

The New Village Project – I have to change my life, an experience

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Abstract

The long, bulky title already gives the most important information about this website-project. Basically, it is about the question of how one can lead a good and proper life today, in 2021: free of fear, self-determined and self-responsible and integrated into the organism Earth. This is, of course, very complex and raises a multitude of considerations, which now, however, urgently require decisions. Because 'my' life can no longer be considered as a purely private ecology. You must change your life! But who could say that to whom? Our modern psyche is now so organised that we no longer let any authority tell us what we must do. And this is what my imperative title suggests: I have to change. Today's life is an ambivalent experience anyway, and my arguments for a 'good life' are a narrative of personal experiences and fictional, archaeological conjectures – presented as a website with video, text and photography.

Keywords: personal interventions and decisions; self-responsibility and participation; shaping a sustainable and collective future; unfolding visions; urgencies of our time

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Visit the project website:

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About the format:

The desire for a good life (life as a very private ecology) is made up of many needs, reasons, arguments and visions. And I think one can only grasp and show this narrative as a rhizome-like entity, because everything in this narration is connected. To communicate this project, I chose the format of a website, which not only allows me to include video, photography and text, all of which enlarge the spoken word – the clicking through the website allows the viewers to take their own steps, an own narration.

About the theme:

The long, bulky title already gives the most important information about this project. Basically, it is about the question of how one can lead a good and proper life today, in 2021: free of fear, self-determined and self-responsible and integrated into the organism Earth.

But they say there will be no social solution, not only because there is no consistency of society, also because there is no common language anymore.

The future looks bleak. An apocalyptic end seems more easily imaginable than a world of mutual support. The disagreement about how to keep the world fair and habitable for all leads to completely new, absurd and opaque strategies and global situations.

All the more, it becomes important to act responsibly as an individual.

The idea of the 'Good Life' and also the search for it, of course, is very complex and raises a multitude of considerations, which now, however, urgently require decisions. Because 'my' life can no longer be considered as a purely private ecology.

About the problem: the acting collective is a construct

The New Village Project (I have to change my life), as an experience, is therefore also a practice which is, first of all, based on the decision to buy a small, old house in a lonely and secluded area around Berlin. The Prignitz is a sparsely populated and unappreciated area. Former GDR territory, a mixture of areas of large-scale agriculture and untouched nature but where progress and integration into the FRG meant only outward migration and impoverishment for the people who stayed. An area where no one wants to live anymore, where the villages are abandoned because the youngsters want – and have to – flee into bigger cities.

The New Village Project (I have to change my life), as an experience, documents the thoughts and experiences surrounding this decision. But it is also about the pure joy of hearing this silence of the place – which is basically the busy sound of vibrating insects. The joy of being privileged to look at the different shapes of sunsets, to be able to smell the wind.

But the project also deals with my fears of what this peace and beauty in the land will soon look like. The project also refers to the fact that this little piece of paradise has to be compared to other places, where no peace and beauty exists anymore.

So this work suggested here is created as a digital mindmap, in which I will talk about some personal experiences on the one hand, and on the other hand, I connect my very private ecology to the global situation.

I am bound, tied down and thus dependent on the world with all my daily actions and desires. My life looked like a comfort zone and for quite a long time, it was really cosy, too cosy. I think this thought applies to many of us.

In the midst of all this cosiness, people no longer looked beyond their own nose and did not see how conditions at the other end of the world were becoming worse and worse and increasingly inhumane.

Above all, I am concerned with these connections and dependencies that make up my life, that make me helpless and sick, and not only me. My little comfort zone – I have to burst this illusion.



My work is about the question of dispensability, the essence and quality of my life. It is a question about what I need and from whom. What are things actually worth? And are they worth producing?

Where do I stand, and where do I want to go? And how freely will I still be able to move?

To visualise or to formulate those questions, I additionally use images which are created by algorithms. They allow me to prove my fears and anxieties of the near future, to make them visible. The power of artificial intelligence can show the gloom of the future in very concrete images. These, as well, in a disconcerting beauty. But that is the fatal thing.

We are stuck in this overcomplexity, and we are constantly in a dilemma of determining whether something is fake or not. But recognising this complexity seems to me to be the first step towards a general alteration. Here, too, the general is me, because I, as a small individual, am involved in everything.

So how can I liberate myself?

This entanglement and dependence is seen in all the little everyday things. The simplest action becomes a challenge when you decide to have no electricity. For example: how do I boil water? And it is even about more: what is the cycle of a drop of water – and how carefully should I handle those smallest drops of water?



There are many decisions to make.
Small ones.

And there are various experiences and disappointments. But at the end, what emerges is a new understanding of time, or even better; there is this experience of new quality of time.

It is the small impositions of life that have an effect here in the small village, my new community. The global relationship to which we align ourselves is not our differences, our ethnicities or our attitudes, no: it is the common problems that unite us here.

So the project proposes ideas and strategies, but then ends up with topics like free will and autonomy and the illusion of autonomy. The project talks about this intoxicating silence of the forest, about the happiness to have those new neighbours, in the most literal sense. But the project also shows visions and fears.

What will resistance look like? Is it true that the strongest force of resistance is saying yes? Saying yes is the most difficult of challenges (so Nietzsche said). Nowadays, the obvious resistance is taken over by the regime of tolerance – but nevertheless: total consent overwhelms. ‘Service by the book’ is possibly the most required resistance.

In this sense, the attitude of the individual becomes important and essential. Doing nothing as action – as an aesthetics of omission.

And for this, of course, the project brings up some thoughts of what exactly counts as a self-portrait today. More than ever, the question is whether I, as an individual, still have a face (and thus self-responsibility). The vanishing of me – of my face – now taken away from me by wearing the mask.

‘I have to change my life’ – this is about individual authority. The project refers to some philosophers, scientists, artists and thinkers because especially science and art are about this permanent unfolding and development of the justification of authority and individual authorship.

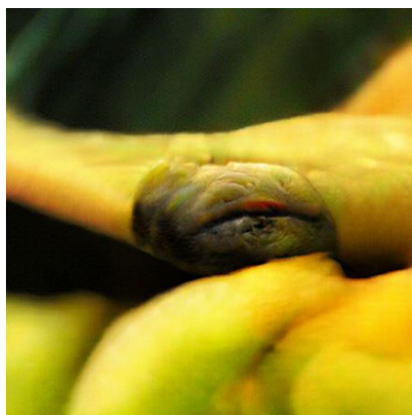
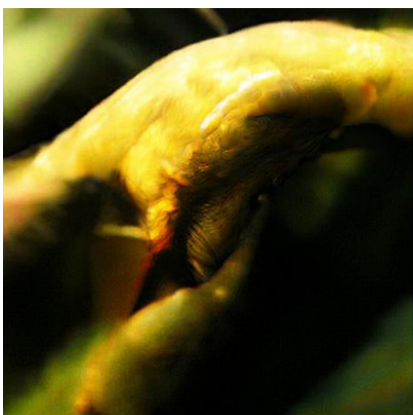


The appendix of my title 'an experience' also indicates to the possibility of sharing. Sharing the captured sunsets, sharing the thoughts, joys, fears and strategies of how to live a good life today.

All based on the agreement that we understand the term 'good' as 'being self-sufficient' and 'as resource-saving as possible'. And that the next steps we take as authors of our lives must be seen as travelling along a way of respect.

So there are thoughts and documents on how to build a small functioning community (community as a term for the realisation that I am connected to everything, really connected to everything).

So it is above all a work about the love for this planet.



About the author

Manuela Johanna Covini, 1960, lives and works in Berlin and Mexico City. Over the years, she has trained, studied and practiced professionally in various areas – including as producer and editor of two TV programmes in Switzerland. Her artistic work is concerned with how life goes beyond its own subjective limits. Unclear narratives deny the viewer orientation in time and place. Her projects explore the theme of simultaneity: simultaneity of space and time, of memory and present, of dream and reality, truth and lies... The digital image allows her to present her projects as a tangible, fictional universe in a distinctive visual vocabulary (as an aesthetically resilient material).