

## 3 strategies for change

A mapping exercise of actions to strategies

### Nowtopias: Building up Alternatives and Experimenting with the Good Life

Nowtopias test and practice an alternative way of living together in small areas – through new practices, institutions, infrastructures, relationships, or forms of organization.

Nowtopias are free spaces where transformation from below is promoted. They emerge within the existing system and despite its structures. While often existing in niches, they offer a small taste of a good life for everyone. The term "Nowtopia" refers to utopia as a visionary, ideal future. While utopia points toward the future, in nowtopias, utopian ideas are already being lived in the here and now. Other names include free spaces, real-world laboratories, avant-garde projects and lived alternatives.

### Examples

- **Temporarily limited nowtopias** (e.g., political camps or festivals all over the world, learning workshops) allow for a temporary experience of a communal, self-determined, and sufficient lifestyle through collective camp self-organization, shared care work, the exclusive use of renewable energies, or compost toilets.
- **Long-term nowtopias** (e.g., collective enterprises, alternative media, housing projects) deal with the organization of specific societal areas – whether energy supply, food production, childcare, schooling, production, or basic health services. There are also larger projects where these different areas are integrated, such as in ecovillages.

### Possibilities

Nowtopias serve as important spaces for learning and experience. In these spaces, people can learn that a solidarity-based coexistence is possible and can practice solidarity actions. They can reflect on and change unsustainable and non-solidary ways of thinking and behavior. In the process, important "inner transformation" can occur. At the same time, the large is reflected by the small: Nowtopias can serve as role models, attract imitators, network with other nowtopias, influence society as a whole, and thus also initiate structural change. For example, solidarity agriculture shows that the collective production of organic food is possible. Nowtopias are also crucial for people who suffer from oppressive structures of society, allowing them to recover from the pressures, repressions, and discrimination of everyday life, gain strength, and draw hope.



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### **Challenges and limits**

Nowtopias alone are not enough. Often practiced locally or on a small scale, their influence on larger, structural change is limited. There is a risk of becoming a "repair shop" for a crisis-ridden society. Nowtopias could also strengthen the resilience of capitalism. This happens when free spaces emerge but are then co-opted by capitalism. An example of this is taking on care work for neighbors or relatives without state support. Additionally, Nowtopias may face repression or violence when challenging existing power structures. Another issue is that the focus on local communities often overlooks the need for broader, national, or transnational solutions. These communities are often exclusive, relying on self-exploitation, and are not accessible to everyone. However, nowtopias should not be keeping people out but must be designed to be open and democratic and be accompanied by changes on other societal levels.

#### **Sources:**

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