, but it is not the driving force, rather a regulating factor. The decisive driver for stability and adaptability is cooperation.

This can also be applied to human societies: civilisation, language, technology and culture are collective achievements, not products of individual competition.

In a money-free, voluntary mode of production such as Benharmonia, innovation does not arise from competition, but from a shared interest in improvement.

People develop new things because they see that it benefits everyone – not because they need to outperform others. Science, craftsmanship and technology become free, collective activities whose goal is not profit, but the good life.

In this context, the argument of 'comfort without competition' is merely a projection from market logic:

- Those who work to survive need external pressure.
- Those who work because they experience meaning and recognition do not need it.

Psychological research confirms that intrinsic motivation is stronger

Numerous studies show that intrinsic motivation (curiosity, meaning, social recognition) makes people more productive and creative in the long term than extrinsic incentives (money, competition, rewards). When people can work freely and cooperatively, the quality of their work increases, as does their enjoyment of what they do – and with it, progress (Ryan & Deci, 2000) (Kohn, 1999) (Ariely, 2009).

The negative example of real existing socialism is also often highlighted. Under socialism, any initiative was suppressed so that no one would break ranks from the 'united front' of the working people.

After the transition, there are endless opportunities for personal development. No start-up capital is required. People with ideas only need to gather enough like-minded people around them, and then all paths are open.

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6.4. Transitional tolerance of discrimination

Direct consequences of the transition

Immediately after the global transition to voluntary work, temporary injustices may arise if many people in the financial and insurance sectors initially remain at home, but production must continue unchanged.

Many activities cannot be fully automated or distributed to everyone immediately. During this phase, a small number of people will take on responsibility for work that others avoid, even though everyone benefits from the supply.

But there are two effects that ensure that work can be distributed more evenly

- Production will decline in many areas because there is no longer any incentive to consume
- People will receive everything they need to live as a gift. They will want to reciprocate and help to ensure that work is distributed as fairly as possible.

Networking and coordination through artificial intelligence will be of great service in this regard.

Today, the automation of production is hampered by fears of job losses. Once everyone is automatically provided for, automation can take full effect. The current state of science and technology is so advanced that it is possible to automate many work processes.

This situation must be addressed in the run-up to the transition. It is important to convey that the disadvantages of the transition are only temporary.

If there were no transition, the injustice would remain permanent

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6.5. The further development of the economy

Routine production

Starting point

On the day of the global transition to voluntary work, the material infrastructure remains unchanged. Production facilities, means of transport, energy supply, digital networks and communication systems continue to operate, and long-term, tried-and-tested supply contracts remain in place. People also continue to go about their usual activities.

The change affects only the purpose, not the physical work itself. Money, prices and payments are replaced by demand and impact data. These reflect the same information content as the invoice data did before, only without the exchange value logic. This means that supply can continue without interruption.

Continuity of supply relationships

The vast majority of all supply relationships are stable, regular and based on mutual reliability prior to the changeover. Bakeries continue to source their flour from trusted mills, industrial companies their components from proven suppliers. These relationships remain unchanged.

The participants know the quantities, qualities and schedules. At the time of the changeover and in the days that follow, nothing will change because life goes on as usual.

As no money is flowing anymore, only payment terms, invoices and contracts are eliminated, but the actual flows of materials and information continue unchanged.

Communication takes place in the same form – via electronic data exchange, only with different codes. Instead of prices, demand volumes, capacities and priorities are specified.

Example 1: Bakery

A medium-sized bakery that previously produced around 5,000 loaves of bread per day continued its operations without interruption. The employees come to work as usual, the raw material deliveries arrive, and operations run smoothly.

The only thing that changes is the form of accounting.

Sonnengold Bakery – 1st week after the changeover

Received	3 tonnes of wheat flour, 1 tonne of wholemeal flour, 20 kg of salt
Processed	4 tonnes of flour → 5,000 loaves of bread
Distributed to	600 households, 3 schools, 1 nursing home
Demand coverage	98 %
Note	Demand stable, no overproduction

Financial accounting is replaced by a material and impact balance sheet. It documents the quantities used and the demands met. Based on this data, work and delivery processes can continue to be planned and improved.

Employees are motivated by the obvious social benefits of their work, not by individual remuneration.

Example 2: Battery production

In a large industrial plant manufacturing battery modules for electric vehicles, the transition is proceeding in the same way. The existing production lines, storage structures and supply chains remain completely intact. Suppliers from

the raw materials processing and electronics manufacturing sectors continue to deliver as usual.

Financial coordination is replaced by a demand-oriented reporting system that records material flows, energy consumption and distribution results.

Battery plant south – 1 month after the transition

Produced	30,000 battery modules
Energy consumption	8 GWh (100% renewable)
Recycled raw material content	86 %
Distributed to	120 regions worldwide
Supply rate	94 %
Note	No bottlenecks, recycling expansion recommended

The previous financial accounting system is no longer used. Control is based on demand data: Which regions need how many batteries in what time frame?

The existing ERP systems remain usable, as they manage quantity, time and location data anyway. Only the money-related columns (costs, prices, revenues) are deactivated. This means that operations can continue without any structural adjustments.

Technical implementation

The technical basis for the transition is already in place. Modern enterprise software (ERP, logistics and production systems) works with real quantity and time data, which was previously used to calculate monetary values. In the new structure, these monetary values are simply no longer needed.

This means that the data architecture remains identical. Only the evaluation logic is adjusted (e.g. from 'cost optimisation' to 'supply level'). Supply and production networks remain active and unchanged.

This means that global supply can be maintained without having to rebuild production chains.

New types of balance sheets

The traditional financial balance sheet is replaced by impact and supply balance sheets. These are not used for evaluation, but for overview and optimisation.

Category	Content
Resource use	Materials, energy, working hours
Output	Goods and services produced
Supply level	Proportion of needs met
Ecological impact	Energy efficiency, recycling, emissions
Social impact	Satisfaction, security, cooperation

This type of balance sheet allows for precise analysis without resorting to monetary values. It measures the real benefits of work and the effectiveness of supply. This means that planning remains possible, but without economic pressure or profit targets.

Result

The switch to voluntary work does not jeopardise supply. As the material, logistical and informal structures remain intact, the economy continues to function – with the same technical foundation, but without money-based mediation.

Production remains stable, distribution becomes more transparent, and control is based on demand data rather than purchasing power. Overall, the administrative burden is significantly reduced, while real coordination becomes simpler and more transparent.

The result is not a new mode of production in the technical sense, but a reorientation of the purpose: from profit-seeking to demand-oriented supply.

Example: the automotive industry

The automotive industry is currently one of the sectors that causes high greenhouse gas emissions, both in the production and operation of cars.

After the changeover, the cars would also be available free of charge. We might imagine that everyone would immediately want to take several cars. In reality, people will have other preferences on that day, and it must also be assumed that the cars will need to be maintained and will therefore be more of a burden.

What will happen in the economy? Production will continue as normal in the days that follow, suppliers will send their products and cars will continue to be assembled. If, in the ideal scenario, car dealers no longer order cars, many car industry plants could be put on standby.

The situation will then be similar to the first lockdown in 2020, but with the difference that everyone affected will be provided for, because daily supplies are free. Car factories will probably be converted in the near future to produce machines and robots that take over dangerous, heavy and monotonous work steps in production.

Infrastructure projects

Special projects are mainly regional in nature. They are decided upon by local authorities on a grassroots democratic basis.

As overall production declines because there is no longer any pressure to grow, it will not be a problem to find producers for individual projects.

For example, it will no longer be necessary to favour large-scale projects such as motorway construction because transport will decline rapidly. It will no longer be necessary to transport milk from the north to the south because it may generate 2 pence more revenue there. This will probably affect most of the products that will later be produced mainly regionally. A reduced infrastructure will suffice for high-quality and durable products.

But if a community decides to build a regional health centre, a corresponding request will be published on the internet and the AI will ensure that all potential companies are informed. There may be cooperative associations, perhaps the construction workers will come with their families and use this for cultural and social exchange. Housing is available free of charge and, due to its gift nature, everyone is eager to maintain it.

Supplies for this construction project are provided as needed and as requested. Today's industry is flexible enough to respond to this without having to draw up a five-year plan.

The care sector

The biggest change will probably be in the care sector. This area of unpaid and paid care suffers from competition just as much as nature, which is being increasingly exploited.

But with the elimination of competition, there will be a significant easing of tensions. Because all carers, like everyone else, are provided with everything they need, there will no longer be any time pressure. This will enable them to provide optimal care for those in need.

Many people have placed their relatives in care because they were no longer able to look after them due to increasing workloads. Due to the reduction in consumption and production, there is suddenly much more time available in social dimensions.

There will also be changes in the health sector and in hospitals, as there will no longer be any cost pressure. Hospitals will no longer have to be closed for financial reasons. There will no longer be any prioritisation of profitable treatments at the expense of general patient care.

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7. Social changes

7.1. Power of society

The driving force in society is no longer to work in order to earn a wage, because otherwise you will starve.

The driving force in society is to help ensure that everyone has enough to eat.

7.2. Taxes and social systems become superfluous

In a society where everyone has unrestricted access to everything necessary for life, there is no longer any need for traditional capitalist social systems based on the organisation and administration of poverty and inequality. Unemployment, health and pension insurance lose their purpose because the question of the

minimum subsistence level and social security is no longer regulated by wages and income.

These systems originally emerged under capitalism to alleviate the existential insecurity of the working class, while at the same time preserving the capitalist system of production and labour as a commodity. The state – or rather the existing system – acts as an intermediary, ensuring that workers can continue to work for capital.

In a society without profit and wage labour, where production is voluntary and everyone has access to the necessary resources regardless of the labour market, the entire bureaucratic apparatus that was necessary to maintain these social systems becomes superfluous. This is because everyone has unconditional access to everything they need for a happy and contented life.

In such a society, unemployment insurance, which originally served to cushion the precarious existence of workers in times of unemployment, becomes superfluous. For in a society in which every person is provided for through voluntary work and the principle of giving, this mechanism of social security, which is based on the ongoing necessity of wage labour, becomes obsolete.

The same applies to the pension insurance system. In a society where all people are automatically provided for, there is no need to save money for old age. There are no social classes divided into different social situations by the compulsion to wage labour and the associated existential pressure. Everyone is equally provided for, regardless of their position in the labour market.

Administration, education and culture, which in capitalist societies are often regarded as sectors secured by taxes and state funding, can now be organised in a completely new way in a voluntary society. In a world without financial constraints and the need to cover social needs through taxes, education and culture can be made freely and equally accessible to all.

Education, which in capitalist systems is often treated as a commodity that not everyone can afford, now becomes accessible to all. In a society where the well-being of all people is the top priority, education is not a question of income, but a communal process organised through collective responsibility and solidarity.

Cultural and social work as a collective responsibility

Culture, which is often commodified in capitalist societies, also undergoes a fundamental change. It is no longer seen as a product of the 'entertainment industry' or as a status symbol, but as a common good that serves society and is created by it.

In a society without financial incentives, people are no longer forced to earn a living doing jobs that do not suit them or that only serve the profits of others. Instead, they can develop their talents in cultural and creative fields without being affected by financial worries or the pressure to commercialise.

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7.3. The financial system is dissolving

On the day we give up wages, the financial system will dissolve. It will no longer have any access to the economy because there will be no more exchange value. Since all products and services are free, no one will be able to do anything with bank balances anymore. The previous standards of value will no longer exist.

Tax offices will also no longer be needed, as there will be no more taxes. Even if taxes still existed, we would not know what to do with them, because nothing can or needs to be bought with them anymore.

Insurance companies will also become superfluous, because damage can simply be repaired without incurring any costs.

Basically, this is not a problem because no material values are created within the financial and insurance system, so no one will be missing anything if the financial system no longer exists. On the contrary, much less electricity will be consumed, which will have a direct impact on greenhouse gas emissions.

In addition, many high-quality buildings will become vacant and can be used for other purposes. Furthermore, there will be a large workforce available, initially working a few hours a week where needed. Over time, these people will contribute to society with their natural talents.

The dissolution of the financial system will therefore only bring advantages.

What will happen to the money? Everyone can keep their money, but they will no longer be able to buy anything with it because everything is free. Cash is worthless; the existing amounts can perhaps be withdrawn and stored in the attic. Perhaps banks and savings banks will agree to issue each saver with a certificate showing the latest balance of their account.

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7.4. Property

The role of property

For almost the entire history of humankind, property as we know it today was virtually unknown. Tools and weapons belonged to the person who used them, but land, water, forests and animals were considered common goods that belonged to no one. It was only with the transition to a settled lifestyle – i.e. to agriculture and animal husbandry – that it became possible to produce permanent surpluses. These surpluses had to be stored and defended. This initially gave rise to possession (that which one uses and protects) and later to property (that which one can legally and socially claim as 'one's own', even without using it oneself). Historically, property did not arise from the need for personal security, but from the desire to force others to work for oneself.

But with a growing population, technological advances and power differences, individuals or groups began to appropriate these resources. The decisive moment was the social acceptance of this appropriation: whoever fenced off or controlled land was soon considered its rightful owner, provided they had the power to enforce this. Violence, religion and later the legal system secured this state of affairs.

Thus, the natural basis of life – the earth itself – was transformed into a commodity. What had previously been shared as a matter of course could now be sold, inherited or hoarded.

In capitalism, property is much more than a means of individual security – it is the central instrument for maximising profit. Whether factories, rental apartments or fallow land: property exists to accumulate capital. Even owner-

occupied flats generate profit because no rent has to be paid and the money saved can be used elsewhere.

Even uncultivated land increases property prices by reducing the amount of land available – also in the service of exploitation.

Why do we simply accept this today?

Because the property system has become the cultural and legal norm. Over thousands of years, it has been religiously justified ('God gave the earth to man' – but not equally to all), philosophically defended (Locke: labour establishes property) (Locke, 2008) and economically declared the foundation of every order. This theory of property, which is based on the state of nature, serves as Locke's basis for justifying the state and the necessity of a social contract. This state is supposed to protect property rights.

Furthermore, survival in capitalism depends directly on access to property or work – therefore, property appears to be 'natural,' even though historically it was a product of violence and exclusion.

Profit and its dissolution

The crucial question is: How can this logic be overcome?

The answer lies not in the expropriation of the means of production, but in the abolition of profit itself. Without profit, property loses its function as an instrument of domination – it becomes functionless. Owners then no longer have any incentive to hold on to their property, as it no longer yields any returns but still requires maintenance, administration and risk. Since there is no longer a market, they cannot sell it either.

What remains is the simple insight that property has become superfluous. It dissolves – not through coercion, but through the loss of its purpose.

The transition

During the transition period, there will still be a formal legal obligation to protect property. Article 14 of the Basic Law (Grundgesetz, 2025) stipulates that property is both protected and committed to the common good. But as soon as property no longer has any economic value, it becomes a burden.

This is precisely where the new opportunity lies: what used to be property can be given to the community. This is not expropriation, but a conscious surrender – a return to the commons, as was commonplace throughout much of human history.

This step has a liberating effect. The owner becomes a guardian: they protect and share instead of excluding and managing. Possession is transformed from a means of power into a responsibility towards the whole. [Zum Inhaltsverzeichnis](#)

Protecting your privacy

Even in a society without property, the protection of privacy remains a central concern. The elimination of ownership does not mean the elimination of personal spaces or individual retreats. On the contrary: when there are no longer economic interests behind land ownership and living space, privacy can be shaped more freely and self-determinedly.

No one will be forced to share spaces they do not want to share simply because property ownership or rental prices dictate it. People will choose their places of residence, flatmates and lifestyles voluntarily – and for social rather than financial reasons. Personal space will not be socialised, but respected, because there will no longer be any need to control or exploit it economically.

Technological aids, for example in the field of communication or automated supply, are designed in such a way that they respect individual spheres and do not monitor them. A world without property can thus also be a world with greater respect for privacy – because it is no longer violated by property interests.

Conclusion

The only solution lies in the complete overcoming of the financial system and profit. Only when profit disappears as the driving force behind exploitation will property relations dissolve – not through laws, expropriation or redistribution, but through the devaluation of their basis. Property loses its function and collapses. What remains is the free, shared use of resources – a world without property, without profit, without classes.

Avoiding forced expropriation will also ensure that the transition to a classless society can take place without violence. [To the table of contents](#)

7.5. Liberation of labour

When work is no longer subject to financial constraints but is performed voluntarily, its entire character changes. It becomes an expression of creativity, self-realisation and social contribution. Motivation no longer stems from the pressure to survive, but from the joy of the activity itself.

This marks a historic break with capitalist wage labour.

There are convincing arguments and empirical evidence that the drive to perform voluntary, community-oriented work is deeply rooted in human nature – regardless of financial incentives. This is not only based on anthropological observations, but also on findings from psychology, sociology, behavioural economics and neuroscience.

In primitive societies, work was motivated not by money, but by the direct satisfaction of needs and social cohesion. Cooperation was essential for survival: those who did not contribute were excluded or considered unreliable. Hunting, gathering, childcare, protecting the group – all of this was done voluntarily, without exchange or wages. The drive to work together served to preserve the species. Sources such as 'The Original Affluent Society' (Sahlins, 1966) and 'Hierarchy in the Forest' (Boehm, 2001) provide impressive evidence of this.

These conditions applied to more than 95 per cent of human evolutionary history.

Modern psychological and neuroscientific studies also confirm that altruism and cooperation trigger happiness hormones such as oxytocin and dopamine. Voluntary helping activates reward centres in the brain – comparable to eating or sex.

The so-called 'helper's high' has been scientifically proven, among other things in Sonja Lyubomirsky's book 'The How of Happiness' (Lyubomirsky, 2008) and in Deci & Ryan's self-determination theory on intrinsic motivation (Ryan & Deci, 2000).

The drive to volunteer in the service of the community is therefore deeply rooted in evolution and has remained culturally alive. It manifests itself in forms that are not tied to money: care, creativity, development work, mutual assistance. This drive is not a utopia, but everyday reality – it is just often overshadowed or distorted by the logic of money. When external constraints such as money are removed, this inner drive can become effective again.

Overcoming alienation

Karl Marx criticised capitalist labour as alienating because it separates people from their product, their activity, their fellow human beings and themselves. Only by abolishing the logic of wage labour can work belong to people again.

Each person can then freely and independently choose an activity that suits their inclinations, abilities and talents, without being forced to earn a living.

In a society where the logic of wage labour has been overcome, most people will, over time, be able to do exactly what they really enjoy doing – whether it be baking, programming, caring, designing or even cleaning. Those who enjoy baking will also get up at four in the morning from time to time to bake bread rolls and croissants for other people, not out of compulsion, but out of a love for what they do.

In this way, many jobs will be filled from within – through personal enthusiasm rather than economic pressure. It is important to prevent monotony through solidarity-based change.

Solidarity-based organisation of unpleasant work

For necessary but unpopular tasks that cannot be performed by volunteers or machines, solidarity-based rotation systems will be developed that are controlled by grassroots democracy and filled on the basis of solidarity.

The decision to participate remains voluntary, but is supported by an awareness of social responsibility, of doing something for others in return for the daily gifts received. Distribution is not based on wage incentives, but on principles of solidarity and a sense of community.

In an economy freed from the financial system, technological progress can finally be used in a people-centred way. Robots no longer replace humans for

profit, but specifically take on the most physically demanding and monotonous tasks.

An end to global exploitation

Today's global economy is based on the exploitation of cheap labour, especially in the Global South – for example, in raw material extraction or textile production. In the society of the future, this relationship will become obsolete. It will no longer matter whether a pair of trousers is sewn by a person in Asia or a person in Europe.

No one will have to work under duress anymore. If people refuse to perform certain tasks, this will not be seen as a problem, but as a necessary correction of a historically grown injustice, and solutions will be sought through grassroots democracy. [To the table of contents](#)

7.6. The role of entrepreneurs in the transition

Many people wonder whether entrepreneurs would voluntarily give away their products if no one demanded wages or profits anymore. The answer depends on whether we really make the transition simultaneously worldwide – and that is precisely the crucial point.

If everyone worldwide worked voluntarily and all basic needs were met, then no one would need money to survive. Entrepreneurs and their families would also be fully provided for; they would no longer need to make profits, nor would they be able to buy anything with those profits. The financial pressure would disappear, as would the constant fear of bankruptcy, competition and market loss.

This fundamentally changes the meaning of their work. Instead of constantly developing new sales strategies or cutting costs, they can finally concentrate on what originally motivated them: manufacturing good, durable, useful and recyclable products. Their knowledge of production, organisation and technology remains valuable – but now serves everyone, not just private enrichment.

New forms of enterprise – without profit, without exploitation

In this mode of production, no one profits from companies anymore. This eliminates the economic incentive for exploitation. Entrepreneurs no longer act as capital owners, but as coordinators of meaningful processes.

They design sustainable forms of production together with other employees, who remain with the company or move on of their own free will – depending on where they can best develop their skills.

Managers are no longer measured by how much profit they generate or how much they reduce costs, but by how much they convey trust, cooperation and meaning.

Control is replaced by role models. A good leader inspires through attitude, not power. They organise not to achieve goals, but to empower people to contribute their best. Motivation no longer comes from rewards or fear, but from shared responsibility for the success of the whole.

Leadership thus becomes a form of service – a hub of coordination, empathy and orientation. The formerly hierarchical role is transforming into a cultural and social task: keeping the spirit of giving alive and enabling everyone to enjoy the joy of working together.

In the vast majority of companies, entrepreneurs will quickly adapt to the new circumstances and perceive liberation from the pressure to make a profit as liberation from a burden.

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7.7. What will become of the state?

Why do we need the state and power today? We need the state to protect property and power to enforce interests. Mostly these are financial interests, to strengthen areas of the economy. In 'Benharmonia' there are no more disputes over money because money has become superfluous.

Likewise, it is superfluous to protect property because there is no longer any use for it. Initially, there is still a duty to care for and maintain it, but gradually property will become common land.

Decisions are made collectively. Local councils, connected by open communication networks, form the backbone of the grassroots democratic organisation. Everyone can play an active role. Power has been replaced by responsibility. Within the relevant communities, decisions on whether to build a new road or school are made on a grassroots democratic basis.

The police and judiciary will probably no longer be needed in their current form. Most crimes, such as robbery, drug and human trafficking, fraud or tax evasion, have something to do with money, and money no longer exists. There will certainly still be isolated cases of violence due to jealousy or similar reasons, but these problems can be solved by civil society, perhaps with a kind of lay court.

Even the few remaining cases that are currently punished with imprisonment can certainly be dealt with in other ways. With therapy or role models, for example. I must point out again and again that people change. The most accurate description for this is living in brotherhood. Excluding someone will then no longer be part of our self-image.

With the disappearance of money and the need for central administration, the state loses its previous functions. The organisation of society is increasingly decentralised, based on voluntary associations and local cooperation. In this process, ethnically or culturally grown structures take on new significance – not as exclusive boundaries, but as places of lived identity and mutual trust.

The 'peoples' in the original sense – communities with a common language, history and way of life – will once again take responsibility for their living spaces.

There will no longer be any power relations between them, but rather networks of mutual support. This will create a new relationship between the local and the global: cultural diversity will be preserved, while the material basis of existence will be shared globally.

In past centuries, colonisation drew arbitrary borders and caused much suffering as a result. When states disappear, these borders naturally disappear as well. Perhaps ethnically related peoples will emerge again.

People will visit each other, even stay longer and enrich each other culturally.

There will no longer be refugee flows as we know them today. Today, people flee poverty and war. With money, poverty automatically disappears. Once there is no longer a market, goods can be distributed fairly.

What will happen to the military, weapons and war?

When the economy is converted to sustainable production methods, a consistent circular economy will emerge. In conjunction with much lower consumption, natural resources will hardly be exploited at all. We can therefore rule out war over resources.

Since there will be no more profit, no one will be interested in manufacturing weapons anymore. [To the table of contents](#)

7.8. Luxury goods and 'dirty work'

Please refer to section 3.5, '[The limits of our imagination](#)'.

8. Global impacts

The elimination of the market worldwide marks the end of the historical era of global dependencies. The previous division between 'rich' and 'poor' regions of the world is losing its meaning. It is being replaced by a process of mutual enrichment in which the Global South is no longer lagging behind in terms of development, but is becoming a key element of a new civilisation.

From inequality to mutuality

In the capitalist world order, the unequal distribution of capital, technology and power formed the basis of an asymmetrical division of labour: the North concentrated wealth, industrial capacity and political control, while the South served as a source of raw materials and a sales market. Under the new conditions, these structures are losing their function.

Instead of exchange relationships, material and social reciprocity emerges. Each region contributes what it has – soil fertility, knowledge, craftsmanship, organisational traditions – and receives what it needs.

This makes true equality possible for the first time: not as formal equality, but as lived cooperation.

The rediscovery of cooperative cultures

While capitalist modernity in the North has largely produced individualised ways of life, in many places in the South there are still remnants of communal and solidarity-based structures – village communities, local councils, clan and family associations, forms of mutual aid and collective responsibility.

Concepts such as the South African Ubuntu ('I am because we are') or the indigenous Sumak Kawsay or Buen Vivir from the Andean regions embody an ethic of togetherness in which the well-being of the individual is inextricably linked to the well-being of the community and nature.

Such ideas, which have never completely disappeared in the global South, form the cultural sounding board for new global forms of communal responsibility in the new society.

These historically grown social patterns take on unexpected significance in the new framework: they serve as living examples of social organisation beyond the state and the market.

Countries in the Global South today mostly live more simply than those in the Global North. We can see this clearly from the fact that these countries' Country Overshoot Day falls in the last months of the year. At the time of the market's disappearance, they will probably still need help from the North's surplus. But soon they will be an example to the North of sustainable living.

Instead of the North 'modernising' the South, the opposite is now happening. People from the countries of the North, alienated from community life, are travelling to the South to work there – not as 'helpers' but as learners. They participate in the restoration of destroyed ecological and social structures, help build large dams against sea level rise or green deserts, and participate in ways of life based on mutual responsibility and direct cooperation.

In this way, the South becomes a source of cultural and social renewal for all of humanity.

Return flow of social experience to the North

The experiences from the South are beginning to profoundly change societies in the North. In former industrial regions, where work and social structures had largely disintegrated, new forms of coexistence are emerging, modelled on Southern communities: neighbourhoods, regional associations, cooperative workshops and open learning centres.

The North is learning to understand social relationships as a productive force once again. Technological knowledge continues to flow into joint development, but it is subordinated to the needs of the communities.

The historical one-sidedness of 'civilisation' is being reversed: progress no longer means technical mastery, but social connectedness.

A new cultural symmetry

Under the conditions of the new society, a new cultural symmetry is emerging. The North contributes experience in science, technology and organisation, while the South contributes social and ecological wisdom, cultural continuity and practical forms of community spirit.

The interaction of these two currents is giving rise to a planetary culture in which the knowledge of one part of humanity no longer dominates the other, but connects with it.

Terms such as Ubuntu, Buen Vivir and Sumak Kawsay are becoming universal symbols of a shared ethic that is no longer limited to specific regions. They describe an attitude that is reflected in everyday life – in solidarity, shared responsibility and mutual care.

The terms 'North' and 'South' are gradually losing their political and economic significance. They then refer only to geographical areas of a shared, multi-voiced global society.

Outlook

The end of global inequality is evident not only in the distribution of goods, but above all in the restoration of human relationships. The dissolution of the market enables a return to social forms based on trust, closeness and shared responsibility.

After centuries of exploitation, the Global South thus becomes the starting point for a new social culture that renews humanity itself.

In this sense, it is not merely a question of economic upheaval, but of rediscovering what it means to be human across the entire planet. [To the table of contents](#)

9. Epilogue

What if everything gets even worse? What if rising global temperatures cause ever greater disasters that also rage here in the global North? On a global scale, nothing is being done about climate change.

What if only money counts and people and nature no longer matter? Economic freedom is growing, and the state can hardly intervene anymore.

Over the years, I have already played through several variants of eliminating the market. Serious considerations included abolishing money in order to avoid injustices between debtors and creditors, as well as between debtors with different levels of debt, in the event of debt relief.

The next step was for everyone to refuse their wages, if necessary as part of a global general strike, in which work would continue but without wages. This would eliminate production costs and make products available for free. However, it quickly became clear that the idea of giving up wages could not be made understandable to anyone.

Today's article is about simply doing away with payroll accounting. This does not sound as bad as giving up wages, but it would have the same effect of avoiding production costs, so that products would be freely available. This would eliminate the market.

It is likely that even better solutions could be found. It would therefore be desirable for this plan to be discussed widely.

It would be humanity's emergency brake.

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The author

Eberhard Licht was born in 1955 in the small theatre town of Meiningen in southern Thuringia. After studying process engineering at university, he worked at a research institute in the construction industry. During the first third of his conscious life, he witnessed solidarity among people in the GDR and on an international scale. This experience gives him the certainty that the vision described in this book can become reality – a certainty that remains difficult to imagine for many who grew up in capitalism.

The second third of his life began after the fall of the Berlin Wall. This part was dominated by the task of conquering market shares. First, he established a branch of a south-western German chemical institute in Weimar, and later he founded his own accredited testing institute for industrial emissions measurements in Berlin.

The third phase began in 2010, when Eberhard realised that the two younger of his four children needed more time and attention. He sold his company and stopped working for money. He quickly discovered how fulfilling housework can be when it is not subject to patriarchal rule. For several years, he also volunteered at a homeless shelter in Utrecht, the Netherlands – until the coronavirus pandemic put an end to this work.

He was also active in the climate movement for a long time.

Since then, he has devoted all his energy to developing the present plan for the liberation of work, people and the Earth.

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