

IF YOU DON'T

DONALD ROOS

SAVING THE WORLD
BY DOING NOTHING
ECONOMICS FOR CREATIVE PEOPLE

Er is maar één land: de aarde
één volk: de mens
één geloof: de liefde
— Mardjan Seighali



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Thank you, my love.

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ECONOMICS FOR CREATIVE PEOPLE

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BIS Publishers

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SAVING THE WORLD BY DOING NOTHING

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**SAVING
THE WORLD
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ECONOMICS
FOR CREATIVE
PEOPLE**



Start Here

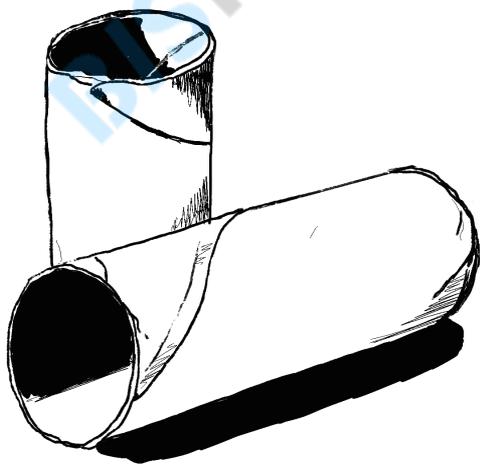
Pick up your phone and you're immediately hit with bad news. As you doomscroll, one headline after another announces the end of the world. Climate change, pollution, extreme wealth, extreme poverty, political turmoil, loss of biodiversity, food insecurity... it's overwhelming. At the same time, you want to do something about it. But where to start?

The buildings we design, the products we make, the brands we create, the fashion trends we set, the art we craft — they all require resources. That means that, as creative people, we're part of the problems the world is grappling with. Artists, designers, and other creatives often criticize the capitalist system, but let's be real: we depend on it, too. We don't create our art solely for our love of it — it also pays our bills.

So, as a creative person, what exactly is my responsibility in all this? Can I tune out all the news of impending doom, keep calm and carry on creating stuff as always, trusting a solution will present itself? Or do I need to hit the streets in protest? Design a poster about climate change? Should I be standing up against the current economic system? Or try and change it from the inside? How do I even do that when I work in the creative industry? What impact can art and design have?

What you are responsible for is the thing inside your control, indeed the only thing that has ever been inside your control: your mindset.

— Clover Hogan



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Creativity is Economics

If we want to figure out what we can do for the planet and its future, we first need to imagine what that future might look like. To do that, we have to understand the present. In other words, we must know how we ended up in this situation. That's why this book has 3 parts: From the Past → Into the Present → Towards the Future. We get into natural history, the history of homo sapiens and then we talk about what humans created: the economy. Economics!?! Yep, economics. Sometimes it's good to step out of your comfort zone and look at the world from a different angle.

Humbug!

— Ebenezer Scrooge

Why Economics?

Because economics is right at the intersection of all things relevant to what humanity has lived through and created on planet Earth: history, science, social developments, and human society as a whole.

What exactly is economics? What does the word even mean? Originally, 'economics' comes from the Greek 'oikonomia,' a combination of 'oikos', meaning house, estate, or family, and 'nomos', meaning both rule and management. Economics literally means managing a household.

Xenophon, a Greek philosopher who wrote the book 'Oikonomikos' (Economics), posited that economics — or household management — was an art form. Aristotle built on this idea but differentiated between economics (managing the household) and chrematistics, the art of wealth accumulation.

This distinction seems to have disappeared in today's (Western) economy: economics is often understood to be all

about wealth accumulation. Our economy is about the market, ruled by the ancient law of supply and demand. In that system, when you can sell something for more than you planned, and the other person can buy it for less than they were willing to pay, both parties benefit. This benefit is often called ‘wealth’. Today’s society is focused on generating more ‘wealth’ — producing faster and more. Growth of wealth has become the ultimate goal, which many people have also come to equate with happiness.

We are, after all, homo economicus.

— Krina Alizond-114

If you want to grow, you need more resources: labour, time, and knowledge, sure, but also physical resources: raw materials. For a long time, people assumed — and many still do — that these resources are endless, inexhaustible. But they’re not. The numerous consequences of ‘economic growth’ are becoming more and more measurable; things are changing on our planet. That’s why we have to make conscious choices about how we create and live. This is where the ToDon’tList method comes in.

The ToDon’tList Method

This book is the third in the ‘Don’t’ series. The first two, ‘Don’t Read This Book — Time Management for Creative People’ (2016) and ‘Don’t Buy This Book — Entrepreneurship for Creative People’ (2020), are about how you make choices in your life, work, projects, and running a studio. This book focuses on the impact these choices have on the world.

In the first 2 books, we use the ToDon’tList method to help with decision-making. It works like this: we’re always coming up with new ideas, and there are always things we want

and need to do. But trying to do all of these things leads to an ever-growing to-do list. Instead of trying to do as much as possible all at once, you could choose to delete a bunch of to-dos and instead, focus on what really matters. Set boundaries, make choices, do less, but do it better. Because time is a non-renewable resource.

To attain knowledge, add things every day. To attain wisdom, subtract things every day.

— Laozi



The higher up in the decision tree you choose to do or not do something, the bigger the impact on all the to-dos that come after. This choice affects all the resources you need: time, labour, money, and raw materials. For example, if I decide not to bake bread, then I don't need to buy flour, make dough or check the dough's rise either, and I'll have more time to do something else.

This principle works the other way around, too. The choices we make on a daily basis also affect the things that come before it. For instance, if you buy clothes, those garments have been shipped to where you live, constructed by someone, the cotton was grown, etcetera. By making decisions, we affect the economy — how it works and what it focuses on. The same goes for the work you do as a creative: it affects the world you live in. Positively or negatively.

A Hitchhiker's Guide to Earth

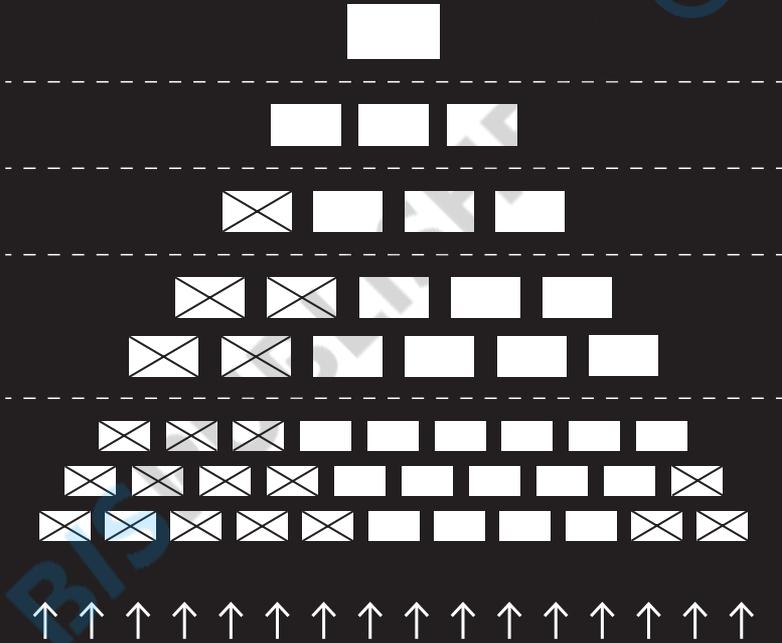
Once, economics denoted the art of managing a household. Thinking about the Earth, we could consider Earth our household. It is the 'house' where we all live together — not just us humans, but also animals, plants, and other organisms.

Henry George, an American political economist and journalist, described our Earth as a 'spaceship' in his work 'Progress and Poverty' (1879). This view of the world was echoed by many, among them George Orwell in his book 'The Road to Wigan Pier' (1937): "The world is a raft sailing through space with, potentially, plenty of provisions for everybody; the idea that we must all cooperate and ensure everyone does their fair share of the work and gets their fair share of the provisions seems so blatantly obvious that one would think no one could fail to accept it unless they had some corrupt motive for clinging to the present system."

Even though the idea of Spaceship Earth is about 150 years old, it seems more relevant than ever today.

DECISION TREE

Top Down View



We'd be fools not to ride this strange torpedo all the way out to the end.

— Hunter S. Thompson

Saving the World by Doing Nothing

The choices we make, individually or as groups, don't just affect us and others; they ultimately impact Earth too. If we do nothing, our spaceship will no longer be fit for us to travel in sooner or later. The silver lining is that, without us, Earth will be able to heal itself.

If we start doing some things differently or stop doing them altogether, we open up new ways to take care of our spaceship. That way, we can stay here a bit longer. How? That is what we're going to talk about.

**If you think you're too small to make a
difference, try spending the night
in a closed room with a mosquito.**

— African proverb

Changing the future seems like a huge task. But you already have changed it — without even thinking about it. You have made tons of choices that affect the future. And you can change more things about the future still, even with seemingly small choices.

A meme I found said it quite well: “When people talk about travel to the past, they worry about radically changing the present by doing something small. Few people think that they can radically change the future by doing something small in the present.”

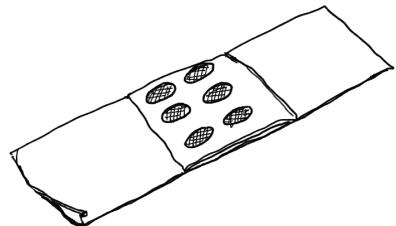
**I guess you guys aren't ready for that yet...
But your kids are gonna love it. — Marty McFly**

Gentle reminder: fear is a bad advisor

In this book, you'll sometimes come across stories and figures that might dishearten you. In those cases, please remember that fear is a poor advisor. If we want to come up with solutions, we need to be brave enough to look the beast in the eye. Let's get going.

**Sometimes we are so afraid
to be political... But at the
end of the day, you are
an artist. And an artist's
job is to make people
uncomfortable.**

— Adebayo Oke-Lawal



Place this part at a distance of 46.5 metres

Sun

Earth



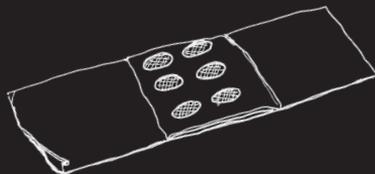
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A little book about the big and overwhelming issues humanity is dealing with. Taking economics as a surprising stepping stone, it connects the dots between essential developments in science, history, sociology, technology, design and culture. This book is not about scary numbers – it is about key stories from our past and present and how they affect our future. How do we as creatives help create the world we want?

The ToDon'tList method, which featured in this book's 2 predecessors, unveils a surprising truth: sometimes, the best action is inaction. This book gives you insight into how simple choices affect the manner in which we designed and can redesign our world. As a creative, you could have a greater effect not by adding more, but by thoughtfully leaving things out.

You may not be able to change the world completely, but there are things you can control. This book gives the creative reader an easy-to-apply philosophy that helps them make choices. Sometimes, the outcome may be that it's best to do nothing – if you want to save the world.

FROM THE MAKERS OF 'DON'T READ THIS BOOK' AND 'DON'T BUY THIS BOOK'



Donald Roos is a creative entrepreneur based in Amsterdam (the Netherlands). Trained as a (typo)graphic designer, he sets up and runs projects with other professionals from different fields. Like many creatives, he has too much to do, and too many ideas – which is why he came up with the ToDon'tList method. This is Donald's 3rd book together with co-writer Anne de Bruijn. They previously published Don't Read This Book and Don't Buy This Book.

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