

If Only Rubble Remains | A concept for life after Corona

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Our office is located in the heart of Munich. From the window of our meeting room, you can see the walls of three houses that surround a small and dark courtyard. Even in the summer there is hardly any light reaching the courtyard, the bottom of which is mossy, damp and cold. Nevertheless, a plant grows here. It's somewhat neglected. But against the odds it stretches towards the patch of sky above.

This plant is a reminder of our current battles. Fighting for justice and human rights usually begins unnoticed, in quiet or forgotten corners. But while our office is somewhat cramped and the light dim (and the light bulb in the hallway doesn't work most of the time), we all feel very comfortable here. We are women from three generations and from three different continents. We have different stories, different opinions, different experiences. What unites us is the vision of a common future, which we share with millions of people around the world. In this protected space we plan our projects, fertilised with the achievements of feminists and human rights activists who have long passed.

Since Covid-19 defines our everyday life, we have been working from home, hidden behind our own walls. But we are not separated from each other. Because from here, with rare clarity, we see all the crises that the world has to deal with.

The crisis after the crisis after the crisis

The economy is down. It's worse off than during the last global economic crisis. Actually, it doesn't look any better than our pitiful plant in the cold, dark courtyard in front of our office window. Covid 19 came suddenly and unexpected and has taken over our lives. People have died and others will not recover from this pandemic for other reasons. Many people fear for their jobs, self-employed people fear for their existence and it's questionable whether we will ever experience social and cultural events together as we did before or whether theatres, cinemas and concert halls will be forced to close permanently.

Yes, the Covid 19 pandemic came unexpected, but it wasn't really a surprise. For decades, we've been shifting from one crisis to the next while climate change looms in the shadows. We panic for air, look for the light, and politicians act in a way they are obliged to: save the economy, save jobs, save supply chains. In Germany, billions of euros will put the aviation and automotive industries back on track. In the Netherlands, the government is investing in fossil fuel infrastructures to rescue its oil giant Shell. Air traffic, cars, oil – here investments pour in and everyone wipes their sweat off their foreheads with relief when BMW, Daimler and Co are back in the black. Until the next crisis comes.

Courage

Our system has not proven to be particularly resilient. Our bureaucracy collapsed when 60,000 Syrian refugees migrated to Europe in 2005. Our financial system collapsed when the credit bubble burst on the US real estate market. And right now our economy is collapsing because a virus is spreading throughout the world. These crises sound different and yet they have one thing in common: their cause lies in our globalized, neoliberal and

patriarchal market. But despite these experiences of the past 20 years, we still hold onto our growth-oriented capitalism model. Not only is this illogical, it is simply stupid.

We've seen a lot of solidarity actions since the outbreak of Covid 19, many weaknesses have been exposed, which is positive. It shows that aid can flow when it is needed - unfortunately huge amounts of it flow in the wrong direction. [On May 25th, the federal government approved a nine billion corona rescue package for Lufthansa](#), while systemically important care work remains terribly underpaid or even unpaid. The pandemic shows that our health system is resilient - yet the burden largely falls onto one group in particular: women. It shows that we can stand together in our neighbourhoods, with family and friends - but that there is no help beyond European borders.

Will we learn some lessons? Politics and society accept what has long been scientifically proven: the earth is finite. Our resources are finite. A forest may only be felled at the rate at which a new forest can grow. Every child understands that. Water is becoming increasingly scarce due to chemical contamination. Not only are the resources of the earth finite, but also the resources of humans. The double burden of paid work and unpaid care work is immense and hardly manageable during times of crisis. Domestic violence is difficult to avoid due to imposed curfews. The extreme increase in domestic abuse shows that the potential for violence lies within many households.

What we need is called eco-feminism

None of us chose the current situation. No one wanted this to happen. But under no circumstances should we make the same mistakes again. We can no longer rely on the automotive industry. Even if everyone drives electric cars, it's not the solution to our problems. Yes, that will cost jobs at first. But with policies aimed for a just transition, jobs will not decrease, they will only be redesigned. We need clean mobility ideas, sustainable, decentralised energy solutions and a fair redistribution of all resources, be it money, land, electricity or a roof over our heads. We need a ban on all pesticides and continual protection of our groundwater and our environment. Natural habitats of wild animals and wild animals themselves must be protected in order to avoid the transmission of other viruses that are dangerous to humans.

All of this suggests that we no longer focus on a growth-oriented economy, but on the common good, environmental protection and human rights. It requires that we get rid of both a patriarchal and capitalist mindset. This means that decisions in business and politics are based on values such as inclusion, care, sustainability and health. It also means that all unpaid work is fairly shared between genders. It means that we question gender roles and introduce safe spaces for critical masculinity so that everyone can develop the way they want to, independent of patriarchal gender constructs.

We are women who don't get tired of fighting. We are not tired of striving for a just life for everyone. We are like the plant in front of our office window, an organism that also grows in the dark and strives towards the sky until it finally blooms. At the moment our society is in a rare position to decide which plant is fertilised and supported: the damaged, repeatedly patched-up patriarchal capital system or the resilient ideas of eco-feminist structures? No one can know where a new path leads us. But it is logical and wise to take a new path if the old one always ends up in a pile of rubble. There are already alternative models. We just have to get started. And if we walk slowly, put one foot in front of the other, make sure that everyone comes along, regardless of their origin, gender or health condition, we have a good chance of safely reaching the sky.