

## **TOWARDS A SOCIETY OF TRUE WEALTH- for all.**

In the “Weltinnenraum” - Inner Space of the World

We left the Holocene and now we are living in the “Anthropocene”. According to the Nobel-Prize winner Paul Crutzen, we have entered this new age. Due to the global environmental changes of increased human population and economic performance, the planet has changed. Humans have altered the planet. We have changed the planet.

You are what you do. Or, as Forrest Gump expressed it in a memorable quote: “Stupid is as stupid does.” We are plundering the resources of our planet. Economic and social injustice is increasing. We have created great disparities of wealth, which is only designed for a minority in the world. Specifically, this means that a minority of 17% consumes 80 % of the world's resources, leading to the result that billions of people live without the very basic necessities of life - that is, food, water, housing and sanitation.<sup>1</sup>

The western political and business elites, the middle classes and the happy few in some developing countries make up over 400 billion people. These are the people who dominate the global economic and political system. It is a system of captivity and deprivation, slavery, impoverishment as cumulative poverty and destruction of nature. This future has no prospect of success.

We have a financial crisis.

We have a water crisis.

We have a climate crisis.

We have massive social problems.

We have a refugee crisis.

We have problems with racism and nationalism.

The whole system is in crisis.

All these crises are interconnected on this small planet.

In accordance with various scientists such as S. Milgram, K. Barrad, D. Watts, N. Christiakis, J. Fowler and many others, I believe that everything is linked together and everything is inseparable.

We – i.e. the people living in the leading and dominant countries and spheres - plunder. We deprive, we live at the expense of others and of future generations; we impoverish our societies. Nevertheless we bear responsibility, for we will be asked: Why didn't you do anything? Why didn't you take action? We are all connected in the globalized world.

The West (together with other elites) exports problems to the Congo. We must heal our souls. We cannot be happy alone. (Albert Camus)

No-one can claim that we knew nothing about it. No-one knew nothing. Never. So we have to create something fundamentally new and different. Not just a system which is only slightly different.

---

<sup>1</sup> <http://worldcentric.org/conscious-living/social-and-economic-injustice>

We should move towards a society of true wealth and towards a new social order. The dominating economic system and the neoliberal ideology behind it seem to be the core reason for this disaster. We are the crux of the problems and we have to change our thinking and behavior radically. We need a new objective: true wealth as described and suggested by Juliet Shor; with a different measurement of wealth<sup>2</sup>. We need a new operating system for society and, first and foremost, new economic thinking. It may be hopeless to believe that a change of system is possible. It is institutionally fixed and settled and the governments are fully under the control of powerful lobbyists. But we cannot survive on this small planet if we fight against each other. We need a system of cooperation and commons.

Only very few people benefit from these policies, as politics are based on the interests of a small but significant minority of powerful groups. It is absurd, but we have to work on - and look for - alternatives.

As Juliet Shor observes, plenitude is already emerging. “*True Wealth* puts sustainability at its core. But it is not a paradigm of sacrifice. Instead, it’s an argument that, through a major shift to new sources of wealth, green technologies, and different ways of living, the commons movement, individuals, groups, communities and countries as a whole can actually be better off and more economically secure.” (Juliet Shor in *Plenitude*).

Juliet Shor explains four principles of plenitude: A new allocation of time, the trend to do things for oneself. The third principle is an environmental approach to consumption. And we have to invest in local businesses, commons and the communities. (Juliet Shor: *True Wealth* p. 4-7)

All over the world, people are busy creating different lifestyles that open up a way out. These pioneers consume less and live more. They create sense and purpose of life together. Urban farmers, D.I.Y renovators, makers, fab lab pioneers, repair cafe organizers, new craftsmen, cob builders – they are all taking risks and establishing novel sources of income and outlets for procuring consumer goods.

In their book “How much is enough?”, Robert and Edward Skidelsky describe the characteristics of a good life. They strive to produce a list of basic goods which constitute the necessary conditions for this good life. These basic goods are universal, valid for all people, everywhere; they are final - not the means to an end but the goal itself; they are goods *sui generis*, i.e. unique, and they are indispensable for everyone. According to the Skidelskys, the basic goods of this good life are friendship, defined as a trusting and loving relationship with other people; health, both mental and physical; security, i.e. a life without violence, war and threat; respect and recognition; personality, or personal space for one's own development; harmony with nature; and leisure - not only as an opportunity for reflection, tranquility and contemplation, but also for disinterested, passionate activity. Economy needs re-appropriation with purpose and sense, particularly with human-centered teleology. That means markets are made for man and not man for markets. (Robert and Edward Skidelsky , 2012)

---

<sup>2</sup> see Juliet Shor, *True Wealth*

## **Problems and Causes:**

What is wrong with neoliberalism and capitalism? We have to open debates on the following aspects.

### **Problem 1: Market Ideology and Market Society**

The whole neoliberal, capitalistic system is a quasi-religious ideological theory based on simple assumptions: Markets are efficient; the untouchable, invisible hand will coordinate all players and finally, everything will turn out well and culminate in a happy end. All is well. Growth is good and will create wealth. More growth will create more wealth. State regulations turn into a night-watchmen system until crisis surprises all marketeers, then the losses which occur will be socialized. Following this ideology, we will drift into a market society without real markets. All is privatized, in the polis.

The Harvard philosopher Michael Sandel describes two fundamental problems - the negotiation between unequal actors and the downgrading effect: “The first objection is the argument of coercion. It points to the injustice that can arise when people buy and sell things under conditions of severe inequality or dire economic necessity. According to this objection, market exchanges are not necessarily as voluntary as market enthusiasts suggest. A peasant may agree to sell his kidney or cornea in order to feed his starving family, but his agreement is not truly voluntary. He is coerced, in effect, by the necessities of his situation.

“The second objection is an argument from corruption. It points to the degrading effect of market valuation and exchange on certain goods and practices.” (Michael Sandel: Markets in: The Tanner lectures on Human Values, page 94)

Sandel indicates the lack of debate: “This is a debate we didn’t have during the era of market triumphalism. As a result, without quite realizing it—without ever deciding to do so—we drifted from having a market economy to being a market society. The difference is this: A market economy is a tool—a valuable and effective tool—for organizing productive activity. A market society is a way of life in which market values seep into every aspect of human endeavor. It’s a place where social relations are made over in the image of the market” (on the internet... [theatlantic.com/magazine/archive/2012/04/what-isnt-for-sale/308902/](http://theatlantic.com/magazine/archive/2012/04/what-isnt-for-sale/308902/))

### **Buy and Sell Everything:** human organs, citizenship, friends, love

It is evident. If you buy or sell love, it changes your character. Buying or selling citizenship is more complicated. Following Sandel, it ruins the inner values of the citizenship. (M. Sandel 2009) By selling your kidney, you might make 5000 €. Nobody in this room would sell one of their kidneys for 5000 €. But you would *give* it to your partner or friend, if they needed it. We end in toxic markets, as Debra Satz calls it (Debra Satz 2010).

### **Problem 2: Fighting and Competition** - the “winner-takes- it-all” principle

The slogan is: “Destroy (wreck) your neighbor”. We fight against each other and against nature; everyone against everyone else; region vs. region, nation vs. nation; Europe and America against Africa, and so on. So we need to discuss about other forms of coordination. We need something between market and hierarchy, like commons and a mixed economy.

Actually, we do not need a system, which results in the "good" ones being punished and the "bad" ones, the most ruthless and selfish, being rewarded. We need a system which supports us in being real human beings. We have to create a system with people who are very competent and contribute to the needs of others. For example, we need a skillful doctor who serves people - not a doctor who only treats private patients and provides them with cosmetic surgery.

**Problem 3: The Wrong Approach and Assumptions of Human Behavior**

We use the wrong approach and assumptions of human behavior. There are fundamental contradictions between behavioral economics, marketing science and the homo economics model.

Manipulating people is easy, especially if you are a skillful professional and in a situation with asymmetric information. Human behavior is influenced by social and physical context and driven by animal spirits. So we have to develop a system to save, support and tame each other. We need a model which cultivates social relationships and which makes it easy to be responsible. It has to be a system similar to the zero traffic regulation system e.g. in Scandinavia. It is not the individual who holds the ultimate responsibility. Accidents have to be unlikely. Self-reliance and personal responsibility are tricks vs. answers. It is not people who are acting wrongly; it is the entire system which is wrong. Krishnamurti expressed pointedly: "It is no measure of health to be well adjusted to a profoundly sick society."

**Problem 4: Financialization and Privatization**

Financialization and privatization ruin the Polis and common goods. Capitalism spreads epidemically like a virus through society and extends its scope from kindergartens, schools, plazas, theatres, roads - simply all over. We continue to make every effort to fulfill investors' expectations and enhance shareholders' prosperity. This destroys our societies and cities.

We have to think about taxes on heritage and high incomes and assets. We talk about a performance society, a meritocracy, but in truth it is the rich and the heirs who have the highest income. This leads to an unequal neofeudalistic society. (Thomas Piketty, Sighard Neckel et al.)

**Problem 5: Underestimation of the Role of Social Power.**

Big corporations are one of the biggest problems. As legal (juristic) persons, they act like natural persons, but with enormous power. They pay no taxes, they influence governments, they grab land, they privatize nature, they lie, they socialize losses, they spy, they enslave people and so on. (Joe Bakan). It is behavior typical of the psychopathic. Such systems attract psychos and make psychopathic behavior more likely.

For example, the current TTIP and Ceta contracts are being negotiated in clandestine meetings. The contents published initially expose danger and menace to freedom, democracy and people. In the South, free trade means "out of bounds" for all citizens, refugees, humans; yet it means total freedom for investors. The corporations hate competition! They like to be monopolists. They want to rule the world. They are free to do what they want. Presently, there are numerous examples of them all around the world, e.g. Blackrock, Monsanto, Nestlé. Only few people know of Blackrock. Blackrock is one of the biggest asset management firms with a very strong influence in the whole world. The owners, Larry Fink and co., are interested in speculation and privatization. Monsanto wants to privatize natural heritage and tries to force farmers all over the world into their system.

Nestlé wants to dominate the water systems. Brand companies create pseudo innovations and lies to generate more surplus value. Goldman are everywhere.

**Problem 6: Capital Accumulation and Financial Capitalism.**

Financial capitalism is a system of capital accumulation without producing goods (!). This means everlasting growth:

- money makes more money,
- more credit cards,
- more loans for household fantasies, slavery, capturing and pollution,
- acceleration of one's whole life: more more, faster and faster. Nobody is interested in long-term investment, in sustainability or solidarity. Everyone has to fight for his own little piece of luck.

Finance capitalism is a system which makes money from money. More money – an absurd style of economy. It is based on slavery and plundering, because you have to serve the investors. This way, the system needs eternal growth. Everybody knows that it isn't possible to grow endlessly in a limited, finite world, so the investors are looking for ways to exercise exploitation. Workers are given lower wages, nature is plundered and everything is accelerated. Investors, investment banks and funds force managers to squeeze more profit out of the companies. These profits are then transferred to islands where the investors pay no tax. Consumers are urged to buy more and more senseless products. Bankers offer credits to consumers and states. The bankers hand out loans that the creditors cannot afford. In the final stages it is financial capitalism, making money from money, profitable only for a few huge investors like Blackrock – it is insanity-economy. Later, the losses are socialized. And so on.

We have to discuss how to get rid of this system of infinite growth and greed; this system of irresponsibility.

**Problem 7: State Finance Nexus and the Long-Term Endangerment of Democracy**

“Today's governments have committed themselves to maintaining the capitalistic economic system, for its good functioning and caring for its further expansion enforcing the interests of economic elites.” (Raymund Geuss, Philosopher Cambridge - unisono David Harvey and Hauke Brunckhorst describe the state of “finance nexus”.)

Maybe we should start elaborating upon the historical and practical significance of democracy and its social function, as well as the concept itself.

**Problem 8: The Capitalistic System destroys Relationships**

Relationships between people, between people and nature, between people and things, between me and myself and it destroys democracy!! The all-over acceleration and the precarious employment situations make caring relationships impossible. And a society of true wealth needs good relationships between the people.

**Towards Utopia - towards “Mitwelt-economy”**

What can we do to find a way out towards utopia? How can we create true wealth for all (I. Erhardt) in peace with all humans and nature?

**First Proposal: The Capability Approach (Sen/Nussbaum)**

**Sen (Extract):**

“The Capability Approach is defined by its choice of focus upon the moral significance of individuals' capability of achieving the kind of lives they have reason to value. This distinguishes it from more established approaches to ethical evaluation, such as utilitarianism or resourceism, which focus exclusively on subjective well-being or the availability of means to the good life, respectively.

A person's capability to live a good life is defined in terms of the set of valuable 'beings and doings' like being in good health or having loving relationships with others to which they have real access."

The Capability Approach was first articulated by the Indian economist and philosopher Amartya Sen in the 1980s, and remains most closely associated with him. It has been employed extensively in the context of human development - for example by the United Nations Development Program, as a broader, deeper alternative to narrow economic metrics such as growth in GDP per capita. Here 'poverty' is understood as deprivation of one's capability to live a good life, and 'development' is understood as capability expansion.

### **The Capability Approach**

The capability approach is a theoretical framework that entails two core normative claims: first, the claim that the freedom to achieve well-being is of primary moral importance, and second, that freedom to achieve well-being is to be understood in terms of people's capabilities; that is, their real opportunities to do and be what they have reason to value. The approach has been developed in a variety of more specific normative theories, such as (partial) theories of social justice or accounts of development ethics. It has also led to new and highly interdisciplinary literature in the social sciences, resulting in new statistics and social indicators, and to a new policy paradigm which is mainly used in development studies, the so-called 'human development approach'. *Published Thu Apr 14, 2011 (plato Stanford)*

### **Well-Being, Agency, and Living Standards**

A person's achievement of well-being can be seen as an evaluation of the 'wellness' of the person's state of being (rather than, say, the goodness of one's contribution to the country, or success in achieving one's overall goals). The functionalities relevant to one's well-being vary from such elementary components as escaping morbidity and mortality, being adequately nourished, being mobile etc., to such complex ones as being happy, achieving self-respect, taking part in the life of the community and appearing in public without shame (the last a function that was illuminatingly discussed by Adam Smith). The claim is that these functions make up a person's being, and the evaluation of a person's well-being has to take the form of an assessment of these constituent elements.

The society of plenitude and true wealth will emerge. Several initiatives are testing different ways of living and working. The Members of Generation Y tend towards a more appreciative and delightful life. Many people are exhausted; we live in a society of tiredness (Byung-Chul Han). Others protest against the destruction of the environment. So we have to support those who try to establish new lifestyles of sustainability and resilience. We have to support the maker culture, the do-it-yourselfers, the communities of self-subsistence (energy and food). We have to look at the new entrepreneurs and founders. (Friederike Welter)

### **Second Proposal: the Systemic and Relational Approach.**

Problems are situated not *in* people but *between* them. All problems are caused by bad communication and bad relationships. All solutions can be found in interaction, in people's relationships. Only together can we create sense, rationality and purpose of life. So we have to improve the togetherness, which supports cooperation, interactive creation and mutual understanding.

## **Criteria Proposal for a True Wealth Society:**

How can sick societies be made healthier?

- (a) The Impact of Equality

Richard Wilkinson shows that equality in society leads to commons, justice, health. Equality is the basis for freedom and well-being.

- (b) Freedom

Freedom for all exists only in a society of equality. Freedom means being able to decide what you do not like doing. Furthermore, freedom is the chance to follow one's own ideas. And freedom means independency from the need for direct labor for viability.

- (c) Diversity

Always act so as to increase the number of choices. (Heinz von Foerster)

We have to create a system which allows everyone to realize his or her own way of life, where everyone can choose different schools, methods. We need a real tolerant society where everyone is accepted. And we need pluralistic approaches in economic science and teaching. (Thomas Ferguson, Til van Treeck)

- (d) Open access and transparency

to plazas, networks, knowledge and shores. We need cities for people, and freedom for all, combined with equality and responsibility.

- (e) Participation and more democracy

in all parts of society (even in companies!). Only together can we create wealth, sense, purpose of life and good design. We have to tame each other. We can make reasonable decisions only by working together.

- (f) Re-regulation and a different scale of measurement for wealth

Re-regulation of the finance market, tobin tax and higher taxes on inherited values, assets and high income

We need a new measurement scale for wealth and success, like HDI and the happy planet index. And we need new objectives for politics like the new magic square (Sebastian Dullien), which integrates ecological, social, and economic aspects of sustainability and good life for all.

## **New Content, New Forms and Styles in Research and Teaching**

Aristotle established the fundamental difference between economics and chrematistics. Chrematistics is the art of getting rich. Oikonomia is the art of household (sustainable) management. We need plural economy combined with political sciences.

What's that?

Students don't know: full reserve banking, alienation, basic income, commons, Adam Smith, Karl Marx, slight differences and social distinction, welfare economy, true wealth, happiness, good life symbolic and cultural capital, legitimacy and so on....

Sometimes I ask students: What do you think about... basic income, Marxism, full reserve banking, commons and they often say:

"I don't like it, I'm against it", and when I ask a second question:

“What do you know about it?”, they often reply: “I don't know exactly what it is. I've never read a text about it”

Yet more and more students have begun to protest against trivial economic thinking and teaching and are looking for alternatives.

Economic researchers and lecturers concentrate on teaching the abstract models of neoliberal theory and the management of “how to get more return on investment”. Researchers concentrate on the puzzling details of a situation, where fundamental change is needed. Some researchers, like Lars Riedel, mathematical economist in Bielefeld, show us how economists' wrong mathematical practices are co-causing the ongoing economic crisis. Despite this, the crisis seems to be systemic. We need debates and discussions to propose focusing on the substance with special attention to the needs of human beings. And we should create new visions and utopias.

The diverse contents of a new approach in research and teaching are described above. In addition, we have to develop new kinds of teaching in an interactive way.

Let me summarize:

The currently prevailing financial capitalism has had devastating consequences for the whole world. We call for the restructuring of, and a basic change to, the economic system which would place the economy back in its position as servant to society instead of being society's ruler. We think that further cultivation of humanity is possible. The democratic welfare state with jurisdiction represents a major achievement, which we should continue to expand. A "mitweltgerechte" economy allows a social, solidary, democratic and ecological society. Such a society of equality, liberty and democracy in diversity would be a vision of the West. Finally, we can place the values of "Mitweltlichkeit" – so frequently betrayed - into the center.

**In our Scoutopian Manifesto we demand and claim:**

1. discourse on alternative models of economic and social order towards a cultured, environmentally and socially responsible economy;
2. a consistent reorientation of wealth measurement and a redefinition of the welfare model;
3. an expansion of democracy towards citizens, including more employee participation, whilst restricting the influence of lobby groups on legislation;
4. a multinational regulation of financial markets, the development of a pluralistic Financial Council, and that new financial products be tested for usefulness. In addition, the restriction and the taxation of financial transactions (Tobin);
5. extensive haircut (debt cut) and real help for the needy instead of rescuing investors;
6. the development of a basic internet without advertising and control. A limitation of the power of technology companies on the web;
7. the reorganization of the corporate governance systems and the obligation of property and enforcement of liability and responsibility in all areas;
8. the diversification of economics; the promotion of a variety of methods and theories, as well as the stimulation of critical discourse;
9. the regulation of the economy, limiting in particular corporations' concentrations of power and the expansion of social economy instead of further privatization and pure efficiency thinking. Immediate suspension of negotiations for investor protection and secret tribunals and the concept of regulatory control;
10. a comprehensive economic education including the integration of technical and especially social, ethical and political aspects;

11. the promotion of Maker Culture and Empowerment. The shift away from education for consumption. Significant restrictions on advertising and promotion. Development of spheres of community. Competence development. In technical and social terms, the young should exchange experiences with the elderly. There are support forums and technology that allow people a re-appropriation of things, an interactive value and decentralized production;
12. the promotion of common structures and free access to knowledge (especially the internet) and training;
13. the transformation of cities to "Cities for People" and an expansion of public spheres;
14. the reorganization of basic benefits toward an unconditional basic income and basic assets;
15. the promotion and development of fair international value chains, and the expansion of fair trade. Putting a stop to landgrabbing and extractivism in resource-rich countries;
- 16 a stop to enslavement to debt and neo-imperialism,

and finally

17. the reconstruction of society and economy in an innovative and inventive cooperation of the people and with nature.

Thank you, and Gutes Gelingen!

### **Workshops:**

In the first round of the following workshops we want to focus on the important contents of a pluralistic economic research and teaching. And we want to look at the possibilities of social interventions to trigger change.

In the second round of the workshop, we want to focus on the new and different forms and methods of research and teaching.

As a result we want to go first steps towards an institute for society and economy with new really innovative forms of research, science and teaching.

Literature

**Barad**, Karen: Verschränkungen. Berlin 2015.

**Bakan, Joe**: The Corporation - The pathological Pursuit of Profit and Power, New York 2004

**Bergmann**, Gustav: Kunst des Gelingens 3. Aufl. Sternenfels 2014.

**Bergmann**, Gustav / **Daub**, Jürgen: Das menschliche Maß – Entwurf einer Mitweltökonomie. München 2012.

**Bergmann**, Gustav / **Daub**, Jürgen: Die Wunderbare Welt?. Münster 2015.

Brunckhorst, H.: : Das doppelte Gesicht Europas, Berlin 2014

**Christakis**, Nicholas A. / **Fowler**, James H.: Connected. Frankfurt 2010.

Harvey, D.: Seventeen Contradictions and the End of Capitalism. Profile Books 2014

**Milgram**, Stanley: The Small World Problem. In: *Psychology Today*. Mai 1967.

**Mouffee**, Chantal : Agonistik. Berlin, 2014.

Symposium Lecture – G. Bergmann 2015

**Nancy, Jean-Luc:** Singulär plural sein. Zürich 2004.

Nancy, Jean-Luc: Demokratie und Gemeinschaft im Gespräch mit Peter Engelmann. Wien 2015.

**Nussbaum, Martha :** Gerechtigkeit oder das gute Leben. Frankfurt 1999.

Neckel, S.: Refeudalisierung der Ökonomie, (Download), MPIfG 10 Köln 2013.

Piketty, Th.: The Capital in the 21. Century, Piketty, T./ Zucman, G.: „Wealth and Inheritance in the Long Run“ 6/2014, in: Handbook of Income Distribution, vol.2, Download (gabriel-zucman.eu/files/PikettyZucman2014HID.pdf); Piketty, Thomas: Le Capital au XXI siècle Paris 2013.

**Sandel, Michael:** *Justice. What's the Right Thing to Do?* Farrar, Straus and Giroux, New York 2009..

*What Money Can't Buy: The Moral Limits of Markets*, Farrar, Straus and Giroux, 2012

**Satz, Debra:** *Why Some Things Should Not Be for Sale: The Limits of Markets.* Oxford University Press, 2010

**Sen, Amartya:** Commodities and Capabilities. Amsterdam 1985.

**Sen, Amartya:** Human Rights and Capabilities. In: *Journal of Human Development.* 6, 2005, S.151–166.

**Shor, Juliet :** *True Wealth. How and Why Millions of Americans Are Creating a Time-Rich, Ecologically Light, Small-Scale, High-Satisfaction Economy* London 2011

Plenitude - **The New Economics of True Wealth, 2010**

**Shor, Juliet :** *True Wealth.* London 2011

**Skidelsky, Robert and Edward :** *How much is enough?.* New York 2012

**Watts, Duncan:** *Six Degrees. The Science of a Connected Age,* New York 2004