

Chasing Dreams, Fighting Nightmares

An Invitation to Imagine Another World

RebelNet

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Now, more than ever, we need to believe that another world is possible. We need the courage to dream and imagine what that world could be like, and how to bring it about.

Come with us into our brave new world, and find inspiration and ideas for how to make this dream a reality.

QUESTIONS

Questions, It's questions that drive us. It's questions that teach us. It's questions that move us from acceptance to doubt, from the convert to the curious, from illusion into truth. From the very first breath of this universe inhaled we begin our explorations, our very own experiments, enraptured with mysterious wonder at this unique experience of life.

Then, slowly but surely, our sense of curiosity begins to fade; our imagination gets hijacked, and our lust for adventure is under siege. We stop asking questions, and start obeying instructions. We absorb stories about our nature, distorted for an agenda, conceived by the least of us. We are held under constant threat of deprivation of our fundamental needs by structures, corporations and agents of control whose very authority depends on our obedience and ignorance.

We all know this. We can all feel it, some more than others. Whilst a privileged few fly first class to dine with 'associates' plotting endless financial growth, many struggle to provide food for their family and to pay rent for their home - which is owned by the bank or business man. Whilst The Few have the luxury of ambition, others are confined by desperation. Whilst the 'powers that be' own everything you need to survive, you barely own your own chains. And we accept this, like it's natural, normal, like it's what we deserve... that is, until disaster strikes!

As the rising tides cascade our shores and disease spreads across the globe; as the rain falls for 2 months straight and thousands seek refuge from war torn lands; as the elderly are evicted and the youth fight depression; as the rich get power and the poor get neglect - it is in crisis that we remember what we have lost.

When the world ends, as we come out from our homes and tear down our barricades, we offer mutual aid to those in need and solidarity with strangers. The streets flood with color as we break up the concrete and sow seeds of transformation in the remains of the ruins. And we start again asking the questions which have been buried for so long.

When did you last look at the stars? When did you last touch the soil? When did you last receive information that wasn't from a screen? Who was it even from? (Did you trust them?) Do you ever feel pressure to be someone you don't want to be? Like your life is not your own? Do you ever feel trapped in a cage to which you did not consent? Each day a carbon copy of itself? Do you sometimes wonder if there could be more to life than this?

What if your world could be modified? What if your life could be hacked? What if you could take back your power, your agency, your energy from the authorities that have stolen it?

What would your world look like then?

OUR STORY

We call it The Tipping Point. The moment in time when everything came to a head - the climate emergency, mass migration, governments who refused to do anything about either, locked into capitalism and controlled by corporations. Populations pushed to breaking point by austerity policies that left thousands homeless and hungry while the wealthy got wealthier. And on top of it

all, a mental health crisis of epic proportions, people of a digital age who were more disconnected than ever, losing the ability to converse, to empathise, to even notice what was going on around them. All these problems, bubbling, simmering away under the surface, that shiny veneer that this was how things were Supposed To Be. But the cracks were starting to show. As the world barrelled along towards self-destruction, we were balanced on the perfect pinnacle of madness, and all it needed was one small nudge to send it all tumbling down...

It came, of course. Two decades into the 21st century, a pandemic swept the globe that opened peoples eyes. The veil was lifted, and it threw into stark relief just how mad and bad things had become. It wasn't a great leveller, this disease, that affected rich and poor alike and showed how we were all just the same. The rich fled on private jets to private islands, and billionaires demanded billions from the pockets of those with nothing to enable Business As Usual to carry on. As quarantine measures spread, people lost jobs, livelihoods, homes - and were blamed for not anticipating the unimaginable and being prepared, while the government used tax money to shore up banks. Our systems were fragile, our communities broken. But not our spirits.

Yes, there was panic. There was fear. People died. But while some waited for direction, guidance and support from those in charge, many more realised it was never coming. And we didn't need it to. We had everything we needed to weather the storm - compassion, kindness, cooperation. And power. So much power to refuse to play the game any more. To refuse to pay rent. To refuse to keep marching to the drum of Big Business and singing with the Choir of Consumption. We could grow our own food, in spaces we took without permission. We could join with people on our streets to prevent evictions. We could share our excesses with those who had nothing.

And when the spread of the virus stopped, when no more people were sick, we refused to hand it all back. We had shown the elites how unnecessary they were, and not only had we survived, we had started to thrive again. We came out into the streets, we had stuck crowbars in the cracks, and we were never going back.

I'm awake. Birdsong drifts through the window, along with the first light of dawn. It's summer, so it's early, which means I have plenty of time to ponder what my day could bring. If the weather is good I'll head to the community garden. If not, perhaps I'll stay at the house - there's an ongoing, ever-evolving mural project happening in one room that's always fun to work on when it's raining.

The house is shared by six people at the moment, and was originally three buildings that we've knocked through and connected together.

Once we did away with private ownership of land and buildings people started to spread out, many heading for the countryside and starting communities. Buildings in the cities were freed up, and we were free to do with them what we would. Walls and fences came down, community projects moved in and people started sharing space.

We installed composting toilets and built grey water systems to recycle water to use on the gardens that started springing up everywhere. We rigged up solar panels and wind turbines for electricity, although we need far less now, what with all the time spent outside and how beautiful everything looks by candlelight.

HOME

Most of us today live in a building owned, controlled and managed by someone other than ourselves. Agencies, landlords and banks hold the authority in our relationships between our

homes and our lives. Whilst rent prices skyrocket, our freedom takes a nose dive, and all the while, someone makes a profit.

But what if things could be different? What if we created new ways to live together, to share together, to take control? Could we foster exciting new spaces to live, to work, to breathe? And what if we did it together, with friends, with family - better still, with strangers?

There are many ways that this is happening already, from housing co-operatives to community land trusts, volunteer collectives to occupied homeless shelters. All around the world, people are finding ways to live, work and play together in exciting and creative ways - and we're only just beginning.

When property is privately owned by absentee landlords, it is often neglected. If you don't have to live with rising damp and a dodgy boiler, what's the incentive to fix it? If you can afford to buy land and leave it empty to obstruct your competition, why do anything with it? Note this on a larger scale and you see long term empty buildings and derelict petrol stations, abandoned apartments and barren farmland.

Housing co-operatives are a great way to start making a move towards a more empowered housing system. Joining together as a group to buy property gives greater control and autonomy to the people actually living in the building. Organising as a co-operative means working together - there is no-one who is not involved, and no-one is superior to another.

Whilst it's important to make use of what there already is, we also need to build new homes and spaces very differently than we do now. Long before we had cities of concrete and steel, there were homes built from earth, stone and straw, of wood, lime and clay - and this tradition is being resurrected today. Natural building is accessible, cheap and safe, in contrast with the industrialised process we're familiar with, but ultimately separate from. Natural building allows us to become connected to our homes as we join with neighbours to create them with our own hands - it takes a village to raise a family, and it could to build a home too. Unfortunately, land ownership, planning permission and building regulations currently make it very difficult for this to be common place, but it is being done, all over the world, in small pockets of resistance, whether legally or not.

In both the countryside and the city we will all need to think about managing our water, food, power and "waste". These fundamentals of a home can be under our control, not left to big business to sell back to us. We can recycle the rain for washing our bodies and clothes and we can grow food together instead of lawns. We can generate power from the sun, wind and water, and with our "waste" we will make compost. All of this could be possible with resources from nature, and no one needlessly profiting from their use.

Changing how we organise one of our most basic needs - that of shelter - requires challenging one of the most fundamental concepts our society is based on - the ownership of property. It will take a huge mental shift, but doing so will open up the possibility of everyone having access to a home that is good for both the planet and the soul.

I get up, eager to make the most of the daylight and sunshine. As I make my way through the tree-lined streets to the garden I graze on the raspberries, blackcurrants and fresh peas that are just some of the food growing along the way. People are cycling down the middle of the roads - there are hardly any cars now, and our neighbourhood has a community bike system of salvaged and repaired bikes, painted yellow and available to anyone.

The garden is on the site of an old supermarket car park, raised beds, containers and green-houses taking up the spaces no longer given over to cars. It's been designed along permaculture

principles, making the most of the space to provide food for the community, but also a place to connect, to relax, to play.

A group of children are weeding beds, another learning basic carpentry in a shipping container workshop where they're building bird boxes to share around the neighbourhood. Some more are joyously covering a wall, and themselves, in chalk and paint. I join with a group who are harvesting produce and filling boxes for people to collect from the food hub we've set up in the old supermarket. A group of elders gives us advice - they regularly gather at the garden, eager to share the knowledge and experience of years growing food in allotments.

A few people rustle up a lunch from our freshly harvested bounty, and we relax in the sunshine, watching children play, their laughter echoing round this once grey and soulless patch of ground.

FOOD

When I was very young, I thought everything grew on trees - the processed chicken nuggets, the gummy sweets, the jackets of frozen potato. For the past few decades, our lives have been attacked by corporate culture, and our diets are no different. Where there once stood humble market stalls surrounded by localised trade, there are multinational super chains with a lust for endless growth - and not without consequence. We now live in a culture almost entirely disconnected from our food supply and utterly dependent upon a handful of corporations for our basic nutritional needs, totally reliant upon companies that would rather you starve than give you their waste for free! We're consistently told that there are not enough resources to feed the world's people, yet how much food is thrown away? Daily! How much bread, broccoli and beans are discarded as waste that could easily feed your family?

Yes, we're in a crisis, but the fight is beginning! Everywhere, we are taking land, growing food and sharing seeds. We are bulk-buying whole foods collectively and dumpster diving 'waste' for community kitchens. We are building new networks to feed each other, and having a go ourselves. The ultimate goal is abundance, to challenge the idea that someone needs to profit in order for us to exist. We could grow salad on our doorsteps, and cherries in the wastelands, mushrooms in the forests and grains on the hillside. What could it look like if we stopped 'shopping' and started 'growing'? If we tore down our fences and made entire streets fertile? If we grew together, cooked together, ate together - without a price tag?

There are many ways people are working towards this change, from Community Supported Agriculture to Edible Forest Gardens, from Permaculture Farms to City Garden Squats. Get in touch with your local council or activist network and see if they have any community garden projects in the area - if they don't, start your own! The time has come to move beyond sustainability and towards regeneration, beyond plastic packaging, bar codes and best before dates and towards food free for all, grown by the many.

But what about fresh water? Stopping the industrial agricultural machine will have an incredible knock-on affect on our natural waterways, dramatically reducing the pollution we currently pump into them; so will switching to composting toilets (in a world of water scarcity, shitting in the drinking water will necessarily become as absurd as it sounds). Perhaps one day we can rely on water from rivers and streams as we used to. Until then, the capture and management of rainwater and the recycling of grey water for use in the garden will reduce the pressure on our existing water sources to provide all our water needs. Access to springs and wells and the sharing of these resources could provide the rest.

Reconnecting with our food has a positive affect on so many areas of our lives - not just the environment, but our physical and mental health as well. Food brings people together, whether we're growing, cooking or eating it, and an abundant, communal and local food system could be at the heart of our new world.

I wander through the Really Free Market to see what I can find. After decades of mass production and epic consumption we had created more 'stuff' than we could ever hope to use, so free shops and markets were set up in neighbourhoods to facilitate the reallocation of goods.

As we began to clear up the mess we humans had made, we began to repair things that were broken, repurpose things once seen as 'trash' and share what we had accumulated. I find some gloves, and a couple of books that I'll bring back when I'm finished. I sign up for a natural building workshop that's happening next week at a rural community, and have a cup of tea with the person taking care of the tool library helping to organise the inventory of tools and getting a few things mended at the Repair Cafe.

The building has become a hub of shared resources and connection, full of people talking, organising events, swapping skills and collecting their veg boxes. There's time now to stop and chat, to learn something new or spend time with old friends. To just wait and see what life might bring your way.

ECONOMY

It has often been said that "money is the root of all evil" and it should come as no surprise to hear that we live in a culture that values money above anything else. We use it every day, for acquiring everything from bread to shelter, water to fire, transport to stability; all our human needs (and more) are met with the necessity of finance - so much so that even our most private and personal affairs are not outside the jurisdiction of capital and profit. And to put it bluntly: it's killing us!

Depending on the class, race or culture we are born into, we come to the world with an agenda in place for us, a life path already laid out. Most of us rarely transcend these limitations, shaping our identities and relationships with economy across a spectrum of privilege. Indeed, many of us are so conditioned into our place in society that we find it impossible to imagine what we would do with our lives if we weren't employed full time into the contractual labor we depend on to meet even our most basic needs.

Capitalism is the barbed wire between our needs and their fulfillment we don't have a lack of resources, we lack accessibility!

But economics doesn't have to be so malicious. There are countless examples of alternative models of meeting our needs taking place right now. From resource sharing to free shops, volunteer bike workshops to random acts of generosity; in fact, every time you have a meal together or take it in turns to wash the dishes, you're practicing the economics of a new world. In a "Gift Economy" value is not measured by finance or merit but by sharing and respect. Jo brings some bread, Sean, the dessert, Sandra brings the wine. No one is in competition, everyone is in collaboration, working together for the benefit of all.

In a new world we can produce enough for what we need, prioritising necessity over profit - after all, most things we discard can be repaired, repurposed and redistributed. This becomes possible once we have dramatically reassessed what we think of as 'needs' and 'wants' to align more with caring for the planet and the people we share it with.

When cracks of injustice and deceit begin to show in our current economic system (and they already are, if you haven't noticed it's because you're not falling through them), and as crisis after crisis reveals just how fragile those systems are, the walls that stand between us and true freedom will start to crumble until one day, when the time is right, all it will take is... one... small... push!

Picture a library, and scale it up. Supermarkets become food-banks, hardware stores become communal tool sheds, high streets become playgrounds and money is lit as tinder for the bonfires. If we pooled our resources, including money (if such a thing were still necessary), we could all live in abundance regardless of our divisions, without the endless struggle to take back wealth from those who accumulate it.

I walk home, past walls covered with art rather than advertising, and people outside together rather than isolated indoors. Neighbours work in shared garden spaces and children play in the roads. At home someone has set up tables and chairs for a street-wide potlatch dinner, and from one house floats the sound of music being played. A couple of the kids ask if I'll hold one end of their jump rope, which devolves into a riotous hour of me and a few other adults making fools of ourselves as we're persuaded to give it a try, surrounded by kids laughing at our efforts. Dinner comes as a well-deserved rest, back against a tree, discussing ideas for the area.

Our neighbourhood meets together once a month, on the full moon, to put forward ideas for projects and work that needs doing, to allocate tasks and work on any problems that have come up. Neighbourhoods have become self-organised groups that link with others to share resources and skills, and throughout the year festivals provide a space for those groups to gather together to discuss and make larger-scale decisions, swap surpluses, celebrate and socialise.

We are directly involved with how our communities are run, consensus decision making ensuring that everyone's needs are being met. It takes time and effort, but we've developed a sense of pride and commitment to our homes, our streets and the people who we share them with.

COMMUNITY

We live in the age of the individual; everything is geared towards the serving of self - our personality is god, and "independence" our reverence. But what have we become independent from? Our families, our friends, ourselves? And what have we chosen instead?

We've all been sold this story and dedicated our lives to it, creating more isolation, depression and despair than ever before. Adults are hopelessly dependent on intoxication and consumption, whilst children addicted to cyberspace demand the latest Apple product in fear of seeming uncool. When enslaved to the impulse for indulgence, we fall prey to corporations, tempting us with their symbols of glamour, happiness and hope. We are put under their spell, vulnerable, open and weak - at the mercy of businesses and governments providing the illusion of leading us into prosperity!

It's clear that we are not the ones benefiting from such a society, and now is the time to take steps to change things. It's about seizing our power. It's about fighting nightmares. It's about taking control. We all want to live in a world where we have a say in how our lives should be. We all want to be heard, and to make an impact. Deep down, we all strive for connection.

If only we could remember how to live for each other, to open up and reconnect and build new empires in the ashes of the old.

One way this could happen is to re-localise our communities and abolish the power structures that make decisions for us without our consent. It would mean doing away with hierarchy and

replacing it with horizontality. Getting rid of state control and replacing it with consensus based direct-democracy. In such a world, we would all be in charge. A world without bosses, of rules without rulers. Each of us empowered, creating our collective destiny together – with no-one left behind.

We could link our communities through festival and celebration, sharing new ideals and forming new connections, making collaborative decisions on issues that affect us all.

We could declare all land as commons, converging to discuss how our world should be, whilst holding safe spaces for the diversity of our needs. We could work towards understanding and inter-dependence, whilst recognising our differences – and we could do all of this ourselves, supporting each other to support each other. Together, we could design a future worth fighting for. Sounds much better than a day at the office right?

Someone has set up a fire pit in the middle of the street, and we gravitate towards it, pulling up chairs or sitting on cushions, cozying up together to enjoy the warmth and magic of an open fire. The musicians have brought their instruments, and are learning the words to folk songs from some of the elders. Sleepy children curl up on laps, a few people are dancing under a nearly full moon and someone begins to tell a story for the wide eyed kids who want to stay up just a little longer. It becomes a game, a communal effort which we all end up contributing to, complete with a live soundtrack.

As the fire dies people start to drift home, ready to rest for another day of life being lived and loved. We are fulfilled. We are healthy. We are together, dancing by the light of the stars to the sound of birdsong. We are home.

MYTH

Since the very beginning of human history, we have told stories. Some of them are true, some of them less so. Regardless of their authenticity, we have grown up with these models of how the universe works, creating a narrative of our relationship with it. As time moves on stories change - some are resurrected, others persist, some fall by the wayside entirely in light of new ways of thinking shaped by new experiences.

Now more than ever, imagination is critical in taking our next steps together as a species. In fact, the ability to visualise that which has not yet happened is a quality which defines us uniquely as human. It is our most powerful weapon against the status quo - the instinct to invent and the ability to manifest. To design the world anew with a revolution of our values. As old stories melt in the rays of a new age, we are given space to design new worlds, and to tell new stories. We can stop writing his-tory and start creating 'our-story'. It is time to hijack the narrative!

Contrary to the misunderstandings our culture holds around ritual, it is not exclusive to devil worshippers or religious puritans - ritual and ceremony are an integral part of our everyday lives. How often have you really thought about the rituals you partake in? Shopping, Marriage, Christmas? Do you agree with these concepts or are you just playing along? Do you still want to celebrate them or could you create new ceremonies to give your life new meaning? Isn't it time we created new traditions, ones more relevant to the world we want to live in?

From our bodily rhythms, to the cycles of the stars, we will forever celebrate rituals - but this time they will be spoken from our own mouths, represent our values and tell our children tales of what it means to be alive. We will express ourselves freely, liberated and without restraint, as we re-discover each other and rejoice in a world we made real. We will tear down the skyscrapers

and sacrifice our corruptions, we will chase our wildest dreams and fight our darkest nightmares. We will storm reality and terrorise tradition and we will sleep in the moonlight, before the rise of a new day.

The only thing we proposed was to change the world,
the rest we have improvised

Subcomandante Marcos, Zapatistas.

We started with questions. And so many remain unanswered because, (and we can't emphasise this enough) this is only the beginning. There are so many elements of life and living together that we've only touched on, or just missed out completely - transport, education, justice, borders, the climate crisis, conflict resolution...and so on and so on!

Which is where you come in, gentle reader. It's time to look up from these pages with new eyes and see the world in front of you in a completely different way. See it as a blank canvas, a place where anything is possible, if only we dream big enough and love hard enough and believe we can make change happen.

And if all those things were true, what would you make? What could we make? Go to the depths and wilds of your imagination, then go a little bit further, just for the sheer hell of it. See what you can bring back...

YOUR INVITATION

RebelNet is a decentralised (dis)organisation of rabble-rousers and rogues; there are no leaders, no one is in charge and no one has any idea what the next person is up to - and if that sounds like total anarchy, that's because it is!

The first rule of RebelNet is: You Do Not Talk About Rebel...no, wait, that's something else. Definitely talk about RebelNet. Talk with your friends and families, seek out like-minded folk and start a RebelNet group of your very own.

One of the most important things about RebelNet is that it exists in real life, not just on the screens of your social media. Form connections with sentient beings in your local area. Start RebelNet, affinity and mutual aid groups (perhaps they are one and the same). Use those groups for discussions, skill swaps and workshops. Organise direct actions and film nights. Start Really Free Markets and community gardens. Use technology, but remember it is just a tool. The real magic happens IRL, not in URLs! See you at the barricades.

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There are quotes and images appearing in the original e-zine which are not included here. Also
a well-known shitbag company has had its brand redacted just because...

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