Mynttorget framed by the Swedish Parliament on the left and the Royal Palace on the right.

Chapter 1: Swedish Beginnings

August – October 2018: An idea takes shape

Preparations

The most beautiful room in our institute at Stockholm University juts out of the façade at a height of five metres, surrounded by three glass walls, looking out over a small wood. This is where I am supposed to be planning the new semester, and especially a workshop on the topic of the climate crisis and sustainability. "Do you have any ideas?" I ask a sheep which is standing outside in the woods, looking at me through the glass. How should we explain the urgency of the climate crisis without the students switching off? So that they, the future teachers of Sweden, will dare to make space for empathy with other people and for fascination with nature? What do the school children themselves think about our way of treating nature, globally? Start there; that could work. Make a quick note. Opening my computer, I notice a news item online. A child is sitting alone in front of the parliament, in the centre of the city, less than twenty minutes away, on strike.

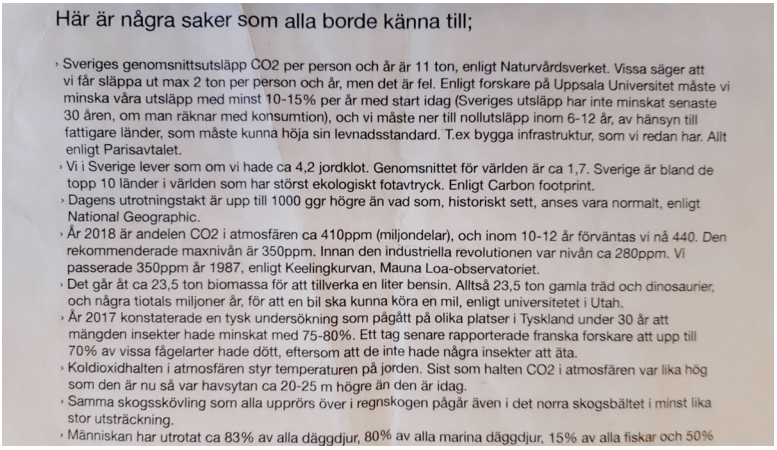
The strike before the strike – the first meeting

When I visit Greta and the other activists for the first time during their strike in front of the parliament, Fridays For Future does not yet exist; there is only the basic idea for a strike. They sit between the two parts of the grandiose parliament building every day for the last three weeks before the Swedish elections, not only on Fridays. It is a Tuesday in late August, and it is unbearably hot. I sit down and ask them what they have to say to us all.

After seeing the news item, I asked my university colleagues: "Should we head over there? We should at least listen." On the Monday morning before

that, Greta had picked up her sign, which now read "School strike for the climate" in big letters, in black and white, and cycled to the parliament, where she found a place right in the middle of the centre of Swedish political power, unrolled her mat and then sat down alone on the ground.

Now she sits there and says: "This is a crisis." A few other youngsters and two or three adults are sitting a little way away. "A crisis?" "Yes, a crisis." There is an A4 sheet of paper in front of them, covered in scientific facts to prove it – that is, they show what we adults, or some of us, have done to the environment over the last fifty years.



Här är några saker som alla borde känna till;

- Sveriges genomsnittsutsläpp CO2 per person och år är 11 ton, enligt Naturvårdsverket. Vissa säger att vi får släppa ut max 2 ton per person och år, men det är fel. Enligt forskare på Uppsala Universitet måste vi minska våra utsläpp med minst 10-15% per år med start idag (Sveriges utsläpp har inte minskat senaste 30 åren, om man räknar med konsumtion), och vi måste ner till nollutsläpp inom 6-12 år, av hänsyn till fattigare länder, som måste kunna höja sin levnadsstandard. T.ex bygga infrastruktur, som vi redan har. Allt enligt Parisavtalet.
- Vi i Sverige lever som om vi hade ca 4,2 jordklot. Genomsnittet för världen är ca 1,7. Sverige är bland de topp 10 länder i världen som har störst ekologiskt fotavtryck. Enligt Carbon footprint.
- Dagens utrotningstakt är upp till 1000 ggr högre än vad som, historiskt sett, anses vara normalt, enligt National Geographic.
- År 2018 är andelen CO2 i atmosfären ca 410ppm (miljondelar), och inom 10-12 år förväntas vi nå 440. Den rekommenderade maxnivån är 350ppm. Innan den industriella revolutionen var nivån ca 280ppm. Vi passerade 350ppm år 1987, enligt Keelingkurvan, Mauna Loa-observatoriet.
- Det går åt ca 23,5 ton biomassa för att tillverka en liter bensin. Alltså 23,5 ton gamla träd och dinosaurier, och några tiotals miljoner år, för att en bil ska kunna köra en mil, enligt universitetet i Utah.
- År 2017 konstaterade en tysk undersökning som pågått på olika platser i Tyskland under 30 år att mängden insekter hade minskat med 75-80%. Ett tag senare rapporterade franska forskare att upp till 70% av vissa fågelarter hade dött, eftersom att de inte hade några insekter att äta.
- Koldioxidhalten i atmosfären styr temperaturen på jorden. Sist som halten CO2 i atmosfären var lika hög som den är nu så var havsytan ca 20-25 m högre än den är idag.
- Samma skogsskövling som alla upprörs över i regnskogen pågår även i det norra skogsbältet i minst lika stor utsträckning.
- Människan har utrotat ca 83% av alla däggdjur, 80% av alla marina däggdjur, 15% av alla fiskar och 50%

It is only much later that I really read that piece of paper from the first days. In front of the parliament in the heat of late summer, I only glance at it. I see a few familiar and a few entirely unfamiliar numbers and comments. The whole page is covered in fine print. We have to reduce emissions in richer countries by at least 10–15 percent every year, from today. We humans have eradicated 83 percent of the population of land mammals. We are now… The information is so condensed that it could make you dizzy. They are just letters and numbers, but behind that is the pain caused by humans to other humans and animals. How can we deal with it? Maybe that is why it takes me months to look at this piece of paper properly. It is simply hard to digest. But it is full of the knowledge the state ought to be disseminating and teaching to pupils at school. Weeks later, when we are meeting every Friday and a climate scientist joins us from the uni-

versity, it becomes clear to me how well-read Greta and some of the other activists are; but it's not just that they know the literature, it's also that they understand the connections, and above all that they can judge their importance: what is the central point, what are the greatest risks, what is our role as adults who are wreaking destruction we could prevent. I am the one who is learning here. In particular, they are calling attention to calculations of risk: which are the numbers the politicians are working with less than ten metres away from us in the parliament; and is that really responsible or are they kidding themselves, ignoring risks such as tipping points, gambling on technologies that don't exist, closing their eyes to UN reports? Are they passing the buck to the children's generation when it comes to reshaping society?

I discuss the meaning of these facts in the next months with my colleagues at the various relevant institutes at the university. They agree with the young strikers.

But for now, it is enough for them to say that we are in a crisis and that the adults ought to present it that way too. I have brought kiwi smoothies in plastic cups; I feel ashamed of the plastic rubbish I've brought along and after talking to them for a while, I leave again, utterly confused, moved, and perturbed. Above all, I think: these young people on strike are not just there as themselves, they're also making space for an idea; the idea that no one has to accept the way the world is behaving. Even if we are small, we can step into the middle of this machinery, refuse to follow the rules of the adults, and skip school.

Half an eternity later, when a bitterly cold winter has arrived and the gang of rebels has been striking in Mynttorget for twenty Fridays, right there in front of the parliament we will all build a snow elephant, or in fact the left foot of a snow elephant, and laugh and complain about the journalists who ask their investigative questions: whether the young people are being controlled from behind the scenes, whether they earn money with their activism, and so on. Greta and the others will have travelled to Katowice, to Strasbourg and to Davos, and they will have made speeches which are broadcast around the world. But at that time, on that August day, we obviously know nothing about that. There are still just a few children sitting between the stone blocks of political power.

When might they be able to end their strike, I wonder. I definitely have to come back and hear more from the ones whose future is at stake. And even in these first days, that's not just Greta. Because one by one, others have joined her. Tindra, Mina, Edit, Eira, Morrigan, Melda, Mayson and so on. There are still not many of them, but they make all the difference. Greta's idea has taken

hold. The core group of young people have found each other, and they are making plans.

The beginning of Fridays For Future – on a Saturday

And so begins the actual story of Fridays For Future – on a Saturday. That is when the children's three-week strike becomes something else, #FFF, a movement. This is because the Swedes are supposed to be electing a new parliament on the following day, a Sunday – and so, a coalition of climate activist groups has announced a demonstration. At the edge of the city centre in the notorious Rålambshov Park, there is a small stone amphitheatre. There we all gather, maybe a thousand people, listening to songs and to speeches about the climate crisis.

Suddenly the group of strikers around Greta are announced; they are starting to be well known after their three weeks of daily striking. Three other schoolchildren walk with her into the open space. "Hej." "Hej," everyone answers. "Please get your phones out," says Greta. "I will now switch to English and make an announcement." A pause. I rummage around for my phone and press "record". "Hej, I am Greta Thunberg, and this is Mina, Morrigan, and Edit. We have school-striked for the climate for the last three weeks. Yesterday was the last day. But we will go on with the school strike every Friday as from now, we will sit outside the Swedish parliament until Sweden is in line with the Paris Agreement. We urge all of you to do the same: sit outside your parliament or local government wherever you are […]. Everyone is welcome, everyone is needed. Please join in. Thank you." Many people post the video. Some of those who see it will start to strike. And they are not in the suburbs of Stockholm, but in Brussels, Zurich, Berlin, Melbourne, and Rio. Meanwhile, Greta goes home and makes a short film of her own, which remains pinned at the top of her twitter account for months afterwards. In a small wood, she records her basic idea: sit down in front of the parliaments, every Friday; the situation is so urgent that the children have to do something. She ends this appeal with the hashtag #FridaysForFuture.

28th of August: The French environment minister, Nicolas Hulot, resigns in protest at Emmanuel Macron's climate policies.

Mynttorget

The strikers have invented or created two things, the idea of the strike – and their life on the square, Mynttorget, as a special place, a kind of democratic space. This is where the movement will come into being. The police direct them to the square. They are not to sit directly between the parliament buildings: Mynttorget is directly in front of the parliament, or just beyond it if you are coming from the seat of the government, the Rosenbad; it is crammed in between the royal palace, the Old Town, and the parliament. At the beginning of September, the strikers are still finding their way. Everything is unfamiliar. Because it is a school strike, it takes place during school hours, from eight in the morning till three in the afternoon. What should they do with those seven hours on the square? If not school, then what? Often, the ten regular Fridays For Future strikers sit quietly, leaning against the wall in front of the parliament, enjoying the autumn air. The atmosphere is serious. They are aware that they are meant to be at school and that they are taking a risk; punishment is a possibility. A few fish jump out of the water of the Mälaren lake; the royal guard marches past. Now and again, a seagull circles their heads, or even a sea eagle. Sometimes there is silence for many minutes. Then someone suggests a game or tells a story. Politicians walk past and disappear into their parliamentary offices without saying hello. Buses pass by. Sometimes a car stops, leaves them a crate of bananas, and drives off with a friendly beep of the horn.

A generation rises up

It is a whole generation that is rising up, slowly but surely. It has already been simmering for a few months. In the USA, the Sunrise Movement is growing (Holthaus 2020). In a few months, it will persuade the young Democrat representative from New York, Alexandria Ocasio-Cortez, to propose a "Green New Deal": an ambitious proposal for reaching zero emissions in the energy sector within ten years, creating green jobs and introducing social security systems (Klein 2019). The young people in Mynttorget take a curious and critical view of the idea of the "Green New Deal". Is it a serious endeavour to deal with the climate crisis, or just an attempt to kickstart the economy? Some of the Sunrise teenagers have forced the American state into a legal case during the last few months, because it is not facing up to the climate crisis and is risking the lives of future generations ("Juliana v US"; see https://www.youthvgov.or

g). In the Netherlands, too, teenagers sue the government for doing too little in the face of a catastrophic climate crisis. And they win. (On the possibility of changing the law through cases brought by young people, for a sustainable future, see Holthaus 2020.) Close to Utrecht, ten-year-old Lilly (@lillyspickup) goes out walking and becomes famous for her funny video clips, in which she urges everyone to prevent and pick up plastic litter. Lilly becomes a permanent "member" of FFF and meets the youngsters from Sweden at the EU parliament. But right now, they still don't know anything about her, or anything about each other; they haven't come to Mynttorget yet.

Still, these young people are standing on strong shoulders. Already for decades, grassroots movements in the Global South, led particularly by women and indigenous people, have been breaking a path for them. They have literally been getting in the way of the oil and coal industry in Ecuador, Canada, Australia and near Manaus in the rainforest of Brazil (see Margolin 2020).

The invention

What awaits the young people at Mynttorget? Most of all, a basic idea. From the beginning, the group has established what will become the core of the young climate movement. It will still be weeks and months before I quite understand this, so familiar am I with the old patterns of activism and political commitment. The young people have invented something new. #FFF is an invention in the best sense of the word. And it only has a few ingredients: the schoolchildren, the parliament, striking on Fridays, the A4 factsheet, the hashtag #FridaysForFuture; and the sign. That might seem obvious. But it is a very special combination of ingredients.

FFF as a movement is directed at someone; it addresses those in power: the protesters sit in front of parliament. They are not blocking petrol stations or coal power stations, they are not striking at home or in front of their schools, but in front of power, the powerful. They dare to make a direct approach to those who have responsibility. Through this, they can focus the full energy of hundreds of thousands of people, they can become the voice of a generation which is rising up. With Occupy, ten years earlier, some of us occupied squares in general, but not parliaments. The young people establish direct communication with those responsible. That gives the movement a target, not only in

spatial terms, as a meeting point for people in cities, but also politically: "The rules must change," Greta says early on, in her first speech in Helsinki.

Ingredient number two: they rebel. FFF is a rebellion, because the movement chooses Friday. It is a real strike, not a demonstration. Goodbye to the giant demonstrations of the 90s and 00s, which often just stopped after a while. School attendance is a legal requirement, and by breaking that requirement, the young people demonstrate the urgency of their cause and prove their determination, refusing to cooperate with a system that makes their own future impossible. That too is new (or at least rare – during the American civil rights movement, young people used similar conflict strategies; see Chenoweth/Stephan 2012): a collective act of civil disobedience by children. But the school strike is a nonviolent rebellion, and anyone can join. People can also start by themselves; usually, no one can demonstrate on their own.

The third ingredient: Greta always places her A4 sheet of facts next to her on the ground. The children are not proposing a political manifesto in which they only argue for one stance or for specific measures, but are instead pointing out the science, the overwhelming climate research, the IPCC reports, and the goals to which all the states in the Paris Agreement have committed themselves. That is not negotiable. This means that a radical compass is available to everyone – one which the global community has already agreed on. Furthermore, FFF becomes hugely educational: the young strikers reach hundreds of thousands of people, spreading knowledge about the key facts, not only regarding the mechanisms behind global heating, but also more broadly about our relationship with living nature and about global justice. They can use their fact-sheet to show that they are on strike against an education system that doesn't take itself seriously. That all contrasts with earlier political movements which quickly became mired in policy disputes.

Fourthly: there is the strike sign, always easily visible. That means that the young people are not only addressing the people in power in front of the parliament, but are also turning in the other direction to all schoolchildren and the whole population, calling on everyone to join them. "Everyone is welcome, everyone is needed." Anyone passing by, the entire public, is being addressed. They literally don't need to cross any thresholds. They just have to stop walking.

Fifthly: The young people established #FridaysForFuture as a hashtag, not as an association or organisation. They will use social media like no other movement before them. They constitute a grassroots movement, not a hierarchical NGO, conscious about injustices between different parts of the planet. All children in the world can and should be part of it. A generation is rising up.

At the Swedish elections on the 8th of September, the Social Democrats win 28 percent of the vote, the centre-right Moderates 19 percent, the right-wing nationalist Sweden Democrats 17 percent, the green liberal Centre Party 8, the Left 8, the Christian Democrats 6, the Liberals 5 and the Greens 4 percent. Negotiations begin, and will continue into January, until another Green-Red coalition government is established, supported by the liberals and the green (neo-)liberals.

The first young people join – the gang of rebels comes together

During these days, a group forms which will work together closely in the next months and years – a small, but very particular group, the rebels of Mynttorget. At first, there are five, and later on ten young people who get the global movement underway. The media, which only focuses on one of them, misses the real main character: the group of young people to which Greta belongs.

It is early morning on a Friday in September. Greta comes to the square at eight, as always. Slightly later, the "regulars", as they are soon called, arrive from the old town. "I saw an article in the news about Greta and thought: She can't sit there completely alone." "Yes, I also saw it in the news. I'd known about the climate crisis for a long time, but not what I should do. There was nowhere to go. Then I thought immediately, I'm going to go there. Clicking on petitions, that won't save the world." Many of them say that they saw a child their own age sitting on the ground because the climate was getting hotter and the environment and human beings were suffering. And that they couldn't accept that. Some of them had got the tip about the strike from their grandmothers.

And so they sat down as well, hesitantly at first, gradually becoming more resolute. "We had it as a topic at school, basically a week about the end of the world. And then there was a break. And then a new topic. That felt surreal. For such a huge problem." "At first, I just wanted to sit here for three weeks. But when you understand how serious the situation is, you can't stop. So we went on. I went to the school administration and said: I'm not coming in. It's the last year of school, but I have to set priorities."

Barely anyone in the group is "only" a climate activist. They don't only come to Mynttorget because of the climate or the environment, but "also" because of the climate. Most of them are here because something is not right about society, they say, because they have the feeling that school leaves the real questions aside and because they can no longer bear how politicians look away. The social aspect, climate justice, comes up early on in the texts they write. And they want real change.

"It would be so powerful if practically the whole of Stockholm went on strike. If we got the unions on our side. If all the bankers stopped going to work. Then there would be a problem." The climate crisis, for many of them, is only one aspect of an overall picture of problems, and of structures and attitudes that have to change, in relation to animals and to other people. "Why are we not all just kind to each other?" asks someone. Hard to believe that humanity is destroying itself. "And why don't politicians do their jobs? That's meant to be their main task: to find rules and laws that give people security."

Often on these Friday mornings, a few passers-by stop and say something supportive, or something critical, before walking on. Sometimes someone expresses something that's also a prevailing mood in Mynttorget: worries, despair and a scientific interest in the future. Is it even possible to stop global heating at 1.5 or 2 degrees, or will effects come into play that keep feeding into each other? What does science say – are we on the way to an earth which is 3,

4 or 6 degrees warmer? When will that happen? What does it mean for young people across the world?

In these situations, I become aware of how important it is that I get hold of precise information and really understand the arguments for different future scenarios. I don't want to sugar-coat anything, but I also don't want to be dramatic. There ought to be a network, I think to myself, with the brightest climate scientists, philosophers and social scientists from my university, and from other universities too. And so in these first weeks, the idea of Scientists For Future emerges. I write to a whole range of professors from various different subjects, asking them to support these young people. It will take a while for the academic world to react. Sometimes I stand on the square with a sign reading #ScientistsForFuture. I want to make it clear that I represent the university. What is necessary to stop the machinery of the "fossil society"? How do we get out of the crisis?

But then the young people switch from seriousness to playfulness, as so often happens, and start imagining a way for the group to communicate with each other from their homes by stretching gigantic strings across the sky above Stockholm (and we find pictures online from a time when the sky really was almost completely full of telephone wires).

But something else emerges in the square. "This is a crisis situation," they say. "We can't just suddenly stop coming here. And so we've developed a way of getting on well, building friendships, and at the same time doing the organisational work for the strike, in a good combination." "Yes, it's like a myth. It's so strange. None of us knew the others. How we could be connected like this by our shared worries! We're all really great, clever people."

Sometimes during these days, I think about whether there is one leader of the group which is increasingly becoming the core of the climate movement. But they are so different that it is more of a cooperation on equal terms. It is difficult to make out hierarchies of status in the behaviour of the young people in Mynttorget. Maybe it is also this aspect which is so moving for us adults, the teachers, writers, and nurses who turn up regularly. It is as if these six or seven young people have decided to stick together even in the most difficult situations and during conflicts. And difficult situations will come. They are attacked in the right-wing media. Strikes with 50 000 participants have to be moved to a different location within twenty-four hours; the entire movement's strategy has to be negotiated.

In that sense, the phrase "gang of rebels" is not quite right. Gangs are structured hierarchically. "And the whole group works so well together, and has done for such a long, extremely challenging time, because we are all exactly perfectly different in age, and so we don't get in each other's way in terms of status," one of the young people explains to me. The older ones care for the younger ones, but without a hierarchy. The youngest is 13, and then each year is represented by at least one person. Two are 14, two are 15, and so on. The oldest are 18 or 19. They intuitively do what's known as "community organising".

But in the first weeks in Stockholm, none of them really has a specific responsibility. That sometimes leads to an email from the media being left unanswered for a long time, but it also helps: no one is limited to one role. This also means that no one can fail. In other countries such as Switzerland, Germany or Austria, systems are quickly built by the strikers, involving schools digitally, establishing contact people and working with NGOs. In Sweden there is no such thing. Quite the opposite: the small group of strikers are alone for months, without structural networks, without NGOs, without political parties supporting them.

They want to keep their independence. But that is also understandable and necessary: after all, at first, Fridays For Future is only an incredibly vulnerable idea, which could develop in any direction or be suppressed, and which first has to be established and anchored in public awareness. For that reason, they say:

We don't suddenly want to be mixed up with NGOs like Greenpeace or young parties like the Greens or the Left. But that means they have an entirely new, unfamiliar task. How do you start a movement?

The late morning is beginning. The young people take photos for Twitter and Instagram and send them out into the world. What is this strike exactly? This is also the question the young people are asking themselves. They are taking a big risk, I think to myself. They are not going to school, but taking the underground early in the morning to the Old Town, with all their fears and worries, and accepting the consequences, first of all in concrete terms, when it comes to the lessons they are missing and the work they'll have to catch up on. But above all, this weekly statement changes their relationships with their teachers, with their classes, with their parents, with society. They are standing very visibly in a public space. The windows of the parliament buildings on three sides of the square sometimes seem like giant eyes.

At the beginning, for months, they simply sit down. There are no marches – those come later in other places, such as Belgium, Australia, Germany, and Switzerland. They are just there. I think about that a lot, because it creates a very special atmosphere, a seriousness, something dignified. What is happening? You might think: oh, some children sat down in front of the parliament. An action. Just like going to school is an action. Or an "event" is taking place; they're "communicating" something to society. But there is something missing (or even false) in these descriptions. What they are doing is more like expressing an idea, I say to myself. So passers-by not only encounter them when they bend down and greet them, but they also meet the idea that life is important. The young people make this possible, a real encounter that gives rise to a task for all of us. Or, as the philosopher Levinas (1969) would probably say, a "demand" that emanates from a human face: to care, to give them a future. Even if no one saw them, I think then, it would be important. They are taking a stand. In some ways it is the strangest possible phenomenon, this non-cooperation on Fridays, free of violence but with such explosive potential.

The days are long and soon they are icy cold. For all of us, they represent a radical end to "business as usual". Much later, the global strikes arrive, and the dynamic in Mynttorget shifts. The regular strikers become organisers, making huge events happen. They get to know the infrastructure of the city, they find out how to book stages, locations for strikes, security measures. They spend hours organising the days which will bring together thousands of Stockholmer, they prepare speeches, they contact scientists together with me, and they write press releases. They design and order posters, hanging them all over the city

and its suburbs. They often use the Greenpeace office to prepare for television interviews communicating the basic idea of FFF. And they start to travel, visiting the north of Sweden to talk to the indigenous population, with whom many of the young people remain in contact. In that region, climate change has already had disastrous effects. In this way, they bring the movement forward step by step. This is followed by trips to Europe, to Strasbourg, Madrid, and Lausanne. They make connections with rebels who are the same age as them, in different countries. And they become the people who lead strikes with megaphones in their hands, raising their voices to sing the coal and oil back into the ground, tens of thousands marching behind them. But it will be many months before Fridays For Future becomes this kind of movement. At the start, everything is uncertain. But they don't give up. It is September and what has happened so far is that the same five or six of Greta's peers have joined her and keep coming back, week in, week out.

The task and the recipe

They set themselves a task and take it on. Slowly, carefully finding their way, and then with ever more certainty and confidence. They don't just see the strike as a strike, but as a project. Now we are here, in the square, what needs to be done? How do we stop the people who are destroying the world?

In the square, real traditions develop in a short time. A guestbook is passed round and will continue to be passed round for the next 50 weeks. And the children and young people soon develop a recurring game, the improvised – absurd – cooking programme. All of them take turns to participate and they each add a new idea. On this Friday, which may be in the third or fourth week of the strike, the programme presents the recipe for a deliciously prepared threshold.

Take one threshold. As ordinary as possible. Rub the wood with your fingers to collect dust that you can sprinkle over the sauce at the end as a topping. Next find a Finnish guy with a nice big spot on his forehead that's crying out to be squeezed. Squeeze the spot carefully into the dish, add a bit of sweet and sour sauce, and spit in it vigorously, three times. Stir with a chainsaw, then spit in it again three times. Finished.

They laugh, then turn serious again and look across at the parliament.

The Swedish parliament – opponent or authority?

In the stone building opposite sit 349 representatives from 290 constituencies. Together, they have the legal means to change the conditions on which people live together. During these September days, the government is a red-green coalition. Prime minister Stefan Löfven has deputy prime minister Isabella Lövin by his side, the Green minister for the environment and climate. Following the elections, they do not have an absolute majority, and now they want to put together a new, broader coalition. What is their project?

Who should be rewarded, and how; what should be produced, and how; what should count as valuable? How should the climate crisis and the ecological crisis be combatted so that the thousands of workers in the fossil sectors of the car industry and the cement industry would find new work? What was the best way to deal with digitisation and robotisation? How to protect forests? How should food security be guaranteed, while at the same time shifting towards plant-based nutrition and regenerative agriculture and forestry? How should an international structure be established to ensure security in relation to food and infrastructure, and keep oil and coal in the ground? How could heatwaves, droughts, and floods be prevented, and how could the countries affected be helped? How could the education sector be reshaped so that knowledge of the climate crisis was at the core of all subjects and at the centre of the approach to teaching? How could care work be properly valued, the "care economy" which after all is the core of society, the caring, teaching, nourishing and healing that is still so often carried out by women and sometimes not rewarded at all? How to get to grips with all of that, with injustices, inequalities, the social and democratic crises?

The two most powerful people in the state have a unique opportunity to make a plan for Sweden and win a majority, I think to myself during these autumn days. In Mynttorget, we don't hear anything of such discussions (on political operations and topics such as lobbying work, see Kemfert 2020, "Mondays For Future"). Greenhouse gas emissions have not really been reduced during the four years with a red-green government (Urisman Otto 2022), any more than the ecological footprint. The members of parliament who pass the young women in Mynttorget and enter the massive building cause about 10 tonnes of CO_2 emissions per year, like most Europeans (including emissions in foreign countries through consumption of goods; see Thunberg 2022). In around twelve years' time, if a fair system were introduced, they would only be able to emit 1.5 tonnes per year (Anderson et al 2020). How is that supposed to happen?

What is the democratic plan for such a change for all of us? And most importantly: how can the rules change in favour of the people who are most affected by the crises and have often contributed the least, in Sweden and globally; including the indigenous people in the North?

Facing the large, silent windows of the parliament, I often think: an abyss is opening within democracy. In these seemingly modern democracies, young people have no real place. They may receive a certain amount of sound teaching at many schools on the subject of "citizenship", but they are not included in political decisions. I walk up and down and look up at the gigantic windows of the members of parliament. How can that be? And it feels more wrong than practically anything else, when at some point during the next Fridays I'm not able to come back to the square at eight in the morning. For that reason, I decide not to go to the University on Fridays anymore, but to take Greta's call seriously. If a few hundred or even a thousand people do the same and gather in front of their parliaments, a political force could develop – that's the idea – which could lead to a change in our structural conditions.

Strangely enough, hardly any of the members of parliament pause as they pass the strikers. The contrast between the ministers' suits and the young women sitting on the ground could hardly be greater. And it is above all young women who are joining together. Many newspaper articles describe the whole generation of strikers as the responsible girls or young women of our time, and that is true; often they have active grandmothers supporting them. The people on the square are more female than male, but there are also quite a few – as the movement grows – who don't see themselves fitting into the gender binary. This whole situation reflects a deeper problem, according to my colleagues in the social sciences at the university. After all, the structure of the society against which these young women are rebelling is still shaped by men (Brown 2019). The men on the boards of the banks, the oil companies and the coal industry, and the world of men at the economic forum in Davos. These are complex structures which make the task of the five strikers on the square difficult, and which are also soon expressed threateningly, with pure hatred and misogyny. It can't go on like this, we think to ourselves then, the adults who return regularly to the square. We have to organise too. In London, so we hear, a new climate movement for adults is being formed, Extinction Rebellion; maybe we can build something similar here?

At the university

After my first meeting with the activists, I take the smoothies with me, open them with a bad conscience and drink them on the way to the metro station "Old Town", to get rid of the plastic rubbish. Travelling on the red line, it's only five stops to the university.

A university is a strange thing, I often think as I pass through the tunnels to the campus. In actual fact, ideas and thoughts swirl through the air wherever we are, including the centre of the city or Mynttorget. Ideas about what is normal, reasonable, what is seen as valuable or politically possible. Wherever we are, we're surrounded by them: what counts as healthy or sick, as fair, as democratic, what counts as freedom, as an appropriate teaching method, as reason, as science. Sometimes we take our time and look at one of these concepts more closely. Maybe we call it into question if we're being harmed by the way one of them has taken shape in society: the women's movement, the workers' movement, and the civil rights movement questioned and changed the prevailing worldview and what was seen as "normal" practice. The university is the place where these ideas are supposed to be made visible, you might think, and converted into new ones, more democratic, fairer, more sustainable. But precisely because they are the stuff of which all the lessons are made, even when the focus is on specific medical procedures or legal considerations, which are in turn shaped by ideas, some of them also remain unquestioned, at least so it seems in this case (see the chapter about education and the transformation of the universities towards the end of the book; and see the work of Judith Butler, Stuart Hall and others).

And so I walk from the station named "The University" past all the wonderful institutions, past Law, and then past Earth Sciences, past Climate Research, Drama and Literature; I leave Languages, History and Philosophy to my right and head to my Department of Teaching with the strange feeling that many of the things that are seen as normal here are actually highly problematic. Solemnly presented by people who mainly come from a particular part of the white upper middle classes, who ultimately don't take the climate crisis seriously. Not really. Those who teach at the university really ought to apologise to the young people in Mynttorget, I think. They should apologise for the fact that for the last forty years, the academy hasn't come up with an adequate answer.

What would my colleagues think if I joined the strike? How would my students react? Will I lose my job? Shouldn't all teaching and all research respond to the current situation of society, and therefore focus on the fact that we are

facing a crisis we've never seen before (see Raffoul 2022; McGeown/Barry 2023)? What would that mean for each subject – economics, architecture, education, philosophy? For interactions between the subjects and the institutional organisation; for the method of teaching; for integrating us as imaginative, social, embodied beings living in problematic power structures? Like a strange, dark omen, the climate crisis hangs in the air.

But these thoughts are layered on top of my more concrete worries during these August days. Together with a few colleagues, I have created a completely new three-year bachelor course in the last few semesters, and not only am I responsible for many of the five-week sections of the course, some of which don't even exist yet and which I still have to develop, but I also teach many of the lectures and workshops myself. They focus on democracy, citizenship, and justice, on ecological, economic, and social sustainability and teaching methods, and they are taught via art education, especially drama, music, images and role play (on drama education: see for an overview McAvoy/ O'Connor 2022; Haseman/ O'Toole 2017; on applied theatre: Prenkti/Abraham 2021).

The drama method (in contrast with theatre) often means involving everyone all the time as part of an improvisation. Only occasionally do we come up with text-based pieces for an audience. Rather than only addressing people's minds, we are exploring what school can be, what the economy can be and what global democracy can be, using our whole personalities and our imaginations, working together with others in the theatre and dance spaces; we're testing ideas. Similar courses even exist in a few other places, such as New York University and the Central School in London. But more and more "applied theatre" or drama education courses (such as at the ZHDK in Zurich and the UDK in Berlin) are developing in this direction focusing not only on role play, devising, empathy and compassion, but on exploring sustainable democracy and transforming society (see Fopp 2016).

Now, at precisely the time of the first Friday strikes, a new year is beginning at our institution. A new class, a new group of students is arriving. I scan the twenty faces. It is the Monday after the first Friday strike. "Hello." We play a few games to introduce ourselves. Then: "How do you want to treat each other?" Twenty completely different people look at each other. "You can interrupt at any time and say 'stop' if something doesn't feel right," I say. "In improvisation, any idea is allowed. But not any action. Be respectful. And finally. All of you should look out for whether everyone is okay; to ensure that no one has to give up the connectedness or contact to themself and others. Again. Every one of you should develop a helicopter perspective; take account of your own

needs and other people's needs, express them and respond to them. Support each other. It is not enough that everyone is allowed to talk and be here; inclusivity is good, but it is not sufficient. In the long term, this will only work if everyone makes sure that everyone else's needs come into play; if you look after each other. Is that okay?" They discuss it. Decide that it makes sense.

Science and games – Mynttorget in September and October

In Mynttorget, too, science is everywhere. "Listen to the science" soon becomes the young people's slogan. And a scientific worldview also comes up in their conversations. During these weeks, the young people who brought the strike into the world often sit together, before the others join them, and talk about everything under the sun. About chemical elements, for example. How strange it is that the whole world is made of so few elements, and that these only differ from each other because of some electrons or protons etc. As if a stone and a carrot were closely related. How strange the scientific worldview is anyway, I think to myself then.

As soon as a sense of morning hustle and bustle arrives, with the shops selling Viking hats and cinnamon buns opening in the narrow streets of the Old Town, most of the young people form small groups and begin to discuss the situation and talk about all sorts of things. It is still warm. No longer as hot as it was in summer, when the heat was quite unnatural. We start playing "city country river". We go through the letters of the alphabet silently, A, B, C and so on, and someone says stop. Then we have to find a city, a country, a river starting with that letter. But we could also choose something else. Dogs, drinks, dishes. And so we begin to play. In the next weeks, it will become a tradition on these Fridays. Sometimes a few other people join. I have no chance. Somehow, the young ones know all the cities in the world, many, many cities I've never heard of. With dogs it's even worse, and with drinks it's funnier, because we just make them up: anything can be a drink. Kiwi juice.

Six months later, on the evening of the first global strike, the 15th of March, I ask myself how many of the cities which we listed randomly on those Fridays, from Buenos Aires to Berlin, now have strikes going on. In how many of those cities does someone leave their classroom on Fridays – whether it's one person or tens of thousands, around the globe? It is as if we had been feeling our way towards this global dimension in these initial weeks, towards a sense of all of us as inhabitants of Earth, in our dwellings on this living planet.

Then, it is already the week of October in which Greta travels to London for the founding of the new movement of environmental activists, Extinction Rebellion, and the group is in the middle of the alphabet game: a dog beginning with L? Bye, off she goes, to the Rebellion in London. Two weeks pass. She makes a speech which goes halfway round the world, at least the activist world. She stands there in London in front of the crowds, but the microphone doesn't work. Then the thousands of environmentalists do what they always do at moments like that. They become a living megaphone. The people at the front repeat loudly what they hear, passing it on to the people behind them. Greta's speech takes ten minutes instead of three, because everyone repeats everything: "When I was eight years old," she says. "When I was eight years old," roars the square in front of Westminster Abbey. But now she is back on the square and the young people go on seamlessly with the alphabet game. The strike day begins.

Emil and Alfred – what is nature and what is healing

On one of those first Fridays, in the evening after "strike time", I have to teach, so I hurry away from the square and go back through the narrow streets of the old town and take the underground to my office. I pack my papers for teaching, most importantly Astrid Lindgren's book *Emil of Lönneberga*, and go over to the building known as the "stables", because that is what it once was. It now houses our theatre spaces. This is where I teach. Not just the new course, but hundreds of future teachers.

In room 420 they jump around, the future kindergarten teachers who have landed in Stockholm from every possible country and every part of society; it's a small hall with a polished wooden floor, without chairs, with a view of the woods that come before the sea, apple trees in between. Soon they have created – as in Lindgren's book – an imaginary waiting room at a doctor's surgery, with rows of chairs. One after another, they shuffle into the room, limping or coughing, and find a place to sit. We are in a small Swedish town, we imagine, Mariannehof, one hundred and fifty years ago. I go around asking: "Who are you?" It is all improvised. Someone says: a maid. I was kicked by the cow. A farmer, I'm pregnant. A carpenter, I hammered a nail into my finger. The pastor, I'm not feeling well. And so on. Twenty groaning characters. We discuss: how did they live in that time, not very far from us, but in a different era, with a different technology, a different relationship to nature?

We act out the scene from Astrid Lindgren's *Emil of Lönneberga* in which the ten-year-old boy saves the grown-up farmhand Alfred from blood poisoning which he got from a cut in his thumb. The drama method works like this: someone reads a page, then we jump into the text, head over heels, together. We become Alfred, who is lying on the sledge in the snow, and we become Emil, who is pulling the sledge. Others become the snowstorm which delays them. And then we all become the thumb, twenty people become a single thumb, and I cut it with a wooden stick. We talk about what really happens when someone cuts their finger. What kind of "things" are in a finger, and so on, the way they can talk about it with their five-year-olds. Later we will heal again, as a thumb. Drama is not theatre, which means that no one is standing on a stage, there is no audience, everyone is always doing something, we switch roles, make backdrops and costumes ourselves.

Alfred is critically ill. We have to go to the doctor, in the town. But that's not possible, it's snowing, everyone says. It snows and snows, and the road is impassible, says the father. Everyone has to accept that. You have to accept fate, Emil. But Emil is overwhelmed by despair. It's his friend which is sick, they grew up together. What are the others doing. They're just looking on while Alfred might be dying. Who are these people who don't really take anything seriously. Who see the feverish farmhand and don't look for a solution, for a cure. Not really. That is the question we ask ourselves in the room with the polished floor; why do some people take life seriously, while others don't? What goes on in their heads? There, in the middle of the night, at four in the morning, Emil has stayed with Alfred the whole time, and he gets up, leads his horse out of the stables and lays the farmhand on the sledge. In a fit of determination and defiance. I cannot accept that no one is helping. Gustaf Gredebäck, a researcher at the University of Uppsala, examined how even some of the smallest children can show this form of empathy (Gredebäck et al. 2015). His experiments have been confirmed many times across the globe: they suggest that even six-month-old infants often have a strong impulse not to accept it when somebody is in pain, and to be annoyed by those who inflict it. At the end of the story, the exhausted Emil reaches the doctor's waiting room, and the farmhand Alfred is healed.

How strange that we can heal on our own, or that a thumb is able to heal on its own. Or rather, not quite on its own. Some wounds are too deep. But when we help people, with a plaster or an operation, a process of self-healing begins. The extent to which we are a part of nature – and the extent to which nature itself is miraculous – is probably never clearer than in a process of healing. But

we can also damage nature so badly that it cannot heal on its own anymore. Ecosystems lose their resilience, as specialists call it, my colleagues from the Stockholm Resilience Centre, among them the world-famous researcher Johan Rockström (2009). Then we heat up the oceans so much through greenhouse gas emissions that the coral reefs are permanently destroyed, and the Arctic ice melts entirely. Tipping points occur, and feedback loops, and what used to be whole can no longer repair itself. The planet, as our habitat, is then irrevocably broken, because it is too hot.

The worldview must change, at the universities, too, I think during those days. We have to rethink and reshape our fundamental relation to each other and nature. This is what a reasonable reaction to the crisis would look like; and a reaction to the young people's. What I feel after these first weeks is that they have given us a task: not to study them as an object, but to study together with them how to get out of the crises. For us as scientists, this is now the project for the next few years. Do my colleagues understand the desperation and grief of the young people in Mynttorget? Do they see the existential challenge for all of us?

In Childhood/Youth Studies research, this is referred to as the perspective of children and young people themselves and is juxtaposed with the children's perspective (see Sommer 2010). The children's perspective can and should be adopted by adults when describing the world and taking account of children's concerns. Whereas making sure that the perspective of children themselves is recognised means giving them space to speak and shape things for themselves. In accordance with this, I will keep insisting to my colleagues that we should study how we get out of the crises together with the young people.

The first Swedish strike groups are formed

In Sweden, the Fridays For Future movement begins to spread. While the young people sit leaning against the wall and enjoy the still-warm autumn sun, a few of them begin – together with some adults, such as Andrea, Janine, Torbjörn, Anders and Ivan – to write to all the Swedish communities, or more specifically to any contacts they have within the grassroots movements and climate activism, and also keep a very close look out for anything happening online. "KlimatSverige" is a great help with this; "ClimateSweden" is an alliance of all the environmental organisations, but because of a strange, happy coincidence in world history – in contrast, for instance, with the equivalent "climate

alliances" in Germany and Switzerland – it is almost a band of amateurs. It's just ten people who spend their free time in the evenings collecting information about all the other groups, writing a newsletter, and creating a network of contacts across the country. Both organisations and private individuals can be part of KlimatSverige. The amazing thing about it: the big three, Greenpeace, WWF and the Nature Conservation Union just let this little group of heroes do what they like, they don't get in the way, they don't control anything, they just provide a bit of money. That is the only reason that the young people can build on the work of this network; it has enough of a grassroots character.

Whoever comes to Mynttorget in those first weeks meets the young people first of all, and then the older activists such as the teacher Jonas, the pastor Lena, the carer Cilla, and especially Janine. Janine is from Australia and sometimes comes to the square accompanied by a good proportion of her family, but most often by one of her sons. Janine herself has worked as an engineer at Ericsson, she is very curious and wants to know exactly what is going on within the growing network of Fridays For Future. Having paid attention to climate research for a while, she is active in various climate organisations, and already in the first days she joined the strike. She networks continuously through her iPad and the emerging Facebook groups. On all topics and in all possible constellations, she creates various chats and forums, and adds all new children (and adults) from Mynttorget to these groups.

Young people from other cities appear in the chats. They, too, have had enough of their governments. The Paris Agreement is not being followed. They leave their schools: Andreas in Falun, later Tyra in Norrtälje, Alde in Gävle, the Sundsvall group; and so on. And so the first lists of strike locations emerge. Andrea, a yoga teacher, takes on the task of finding contact details together with the young people and putting them into a document. This is an embryonic version of the global map created a bit later by Jan and Jens, and which is valuable for coordinating the global strike actions. The list includes the place where someone is planning to strike, the time and possibly their contact information. At the beginning, it is just a few points on the map of Sweden, but gradually more are added. And everyone posts the successes almost daily on the newly created Facebook group page, #FridaysForFuture. This will be the first source of information for strikers in Sweden and then across the globe, and will remain the key source for a long time. Week by week, new locations pop up. And the media start to report that there are thirty and then fifty groups striking in Sweden. #FFF has become a reality. And not only in Sweden. In Berlin, too, people are striking in front of the Reichstag, and soon we discover more and more

cities and countries on social media. All of them want political change and a safer and fairer world for everyone. As strikers, they are the same everywhere. And yet: we have such different starting points and privileges in this struggle; coming from different generations, social classes, and so on.

The big task and the small one – status and privileges

Back at university. What would a more humane world be like? What role do we have in it, as adults or young people, as privileged or disadvantaged people?

We experiment a lot with the question of what is humane in the drama spaces. In particular, we come up with so-called status exercises (see Johnstone 1987): someone plays a king or queen who takes on a higher status in relation to their subjects and can ask for whatever they want. Then we continue improvising so that the subjects increase their status and the monarch's status is reduced, until they hardly dare to rule over their realm. As an exercise, both can be equally difficult, playing someone with a high or a low status – for Johnstone (1987), status is not the same as power, but a quality of relating to others, of taking up space and time, for example, often expressed by how confidently we move and speak. The students want me to join in. That reduces my status significantly, since it requires me as a teacher to get involved in bizarre situations; but it also increases my status if I'm open to taking part. I often ask myself on the way to the university: What exactly is my role as a male, white, middle-aged person from the middle classes (or the role more generally of such people)? With some of my colleagues I discuss this again and again. How should we deal with our own privileges; how should we give others space; how should we dismantle power structures?

"Give me that stool there!" a student yells at me. "Yes but…" "Give it to me. Now!" We are standing in the middle of a group of improvising students and testing a scene. It is about understanding how we might meet each other at eye level. For that to happen, we try to understand status, power and domination. "But the stool is rather wobbly," I say, testing out, as a servant, the high status of my king. What will he do now? If he has a fit of rage, he will ostensibly raise his status, but in fact he will lower it all the more: what kind of king flies into a fit of rage over a broken stool? But doing nothing would also undermine his status. What would be a truly self-assured move? He could make me try sitting on the stool and thus display and protect his sovereign position. And so we test, day in, day out, micro-transactions of domination, with body and soul, in order to get our own sense of how and when we place ourselves above others or

discriminate against them – and how we can instead work together without blocking each other (the exercises can be found in Johnstone 1987).

In this way, we practise what we can call "substantial" democracy. It is important to see that the concept and phenomenon of "status" is different from "power". Power belongs to an individual or group, whether taken by itself or given by others, in informal or formal ways, and can be exercised or not; while status is the specific relational transaction which we perform towards someone. Status can be established on the same level – low, middle, or high – or on different ones: lower or higher than the level of the other; we can call it domination if we violently lower the status of someone (or of ourselves; as submission). It is the core ingredient of oppression, in all dimensions of privilege and discrimination (including gender, ethnicity, class, etc.). The opposite of domination is not indifference, but either adopting the same status, or moving "beyond" the status struggle, which we often call "humane" behaviour. "Meeting on an equal footing" can mean either adopting the same status or creating a relationship with the other beyond status transactions – which we often call friendship.

Many children specialise in this, even very small children, according to research (Fopp 2016). If they are not valued by adults or treated with dignity, they will do anything to topple their giant counterparts from the throne. With words, with facial expressions, with disobedience, or whatever method they can use. And they are very happy if you communicate with them at two levels: if you act like you're going to be a lion and eat them up, and then don't do it. To meet each other beyond squabbles over status, we all have to practise; that is what my colleagues argue, and what I argue at our institute. It is useless to offer ethics seminars on empathy, or come up with long-winded theories about a new ethical society, or rejoice in a new "compassionate" attitude. We have also have to put these things into practice, we have to let ourselves be observed, we have to see through longstanding patterns of domination and discrimination (Ogette 2018).

Most of us don't even notice what we are doing, which patterns we have become used to and what is inscribed in our bodies and our self-image (as white and male, for instance). In our seminars, we study these microtransactions of power in world politics, too: Trump's handshake is already well-known as an attempt to put people off their stride and humiliate them; the same patterns are reflected by (climate) policies which explicitly call for "dominance" over other people and nature. "White supremacy", as represented by many of Trump and Bolsonaro's followers, explicitly refers to that dominance (see Saad 2020). An-

other dramatic example is the first interview given by the director of the oil company BP after the explosion of the oil platform in the Mexican Gulf, when he talks about the thousands who relied on fishing for their livelihood and who have lost that livelihood as "small people": people he looks down on.

When it comes to analysing these power relations, it is also useful to look at the results of psychosocial research, from Theodor Adorno's *The Authoritarian Personality* to modern intersectional theories (Meyer 2017), which show how various dimensions of discrimination (racism, patriarchy etc.) influence each other (see the chapter on corona and intersectionality). A white man has a different place in society from the man of colour, and a Black working-class woman has a different position from a rich white woman (see Collins 2019).

In our exercises, we often observe that most people use high-status positions to keep other people down; but high status and positions of power don't have to result in relations of domination. There is after all the possibility that the king could discharge me from my duties as a servant, and abdicate power, leading to a democracy. The question underlying the whole course is how all of that hangs together: how do we arrange and structure our small-scale encounters in terms of domination or being humane, in the family, in school, in university lecture halls – in relation to the ways in which we organise our shared life in the larger political spaces, when designing our economic system, for instance, but also when setting the political conditions for environmental protection, the health system and so on.

What is the ideal, the compass? Domination – we often agree – ought to be replaced with more democratic spaces, in which we can reinforce each other's strength and make sure everyone is okay and keep the caring contact to oneself and others; in which everyone's needs are seen and met, so that we all have enough to lead a dignified life and we take care of the environment (see Raworth 2018).

But there is so much getting in the way of that, I then think; there are the existing power relations and privileges. It is not enough just to claim that everyone is free and equal. That's a point we first have to reach, by dismantling the very concrete relations of domination (Saad 2020): at a micro-level in the university classroom, it is about giving everyone space for discussion, not just the three or four who are the loudest. But it can't stop there; and that is what I worry about the most after the seminars. The macro-level of power relations can be felt on a small scale in our interactions: for instance, there are barely any Black students, and no Black tutors. An invisible gulf opens up between theory and practice. Because more or less all Swedish students in the humanities,

in sociology, education and political science – that is, far more than half of all students – attend compulsory courses on "norm criticism" and intersectionality, where they learn things that the universities themselves hardly implement. Something is fundamentally wrong. There needs to be a discussion with the people in charge. We can't just talk about changes; we have to carry them out as well – that is the basic idea of the course we are offering our students. That means we also have to put it into action. That's why we don't just read texts but also work with our bodies in the room and try to bring about real, substantially democratic encounters.

At the end of October, the UN's climate researchers publish a report known as the IPCC SR1.5, a special scientific report demonstrating what the differences would be for the development of the planet if the earth became 1.5 degrees warmer rather than 2 degrees, compared with the pre-industrial era. The differences are dramatic, particularly when it comes to reaching potential tipping points. The report receives a great deal of attention, and the worries in Mynttorget grow even more serious.