**Headline:** Artist Group’s ‘Remember the Future’ Podcast Shines a Light on the Solidarity Economy

**Teaser:** A new platform for those putting the planet and people over profit.

By Aric Sleeper

**Author Bio:** Aric Sleeper is an independent journalist whose work, which covers topics including labor, housing, food, and more, has appeared in the San Francisco Chronicle, the [Santa Cruz Sentinel](https://www.santacruzsentinel.com/author/aric-sleeper/), the [East Bay Times](https://www.eastbaytimes.com/author/aric-sleeper/), the [San Jose Mercury News](https://www.mercurynews.com/author/aric-sleeper/), and other publications local to California’s Central Coast. In addition to his role as a community reporter, he has served as a government analyst and bookseller.

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**[Article Body:]**

The saying goes that it’s easier to imagine the end of the world than the end of capitalism. However, it’s not so difficult to envision a world operating outside of the economic status quo when you notice that people are already doing it, some of whom have been doing so for decades, and are operating under different names—whether it is democratic socialism, [just transition](https://www.ieyenews.com/movement-generation-works-to-usher-in-a-sustainable-just-transition/), local peace economy, or the [solidarity economy](https://neweconomy.net/solidarity-economy/).

“This is not some new, abstract, or hard thing to understand,” said [Marina Lopez](https://www.peopleshub.org/people/marina-lopez), [Art.coop](https://art.coop/) co-organizer, while speaking about the solidarity economy movement. “People have been doing this for a long time and by naming it, and formalizing it as the solidarity economy, we can have a shared language to talk about what we’re doing, and that helps us as we are in this in-between space between capitalism and this new economy.”

Lopez and her colleagues at [Art.coop](https://art.coop/) are focused on bolstering the solidarity economy, or economic activities rooted in community ownership and democratic governance, or as Lopez puts it, “people and planet over profit.”

She said the term solidarity economy is used internationally to describe the sustainable and equitable community control of labor, food production, housing, technology, and culture using various organizational forms such as cooperatives, time banks, and mutual aid networks.

Lopez pointed out that these organizational forms are not considered a part of the solidarity economy on their own unless they are run with the core values of the solidarity economy in mind, such as cooperation, participatory democracy, intersectional equity, sustainability, and pluralism.

“In the solidarity economy there are these tools that we name as worker-owned cooperatives, creative cooperatives, community land trusts,” Lopez said. “But if you’re not governing yourself, or being in relationship with one another within the cooperative or the community based on these values of cooperation, that’s not solidarity economy movement work. That’s just having a worker co-op. It’s the tools plus the values embodied in practice. That’s the solidarity economy.”

Art.coop began in March 2021 with the [report](https://art.coop/#report) “Solidarity Not Charity: Arts and Culture Grantmaking in the Solidarity Economy,” which serves as an introduction to the concepts of the solidarity economy and as a guide for grantmakers to assist the movement. The report was authored by Art.coop co-organizers Nati Linares and Caroline Woolard.

To create the [report](https://art.coop/#report), Linares and Woolard interviewed more than 100 artists and culture workers across the United States who were already involved with solidarity economy work.

After the “Solidarity Not Charity” [report](https://art.coop/#report) gained attention, Art.coop co-organizers continued their relationships with the artists and culture workers, and through collaborations, developed [online courses](https://creativestudy.com/solidarity-economy) called CreativeStudy to teach people about the solidarity economy. It was at this point that Lopez came on board as a co-organizer to help create the course curriculum.

Lopez, a dancer, body worker, and alumni of Goddard College, became a part of the solidarity economy movement after learning about it at an event in 2018 called “[Artists Dismantling Capitalism](https://cooperationhumboldt.com/dismantle-capitalism/#:~:text=2018%20Artists%20Dismantling%20Capitalism,%2C%20compassionate%2C%20inclusive%20and%20beautiful.).”

“It was the first time I felt like I’d found my people,” said Lopez. “The whole event was really inspiring, and that was my introduction to solidarity economy work.”

In January 2023, Lopez and others produced a [podcast series](https://rememberthefuture.buzzsprout.com/2087911) featuring seven of the artists and culture bearers involved in the “Solidarity Not Charity” report, called “Remember the Future.”

“We were approached by [Yerba Buena Center for the Arts](https://ybca.org/), and they were excited to support us to create a podcast about arts and the solidarity economy,” said Lopez. “They gave us a lot of free rein.”

The co-organizers at Art.coop wanted to create a podcast series that would provide a platform for champions of the solidarity economy movement and teach listeners what the movement looks like on the ground level.

“We saw the podcast as another educational resource, and we wanted to do it through storytelling,” said Lopez. “We wanted to give the artists that we interviewed for the report a chance to expand on their stories.”

Lopez explained that the title of the [podcast series](https://rememberthefuture.buzzsprout.com/2087911), “Remember the Future” refers to the fact that components of the solidarity economy such as mutual aid and cooperative practices are, “as old as time, and they’re often our ancestral and cultural practices that have been lost or stolen.”

The seven episodes of the podcast are connected thematically by the tools and values of the solidarity economy, but are diverse in subject matter—from the creation of the first democratically run investment firm, the [Boston Ujima Project](https://www.ujimaboston.com/), to the cultural cooperative [Double Edge Theatre](https://doubleedgetheatre.org/about-us/), to the trials and tribulations of cooperative art-making and business ownership with theater and performance artist Daniel Park of [Obvious Agency](https://www.obvious-agency.com/).

“I’m not somebody who wants to be fighting against the oppressive systems that exist,” said Park. “I am much more interested in going around those systems and norms and creating something different that’s more aligned with my values.”

Obvious Agency is a worker-owned cooperative that creates interactive and experiential art, which tackles serious subjects but often errs on the side of silly with projects like the real-world adventure game about insomnia called “[Go To Sleep](https://www.obvious-agency.com/gotosleep),” or the team’s latest project, a sci-fi role-playing game with the title “[Space Opera](https://www.obvious-agency.com/copy-of-barnes-jawn-t),” which is played by a group of people over several days.

“It is designed as this multiday, table-top role-playing/LARP/mega game experience for 40 to 60 people at a time,” said Park. “It’s very much about the issues we’re facing today, but we’ve set it in a sci-fi, fantasy future.”

Park and the team at Obvious Agency didn’t set out to become a part of the solidarity economy movement when they started the agency but fell into it almost by accident when they banded together to work on a commissioned [live-action game](https://www.obvious-agency.com/portfolio-1) for Temple University Library’s Beyond the Page Festival called “The Diamond Eye Conspiracy.”

“We were working in ways that prioritized democracy,” said Park. “We knew that we generally wanted to be making decisions collectively and together, and that was the base point from which we started, and then things continued to evolve and develop.”

Through his involvement with the [United States Federation of Worker Cooperatives](https://www.usworker.coop/clinic/dp-headshot-small-daniel-park/), Park began to learn more about cooperatives and the language of the solidarity economy and become more involved with the community centered around its practices and values.

He explained that making all the administrative decisions for the agency democratically, where everyone has an equal say, is much more empowering and rewarding for everyone involved, but it takes a significant amount of time and energy, and it’s not always easy.

“There are just a lot more conversations that need to happen and a lot of people who need to be involved in those processes,” said Park. “It also forces us to have more intentional conversations about money.”

In the future, Park hopes that other artists seek out alternative ways to make a living and art they care about outside the top-down, nonprofit industrial complex.

“Whenever the nonprofit industrial complex system finally falls, we’ll be ready to fill that power vacuum with all of the new, creative, and different ways of organizing ourselves, our work, our labor, and our resources,” said Park.

Although Art.coop doesn’t have the funding for a second season of the “Remember the Future” podcast yet, Lopez would like to produce more episodes if resources become available.

She and the co-organizers at Art.coop have recently been putting their heads together to envision their work in the next few years and hope to expand their team, support artists with a participatory regranting program, and grow the solidarity economy movement at large.

“It’s not only possible,” said Lopez; “it’s already happening.”