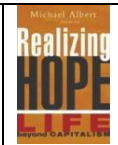

Realizing Hope

Michael Albert

Realizing Hope: Life Beyond Capitalism, by Michael Albert, published by Zed Press in London, England. Price £ 14.99.



Realizing Hope is about envisioning and winning a better world. Noam Chomsky from the U. S. says about *Realizing Hope*: "In many earlier studies, Michael Albert has carried out careful in-depth inquiries into systems of participatory economics (parecon), analyzing in detail how they can function justly, equitably, and efficiently, and how they can overcome many of the criminal features of current social and economic arrangements. This new and very ambitious study casts the net far more widely, extending to just about every major domain of human concern and mode of human interaction, and investigating with care and insight how, in these domains, parecon-like principles could lead to a far more desirable society than anything that exists, and also how these goals can be constructively approached. It is another very valuable and provocative contribution to the quest for a world of much greater freedom and justice."

Realizing Hope in its first chapter presents an ultra accessible summary of the logic and rationale of a post capitalist way of organizing production, allocation, and consumption called participatory economics. Mandisi Majavu from South Africa says about *Realizing Hope*: "Michael Albert is a very serious thinker. In *Realizing Hope* he not only presents an alternative to capitalism, he provides profound insights into how economics affects personalities and social relations and vice versa."

The book opens many doors for social vision and strategy. At a moment when Africa needs an alternative to nationalist politics, *Realizing Hope* is amazingly timely. Pan-Africanists and Black Marxists alike will find much to enrich and expand our politics in this book."

Realizing Hope explores how having a desirable economy would impact other parts of life and, vice versa, what the implications of desirable change in other parts of life would be for economics.

Jeremy Brecher from the U.S. says about *Realizing Hope*: "During the grim decades of 'there is no alternative,' few did more than Michael Albert and his collaborators to promote discussion of alternatives to domination by either state or market. Now, when millions assert 'another world is possible,' Michael Albert's proposals for 'participatory economics' provide an essential starting point for thinking about what that world might be and how we might get there. In *Realizing Hope*, he goes beyond the primarily economic framework of participatory economics to open the crucial but too-rarely posed question of how to coordinate economic change with the changes we need in other spheres of life. *Realizing Hope* addresses government, race and religion, gender and generations, ecology, and international relations".

Andrej Grubacic from Serbia says about *Realizing Hope*: "Michael Albert has posed a breathtakingly simple question - what do left-libertarians want, exactly, 'beyond capitalism'? And, in answering it, has produced a work of exhilarating scope. Albert captures the best of the spirit of the new global social movement. He consciously rejects all vanguardism, and demands a direct action in the realm of thought: he asks us to look at those who are creating viable alternatives, to try to figure out what might be the larger implications of what they are doing, and then to offer those ideas back, not as prescriptions, but as contributions,

possibilities - as gifts. Albert combines close empirical insights with a magisterial conceptual grasp. We will be arguing about this work for years."

Realizing Hope addresses on a more specific level, education, art, athletics, journalism, crime, science, and technology. Milan Rai from Britain says about *Realizing Hope*: "In *Realizing Hope*, Michael Albert mulls over the better society that we may create after capitalism, provoking much thought and offering a generous, hopeful vision of the future. His prescriptions for action in the present are modest and wise; his suggestions for building the future are ambitious and humane. There is a hunger for this kind of practical, visionary alternative. *Realizing Hope* is an important part of the internal development of the global movements for peace and justice, helping us to recover lost insights." *Realizing Hope* is succinct. Each chapter can stand alone. But it is not only about values. It is about viable institutions that can measure up to our highest values, including solidarity, diversity, equity, self-management, sustainability, and justice.

Vittorio Agnoletto from Italy says about *Realizing Hope*: "This book is against all those who accuse the social movements of only being able to say "no". A better world is indeed possible and not just a Utopia. Michael Albert points the way towards a society based on participation and justice. Utopia is somewhere that does not exist yet. This book can really help turn a dream into reality." With some ideas about vision and strategy bearing on each area discussed and clarified, *Realizing Hope* proceeds to discuss broad schools of strategy, including issues of organization, movement building, decision making, etc.

Stephen Shalom from the U.S. says about *Realizing Hope*: "Those of us who have been grappling with the question of the good society in limited domains of inquiry are indebted to Michael Albert for bringing together so much of this work into a

coherent and exciting whole and expanding on it. Anyone disgusted with existing society - which is to say, just about everyone - who wants to know if there are any alternatives, will find *Realizing Hope* informative, provocative, creative, engaging, and, yes, full of hope."

Realizing Hope is not about fixed, timeless assertions. It is about asking questions and providing tentative answers that can reveal their adequacy only in collective practice. Pervez Hoodbhoy from Pakistan says about *Realizing Hope*: "The need for an alternative vision has never been greater than now - a time when moral compasses are unsteady, and capitalism crows victory even as much of the world descends into dark despair. Michael Albert passionately argues for a different future where equity, diversity, justice, and self-management are more than just distant dreams. Those who have seen through the childish notions offered by religion and its vision of a perfect society, as well as the false claims of unreconstructed Marxism and promises of the dictatorship of the proletariat, will benefit from this profoundly important work. It does not shy away from the awesome complexity of human issues, nor does it reek of the stultifying dogmatism of so many left-wing tracts. One can disagree at places, but it forces the reader to think and be conscious of choices."

Finally, Sudhanva Deshpande from India says about *Realizing Hope*: "Michael Albert is more than a man behind a virtual address - he is an organizer, he is a dreamer, he is a fighter, he is a man with a vision. Erudite and learned, his prose is marked by that rare commodity, simplicity. His intellectual and political roots may be in Anarchism, but he is, in the best sense of the term, a Utopian. Not for him, though, the lazy distractedness of the utopian. His feet are firmly on the ground. He recovers for us the best aspects of the socialist traditions of the nineteenth century: the anger with an unjust and exploitative

system, the return of morality to the centre of thinking about politics, economics and society, and the belief, simple though not naïve, that human beings are amenable to reason. There are, in *Realizing Hope*, ideas you may agree with fully, or partially, or not at all. But there are no ideas that you can throw in the waste bin. But for the most fanatical loony fringe of the far Right, no one believes, not even those who earn billions from it, that capitalism and imperialist globalization are just or equitable. Millions across the world are coming together in hitherto unprecedented networks of solidarity to struggle against poverty, inequality, discrimination, and war.

Introduction to *Realizing Hope* by Michael Albert

The stupendously influential and celebrated British economist John Maynard Keynes wrote, "[Capitalism] is not a success. It is not intelligent, it is not beautiful, it is not just, it is not virtuous - and it doesn't deliver the goods. In short, we dislike it, and we are beginning to despise it. But when we wonder what to put in its place, we are extremely perplexed."

Suppose we escaped Keynes' perplexity and attained a desirable post-capitalist economy? What changes would need to occur alongside this new economy? What features would the new economy have to incorporate to mesh successfully with extra-economic innovations? How would broad future prospects affect current strategies for change?

Societies must resolve disputes, deal with criminality, establish shared norms and rules, and implement collective pursuits. What impact would a new participatory economy have on political functions? How might new political structures affect a desirable economy?

Societies involve women and men being born, maturing, aging, and dying. What impact would a participatory economy (or parecon for short) have on relations between the sexes, living arrangements, methods of procreation, styles of nurturance, and the content and practice of socializing new generations? What would kinship improvements require of participatory economics?

People live extended lives and pass through different age groups. What implications would a participatory economy have for intergenerational relations and what would healthy intergenerational relations require of a parecon?

People develop diverse cultures and form racial, ethnic, and religious communities. What implications would parecon have for cultural communities? How might innovative cultural community relations affect economic structures?

Societies exist in the context of other societies. Will a participatory economy foster war or peace, strife or cooperation, international equity or widening inequality? In turn, how might new international relations affect economic structures?

Economies exist in nature. Would a parecon lead to environmental disasters? Would it produce wise environmentalism? What about other species, from the smallest one-celled creatures to great elephants and whales, from bugs that kill to bugs that sustain, plants that overrun to plants that nourish, and pets we love to predators we fear? What implications would a parecon have for species other than humans, and what implications would prioritizing sound ecological and species policies have for a parecon?

Scientists have long investigated our world from its most minuscule subatomic byways to its most gargantuan extra-galactic vistas. How would participatory economics affect the

knowledge and activities of scientists? What would healthy scientific practice imply for a parecon?

Humanity utilizes scientific knowledge plus experiential skills to create technologies for production, shelter, locomotion, health, entertainment, etc. Would pareconish technological developments be accelerated or obstructed? What would happen to technology's direction, content, and use? What would desirable technological innovation require from a participatory economy?

Health matters. Economies directly and secondarily influence our bodies and minds. How would a parecon affect medicine and medical care and what would having a healthy society require from a parecon?

People need education. Would a participatory economy call for the best pedagogy we can imagine or would it limit our pedagogical imaginations? What would having desirable pedagogy require from a parecon? Would a parecon meet education's admission and graduation requirements?

What about information? What implications would a parecon have for journalism's content and process? What would desirable journalism require of a parecon?

Humans engage in visual, auditory, textual, and tactile arts. Would parecon facilitate artistic creation or reduce artistic quality? What would a parecon demand from artists? What would artistic creativity demand from a parecon?

Would sports be diminished or enhanced by parecon? What will become of competition in non-economic realms when we have a cooperative rather than competitive economy? What would desirable play require of a parecon?

Finally, what does participatory economics tell us about who are the agents of social change and who are likely to oppose social change? What does it tell us about the demands, arguments, evidence, and inspiration necessary to create lasting opposition? What does it tell us about the features our organizations ought to embody to win desired aims rather than results we must later disavow? What is the connection between participatory economics and Marxist, anarchist, and other approaches to economy and social change?

How does participatory economics view its own fallibility? How will parecon interact with its own advocates and critics? Will it welcome critique and innovation, including renovation? Or will it tend toward defensiveness, inflexibility, and even sectarianism?

One goal of *Realizing Hope* is to indicate the broader social merits of participatory economics and to further explore economic vision and strategy's interconnections with other spheres of social life. A second goal is to provoke and even modestly help inform proposals of worthy vision and strategy for each other area addressed here. ▶