John Kampfner

Author, commentator, and broadcaster

London

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Born in 1962 in Singapore

BA in Modern History and Russian from The Queen’s College, Oxford

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PROJECT

“Why the World Does It Better”

My latest book, my eighth, entitled “Why the World Does It Better,” highlights specific decisions or interventions taken by governments and citizens in recent years that are blazing a trail for the rest of us to follow. It mixes deep research and data with interviews with experts and practitioners, while reporting in detail from each of the countries featured.

In the book, to be published in summer 2026, I focus on issues that are essential to combating the challenges of the second half of this decade and into the next one: climate, public health, ageing, poverty, technology, demography, migration, resources, and equality between countries and within countries.

My choice of countries is deliberately eclectic. Some are the standard “overachievers” in Northern and Western Europe – those that top the lists put out by the OECD, the UN, and others. I am looking, inter alia, at education in Finland, cyber security in Estonia, public housing in Austria, and immigration in Canada.

I also highlight best-practice examples from Middle Ground states and the Global South, many of which are producing more innovative solutions than wealthier nations. Hence my choice of Costa Rica and Morocco on biodiversity and renewables and of Taiwan, whose health service outperforms others.

The book aims to prompt a debate about the structure of society, the size and role of the state, and the trade-offs required in tackling future crises. Are statist interventions essential to achieve maximum impact, particularly during times of crisis (such as climate change)? Do such interventions work against the spirit of innovation and personal responsibility – or are they the best way of encouraging people, within countries and between countries, to work together? Amid a canon of books pointing to the troubles ahead, I hope to help foster a different form of globalisation, one that is based in the willingness to learn from others, including those with whom we might – at first glance – have little in common.

Recommended Reading

Kampfner, John. Freedom for Sale: How We Made Money and Lost Our Liberty. London: Simon & Schuster, 2009.

–. Why the Germans Do It Better: Notes from a Grown-Up Country. London: Atlantic Books, 2020.

–. In Search of Berlin: The Story of a Reinvented City. London: Atlantic Books, 2023.

A survivor’s guide: a journey to some unlikely places in search of policy solutions in our troubled times

At a time when so much of the world is enveloped in gloom, my eighth and latest book, which I’ve been working on while at Wiko, looks at examples of good practice in policymaking that we can learn from.

Although the framework of my research hasn’t changed since I started the project in early 2023, the context very much has. The Putin-Trump axis and the wider authoritarian power grab poses an existential challenge to our societies.

What we cannot do is to imagine that things will return to the status quo ante. Call this therefore a ‘survival guide’.

I’ve travelled so far to eight countries (one or two more coming up) to look at imaginative ways of dealing with present and future challenges. My choice of destinations and themes is designed to demonstrate a new form of globalised inter-dependency, while breaking out of path dependency and bureaucratic inertia.

No matter the culture, history or geography, we’re all asking the same questions. Where am I going to live? What happens when I get sick? Am I learning the right skills? Are there ways of ensuring my children aren’t being brainwashed? How can my environment be protected without costing me my livelihood? Who will look after me when I’m old?

The immediate and long-term crises of climate and demography require fresh thinking. Wherever you look, someone has a lesson for us, if only we have the humility and foresight to want to learn. That’s the difference between societies that are open to new influences and those who fly the flag and think they know best. Many examples of best, or good, practice exist, some (to a Western mindset) in the unlikeliest of places. Nobody has a monopoly of virtue. Everyone is making mistakes along the way. But in their embrace of innovation, digitisation, social solidarity, long-term planning and candid communication, another country is doing something that we should pay attention to.

This colloquium will take a slightly different course to others. I will invite attendees to help me think through some of the key themes linking my examples. Fellows and guests will be provided with some short accompanying notes on arrival.

PUBLICATIONS FROM THE FELLOW LIBRARY

Kampfner, John (London,2023)

In search of Berlin : the story of a reinvented city

https://kxp.k10plus.de/DB=9.663/PPNSET?PPN=1867485605

Kampfner, John (Hamburg,2021)

Warum Deutschland es besser macht : ein bewundernder Blick von außen

https://kxp.k10plus.de/DB=9.663/PPNSET?PPN=1736179942

Why the Germans do it better

https://kxp.k10plus.de/DB=9.663/PPNSET?PPN=1736179942

Kampfner, John ([Erscheinungsort nicht ermittelbar],2020)

Russia and China in Germany

https://kxp.k10plus.de/DB=9.663/PPNSET?PPN=1899179933

Kampfner, John (London,2020)

Why the Germans do it better : notes from a grown-up country
https://kxp.k10plus.de/DB=9.663/PPNSET?PPN=1727149610

Kampfner, John (New York,2010)

Freedom for sale : why the world is trading democracy for security
https://kxp.k10plus.de/DB=9.663/PPNSET?PPN=607803983
Dangerous liaisons
https://kxp.k10plus.de/DB=9.663/PPNSET?PPN=607803983

Kampfner, John (London [u.a.],2004)

Blair's wars
https://kxp.k10plus.de/DB=9.663/PPNSET?PPN=1620105039

Kampfner, John (London,1998)

Robin Cook
https://kxp.k10plus.de/DB=9.663/PPNSET?PPN=246410906

Kampfner, John (London,1994)

Inside Yeltsin's Russia : corruption, conflict, capitalism
https://kxp.k10plus.de/DB=9.663/PPNSET?PPN=1606338927