Chapter 4: The International Movement Develops

December – January 2019: COP meeting and climate justice

A storm is coming

In these December days, if you were to get into a hot air balloon in Mynttorget and slowly lift off – without burning too much gas, of course – and gradually float upward further and further through air containing over 410 ppm carbon dioxide (the villainous molecules holding in the warmth of the earth), in the next weeks and months you'd see events following a pattern on the blue planet down there. Inspired by Greta's speeches or just by a picture or the rumour that there is a group of children in Sweden who are fighting back against all the irresponsible actions of the grownups' world, suddenly tens of thousands of young people are leaving their classrooms at the same time, with similar cardboard signs, gathering in the most important squares and demanding that their parents' generation finally pull the emergency brake. And even if they generally refuse to do so, they have to face the question of how they should react, as parents, as teachers, as ministers. The time of debates about compulsory education begins, about the authorities' duty to step in, keep the children in their classrooms and fine the parents. Teachers and headteachers in Berlin, Melbourne and St. Gallen are suddenly facing a dilemma. Some of them punish children so that the strike will clearly be seen as disobedient (Wetzel 2019). What is the point if the schools support it? It becomes clear in these weeks: the children have found a source of power which is stronger than all others, stronger than demonstrating, writing petitions, and occupying banks. But how do they create a united movement?

30th of November – the first largescale strike in Australia

At this time, it's obvious that the living planet is sick, especially in Australia. One heatwave after another makes people, animals, and plants collapse. On the 30th of November, ten thousand children and young people suddenly stand up and leave their classrooms in unison. It is the biggest and the first largescale strike by the movement. And it becomes the beginning of countless others, which will follow each other week after week, first in Belgium, then in Switzerland and gradually in more than a hundred countries, until on the 15th of March 1.5 million people join together for a global strike. But what came as a sensation for most people, the young people in Mynttorget had suspected already weeks in advance.

"Where is she, then?" I call. It is ten o'clock. The pictures travel round the world, showing children walking through the streets of Melbourne, Sidney, and Perth with their placards. Australia is half a day ahead of us, so they have been up for hours, and Janine is nowhere to be seen with her two teenagers. She prepared herself so well for this day, Australian that she is, together with the other children and mothers across Australia. She arrives towards midday, having had hardly any sleep. Today is not just a big day for Australia. Today Greta is going to Katowice and at the same time the other young people of Mynttorget are to hand over a demand to the city councillor of Stockholm: there must be a carbon dioxide budget and a political plan showing how emissions could decrease every year by more than ten percent. Everyone is nervous.

How is it possible that tens of thousands of young people have left their classrooms at the same time across Australia and taken to the streets? Greta's interviews and speeches were picked up by the pupils there in the past weeks. They were just the last spark in a situation that had been tense for a long time. The firm Adani had announced that it would be building a new, gigantic coal mine which would warm up the climate for decades. This led activist networks to form, and they were already used by school pupils. The weather had been out of control for a while, and temperatures of 45 degrees are no longer rare. Young people were increasingly politically aware, like their counterparts in America with their Sunrise movement. A few of them begin to get organised. They quickly build a website and reach the whole nation (see Mao 2018). Jean soon becomes one of the best-known young people and can be seen beaming into the television cameras; she finds words for all the anger at a government which is deliberately risking their future. Parents are there too – mainly mothers, in fact, as will be the case across the world in the coming months.

Along with a few NGO workers, they chat with Stockholm almost every day in the weeks before the strike and support the young people however they can. In Castlemaine, Victoria, some pupils have already started to strike on some days of the week, thus becoming a model for the others.

And then, on a cold November day, weeks before the strike, the young people in Mynttorget are sitting on their mats as usual with their eyes fixed on an iPad: there are the faces of the young people in Australia, asking questions about how to strike. How should they react to stupid passers-by, what do they need to bring, what should they sit on… The children on the other side of the world at least get the feeling that a strike is not something impossible.

The plan for the huge strike on the 30th of November becomes more solid, and then it becomes a reality. Into an overall situation that was already politically explosive – in the context of the building of the Adani Mine – the Swedish call for a school strike has come at exactly the right moment. And now, unwittingly, the activists are also helped by the conservative prime minister Scott Morrison, who declares in parliament that he will not tolerate a school strike and that pupils must attend school: "Schools are not a place for activism!" This is the best thing that could have happened. In parliament, a debate is sparked. Even more young people are mobilised and dare to join the strike plans. At the same time, an article by Greta is published in the Australian edition of the Guardian (26. 11. 2018), explaining the scientific background and also presenting information and facts to the parents' generation.

At exactly ten in the morning on the 30th of November, more than ten thousand children leave their schools, while dawn has not yet broken in Stockholm. The pictures go round the world. The movement has become international, and we are all incredibly happy. And then comes noon and chaos breaks out.

The COP24 climate conference in Katowice

We are all busy with something else when Greta quickly grabs her sign, holds it up and bounds off along the façade of the palace, away from Mynttorget. I see an unbelievably dirty car. It is right there where the sign was a minute ago. Then there's a screech, the car speeds up and turns and Greta's father sticks his head out of the window. Greta is going to Poland today, to the UN climate conference in Katowice.

The climate conference begins, and some of us in Mynttorget follow every detail on the internet. COP ought to be a meeting of representatives of the

world population, who should be able to use the best research in the world to agree fair, global political change. That is why the UNFCCC and the IPCC were founded as "global" (research) institutions of the UN. How can we live together well, fairly, sustainably, on a living planet? That was what it was meant to be about.

Climate conferences are a strange world unto themselves, at least in my experience as an activist in Copenhagen in 2009 and in Paris in 2015. For us climate activists, and for nature itself, the events of 2009 were a nightmare which seemed to paralyse us for years afterwards. For us it felt as if the non-decision in Copenhagen destroyed something irrevocably, and not only the possibility of decreasing emissions. Something broke inside us, something like belief in humanity, if you want to use big words for it. Belief in ourselves, too, perhaps. Added to this came the brutal blows of the police, who beat us up at the final demonstration. For the first time, we dared to use methods of civil disobedience, rather than just watching. We knew that Copenhagen ought to have been a turning point. The heads of government ought to have pulled themselves together, freed themselves from their nationalist sympathies, put an end to the fossil fuel regime and the lethal geopolitical games they were playing, and set a new course (see Linnér/Wibeck2019).

As representatives of "civil society", we sat around in a depressing "alternative congress centre", knowing what could happen. That the next ten years would be the warmest since records began. And that the emissions would continue to rise. Naomi Klein and George Monbiot were already heroes of the alternative scene. But they irritated some of us. They proudly announced that a unified protest movement was not necessary; that our strength lay in our plurality. Why, I wondered at the time – why? We must unite, combine all our energies. Otherwise, we're powerless. I was much more concerned with the question of how to create unity. How can we create the feeling and organisation of one shared humanity on one living planet? How can we build a united movement? Through values? Demands? Structures? Places? Back in the present, in Stockholm, I ask myself: how will the young people act now, ten years later? How do they hold their movement together? How do they express the fact that they are one connected humanity?

On science, universities, and activism

In the rooms of the university, my students follow what is happening in Poland and discuss the function of science in relation to politics as well as their own societal role as students.

When I become co-responsible for the B.A. program, creating new university courses, I define for myself the task of these studies (of drama education and applied theatre) as opening the imagination to understand and practise how to interact with each other and the environment as part of a shared, democratic, sustainable humanity. How can we as embodied, social, imaginative beings living in problematic power relations playfully explore and create humane relations? And this is what the COP should be about, I think: a place which cares for the one humanity living on one planet.

But what kind of project is that, the scientific project on which we have been working for two hundred years, at universities but also through technological research and development outside the academy? One lecture is about the relationship between science, imagination, and magic, and thus about the emergence of our modern concept of the industrialised world of nation states, which divides body from soul and separates scientists from their environment, presenting them as "neutral" observers. On the A4 sheet which Greta brings with her in the first weeks of the strike, we can read the outcome: our modern worldview may have brought with it an incredible productivity and desire for discovery, but it has also ensured that most wild animals have been exterminated, and that our lifestyle emits so much carbon dioxide that we as a species are changing the shape of the whole planet. Some people claim that the Anthropocene has begun (Hardt 2018), referring to the epoch in which nature is shaped by humans.

Can a new change take place, two hundred years after the dawning of modern science, a new paradigm shift enabling us to dissolve power relations? How politically committed can science and research be (Raffoul 2022)? Luckily, most textbooks on empirical sociology, humanities, politics and education now have chapters (Leavy 2009; Cohen et al 2017) emphasising that we researchers are also part of a natural and political environment and that we can take an "objective" view of this environment, but also act transformatively (McGeown/Barry 2023).

"Objectivity" then does not mean neutrality but includes using comprehensible methods to trace what is going on in the world; being open rather than taking a single position from the beginning; using terms that have been de-

fined; interacting critically with the field; being transparent; remaining in permanent self-critical exchange with others – but also: questioning our own positions of power, entering this environment with an existential responsibility for our privileges, in search of a more democratic world, changing our environment through research – as flesh-and-blood researchers, not as disembodied brains that don't reflect on their context (see the chapter on education).

We remain sitting for a long time in the room after the seminars and look out at the winter landscape of Stockholm. With another cohort of the course, we are performing a new English play set in a refugee camp in Calais (Robertson/Murphy 2017). It articulates the nightmarish experiences of young (climate) refugees from Syria, Afghanistan, and Congo, but also the possibility of human cooperation. The course is really about showing the students how they themselves can work through plays with children and young people. But also: what are our political roles and what does it mean to encounter people as someone who practically has no rights – or as a fellow citizen with equal rights? How can we create a global shared life with dignity for all, a worldwide convivialism?

The speech

The corridors of the COP conference centre in Katowice fill with more and more politicians and scientists, who are supposed to discuss how the Paris Agreement can be implemented in the next few years.

In October, a revolutionary report by the IPCC was published (IPCC SR1.5): what is the difference between a world that is warmer by one and a half degrees and one which is warmer by two degrees? The differences are enormous and dangerous, especially when it comes to the potentially disastrous tipping points which could push forward the warming of the earth by several degrees by the end of the century, forcing billions of people to flee (Xu et al 2020). Still, the most powerful people in the world hardly talk about leaving fossil fuels in the ground. Instead, already in the first days of the conference a scandal begins to develop: Brazil, Russia and the US do not want to "welcome" this IPCC special report, but only "take note of it"; this would weaken political decisions in the future. The Swedish environment minister intervenes at the last moment and the report is accepted by all countries – thus becoming a fundamental document for the international Fridays for Future movement. It states that to reach the goal of 1.5 degrees, the world in 2018 only has about 420 Gt of CO_2 emissions

left. That is nothing; if they carry on in the same way for eight years, it will all be used up. A sense of world citizenship would have to emerge, we think to ourselves in Stockholm. The delegates would have to wake up suddenly and see themselves as joint representatives of all people and of nature.

Thursday afternoon becomes evening. Greta is supposed to be speaking at the end of a three-hour meeting. I tune into the UN live broadcast. Some prime minister of one of the almost 200 countries is holding forth, with lots of flowery words. And everyone is going over their allotted time. Greta's turn is supposed to come at eight, but it is postponed to half past, and then to half past ten, and she has to shorten the speech and adapt it. The fact that she is even allowed to speak is thanks to "Climate Justice Now," an alliance of grassroots movements and NGOs which she is representing. So it's not thanks to the Swedish government that she's been asked to speak, or because of some powerful people, but indirectly because of the little Swedish Fridays for Future groups, which have been striking in solidarity for several weeks in around fifty different places.

The prime ministers talk and talk. Via WhatsApp, I receive from a friend a leaked version of the draft agreement between the world governments. The language is bureaucratic, half political, half scientific, and they argue over every comma. As usual, it is about the main chapter: "mitigation", meaning the prevention of global warming; "adaption", meaning adapting to the damage caused by global warming; and "finance", the financing of transformation. I stare at the document and then at the screen. We ought to be able to share natural resources, or not just see them as resources but as a shared basis for life, I think. Otherwise we won't have a future. We need a global contract right now to settle this fairly, so that fossil fuels are kept in the ground for ever.

Then Greta appears. "Hey," she says. I film the speech directly from the screen. How will it go? The speech is incredibly moving, for many people it is deeply shocking, for some perhaps annoying, and it is compact, much shorter than the speech she made at the Stockholm theatre. The speech addresses all of us with quiet, furious force, and gives people the feeling that we really can change something. Right away, the media invent some historical parallels with Jeanne d'Arc and other historical figures. And from that evening on, I am constantly worried. Is it good for a young person, being exposed like that, being famous? How can we handle it in an ethically defensible way? The climate researcher Kevin Anderson tries to shield Greta by tweeting that the celebrity cult is just one part of a corrupt society.

In Mynttorget, we try to understand the issue and to act. I'm already having trouble understanding the adults who cheer the kids on and find their strike

great, but don't do anything. This shouldn't actually be the children's job, I say to myself again and again. I'm there, not because I think it's great that they're on strike, but because for me the whole situation is wrong. They shouldn't have a reason to be so deeply frightened about their future.

Many young people across the world see the speech and are not just hit by the force but also feel supported in something that has lain dormant in them for a long time; namely the idea that they, the children, don't just have to watch. That it's not an absurd idea for them to rebel. A young person their age is speaking not just from the heart and with knowledge of the impending climate crisis, but about their lives. "I care about climate justice and the living planet." It is more like a fundamental statement by one generation to the world. It is about justice and about the perspective of children. "You say you love your children above all else, and yet you are stealing their future in front of their very eyes." "Our biosphere is being sacrificed so that rich people in countries like mine can live in luxury. It is the sufferings of the many which pay for the luxuries of the few" (Thunberg, 2019, p. 38).

Since the evening when the speech is broadcast around the world, Fridays for Future as an idea and as a global movement becomes unstoppable and changes the situation dramatically, not just in Stockholm. Thousands and thousands of children and young people have seen it. Three young people are there, and they talk to Greta in the COP corridors. Jonas and Marie-Claire from Switzerland, and Luisa from Germany meet at this time, all of them very well informed about the climate crisis and about the political background, and they sit down together and strike with the Swedish sign. They travel back to their countries and organise their peers. They force those around them to take a stand.

In Mynttorget, the young rebels are proud of the one among them who has dared to shake up the world and make everyone see why they have been gathering every week in the rain and the icy cold. They throw snowballs and stand together in the winter square between the parliament and the palace, and see in the global media what their courage and work have achieved. But hardly anyone understands that they are the ones who keep the movement going week after a week. On Friday, when Greta is back, they form a circle with her and improvise a new absurd recipe. The contrast between this circle of young people and the rows of COP delegates in their expensive, dark suits could not be greater.

The formation of "local groups" – the Swiss take to the barricades and demand climate justice

In the weeks afterwards, something happens that changes the whole movement. In a certain sense, you could say that this is the moment when Fridays for Future emerges as a structured network, not as an organisation in a way that an official association would be, but in the sense that FFF becomes more than a series of individual large-scale strikes like the one in Australia or later in Belgium. Now there are epicentres everywhere, in many places which organise strikes over months: on the 14th and the 21st of December, Swiss pupils leave their schools en masse, but coordinated, with core groups which not only organise a strike but do continual work and political education, like the "local groups" that emerge later in Germany and France.

A kind of stable organisation comes about, for the first time, worldwide; in every country in a different way, strengthening the movement as a whole: some people use WhatsApp, others Telegram; some don't work together with NGOs and youth political parties, others do; some strike every Friday, others once a month, and all of them feel part of a shared movement. In Switzerland they call themselves "Klimastreik", in France "youth for climate", in England "SchoolStrikeForClimate", but all of them can unite behind the hashtags #FridaysForFuture and #ClimateStrike.

In the square, the young people are glad to see Swiss schools going on strike. In many cities, children accept the fact that they will come into conflict with school boards, with their teachers and headteachers. At first, there are only a few people in St. Gallen who can no longer accept the inaction. Miri and a few others had seen Greta's speech in Poland, as she will explain six months later. She could almost be a twin of Isabelle and Tindra in Stockholm, a Swiss variant with American roots. She has a similar breadth of political interests – it is not just about protecting the climate, but just as much about social and global justice; and about the core group of pupils who organise. They are a real community, an "asocial network", as they call themselves. Soon, other schools in eastern Switzerland will join the St. Gallen strike. And as has been seen in Australia and later in Germany, it is a concrete political decision that helps the Swiss activists. Parliament will be discussing a carbon tax.

Already on the Wednesday after Greta's speech, a group of four or five pupils meet, some of whom don't even go to the St. Gallen *Kantonsschule*, and form a "strike organisation." WhatsApp groups are formed and within two days they succeed in mobilising four hundred of the roughly 1000 pupils in

the school. A letter goes to the headteacher, who has certain sympathies with the seriousness and the cause of his pupils and implies that he will tolerate the strike so long as it takes place near the school rather than within school grounds.

Then things move very fast: the first large-scale strike is followed by a general meeting of Swiss activists at a church in Bern during the winter holidays. The demands of the new climate strike movement are agreed; a website and a flame logo are created. The 300 participants from all corners of Switzerland follow the communication methods and values of Extinction Rebellion and YOUNGO (the youth organisation of the UN), which are brought in by Jonas, Marie-Claire and all the others: based strictly on grassroots democracy, on consensus, with silent handwaving to show agreement, and so on.

The first demand is: all greenhouse gas emissions in Switzerland have to be brought down to "net zero" by 2030. Then: a climate emergency must be declared, meaning that the population needs to be informed of the crisis and laws have to be shaped by it. And: social justice should define everything. On the controversial demand for "system change," a compromise is formulated. And similar processes happen soon everywhere in the world: in Italy, the Czech Republic, Ireland, Japan, Brazil, and so on. The worldwide movement takes shape.

Climate justice

The concept of climate justice is important for the whole global FFF movement from the very beginning – an "empty signifier," as some researchers call it, not because it is actually empty, but because many slightly different positions can be united behind it (see for different distributive, procedural, intergenerational, and regenerative or restorative aspects: Jafry 2020). It is something like a compass showing the direction. In this, the young people are joining a long tradition (Thanki 2019). In particular, at the climate summit in 2009 in Copenhagen, the phrase became an inclusive term.

The basic idea is that the environmental and climate crisis is not limited to the technical problem of global warming (Müller 2020). The crises themselves and the way we attempt to deal with them must be seen in an ethical and political context; not only in relation to a "just transition" for the workers in the fossil sectors (energy, transport etc) but also for all other people, especially in terms of the human rights of the most vulnerable.

In the core of this tradition, we can find the following analysis. A few people, especially in the Global South, are much more severely affected by the

crises; and often, they have barely contributed to CO_2 emissions (Margolin 2020). A few states (and people) are much wealthier and have better resources to avoid emissions and also to compensate for the damage. In the Kyoto Protocol, and also in the Paris Agreement, justice and equality are explicitly named as a binding compass. All states have in fact committed themselves to this.

What justice means exactly – that can be interpreted in different ways; for example, the intersectional tradition would relate it to the different dimensions of injustice and discrimination and how they affect each other (gender, class, ethnicity etc; see the chapter on corona and intersectionality). But what it is generally about, in the tradition of the climate justice text of Bali 2002 and the "climate justice" networks, is a broad view of the situation, and a stance with political consequences. It means, for example, letting those people take charge who are most affected, such as indigenous people in Brazil and in vulnerable populations in the Global South, such as Mozambique, Bangladesh and the island states which will soon be submerged.

In concrete terms, it is also about the fact that those who have already emitted more CO_2 and are also wealthier overall should contribute significantly more to the reduction and compensation of damage. That has consequences: a Swiss person causes around 10 to 14 tons of CO_2 emissions every year, but to prevent global warming, they should actually only be allowed to emit about 1.5 tons if we distributed the budget fairly. And this justice does not even yet include the broader concerns of historical debts and current wealth; in that case, richer countries would have to pay a "fair share" (cf.: Civil Society Equity Review Group 2018) into a green fund which would go far beyond cutting our own emissions.

In Mynttorget, too, we have lively discussions about the implications of "climate justice": does it mean something deeper, including looking at the system which shapes our fossil societies, in which states in the Global South deliver cheap raw materials through companies such as the Swiss Glencore, which are then sold with the support of banks such as Credit Suisse and UBS – making a profit which goes mainly to a few white male shareholders in the North? From this perspective, it is not just about who pays how much (to affected workers etc.) and who can emit CO_2 through their lifestyle, such as by eating meat or flying (through individual or national quotas, for instance); the social and economic structures would have to be changed so that these privileges and power relations disappear (Hickel 2018; and see the chapter about Economics in this book).

And in my lectures, I point out that the concept of "justice" should be supplemented by that of "being humane". We need to care, to provide enough resources for everyone, not only to get rid of problematic power relations (Fopp 2016). If whole populations in the Global South are treated as if their welfare is secondary to ours in the North – that is unjust, but it's also more than that; it is inhumane. Most of us adults in the square are plagued by a bad conscience and the knowledge of our privileges. All the more important that we change the situation. But how is that possible; global politics would have to change. Where do we start?

Making international contacts

The live stream of the Switzerland-wide meeting is as exciting as a good film. The very fact that the young people work so transparently is remarkable for many of us and ensures that those who cannot be there are still included; travel to the meeting is also paid collectively for those who don't have any resources. And everyone can follow the first hour of the meeting live on YouTube.

Can they agree, or will the movement fall apart right at the beginning? There they sit, Fanny, Paula, Matthias, Lena, Linus, Eslem and all the others, from towns and villages across Switzerland. Two who lead the meeting are Loukina and Jonas; both are about 17. Jonas comes from the Zürich area and Loukina from near Lausanne. In the next weeks and months, they quickly become two of the leading figures in the global network. The Swiss activists decide early on that they don't want to encourage "stars" to emerge (which makes the movement stronger than the movements in most other countries), and the faces making statements in the media are frequently rotated.

Soon, these two take on the planning of the first international FFF meeting, when some fractions of the EU parliament invite the young people to Strasbourg. Jonas holds together the threads of the global movement for the writing of the first Guardian article, and takes part in the Lausanne SMILE meeting. Loukina chairs together with Saoi from Ireland many discussions at the international FFF Zoom meetings, which take place every Sunday evening from now on. There, the global group works through all upcoming questions, from the planning of new large-scale strike days up to the "welcoming" of new countries which are going on strike for the first time.

Early on, Loukina also tackles a project of her own together with other activists in Canton Waadt: because politicians are failing to act, they draw up a

detailed plan of their own, a "Climate Action Plan" showing what a zero emissions society in 2030 could look like. A long, comprehensive paper emerges. Sector by sector, political actions are described: the economy, energy, agriculture, changing people's diets, developing public transport, and reforming the financial system.

And Loukina and Jonas quickly set about following the path of this climate action plan at a national level together with other Swiss people, and with scientists (www.climateactionplan.ch). In Germany, there are instead eight specific demands for the government: from switching off all coal power plants by 2030, to a carbon tax of 180 euros per ton. In Sweden, the young people insist that it is the rulers themselves who must come up with a plan; they refuse to present concrete demands. The movement should be an emergency brake and not a youth party.

One Friday after Christmas, in Mynttorget, I excitedly describe the Switzerland-wide meeting. The following week, which is stormy and snowy, the Swiss activists talk to their Swedish peers on the phone. Another piece of the puzzle has found its place. The global group of rebels is growing; a kind of community feeling is becoming ever stronger. And in Belgium, Anuna and Adélaïde have had enough of the adults' passivity and are leading thousands,

and then tens of thousands through the centre of Brussels every Thursday. Already weeks earlier, they had begun to interrupt lessons at school using the alarm function on their phones. More and more often, and for a longer and longer time. Now the anger and the desire for change have become unstoppable.

Every new strike, and every new strike location, is picked up by the group in Mynttorget on their daily trawls through social media, and retweeted once it has been checked thoroughly: is that definitely a real photo? Are there newspaper reports about the number of people on strike in Brussels? In Kiel? In Zürich? In Bangladesh? Pakistan? Are there independent sources? The movement has become international. And it is getting a reaction.

The adults' reaction

How do the adults react? Some are baffled by the force of the protests and the courage of the young people who are ready to leave their classrooms – because that's what often happens. In Lausanne, for example, Loukina walks through the corridors with her fellow pupils and calls on others to strike; in front of their teachers, they get up and go out into the streets to rebel.

Many people adopt a "wait and see" approach. Headteachers are put in difficult situations. And in the media (see Voss 2019), there is plenty of interest, but also plenty of criticism. "Do you travel by plane?" – that's often their first question. "Do you eat meat?" But the young people – and that is part of FFF from the beginning – do not allow themselves to be pushed aside as small, not quite grown-up individuals. They hold onto their perspective as a generation who are being betrayed by indifferent adults. They answer: yes, individual lifestyles play a role, a significant one. Many of them are vegans. But they also insist that it is just as much a structural problem. How are emissions supposed to go down by ten or twelve percent just by a few children flying less? They expose the critical attitude of the media as a political stance which is hostile to their generation and reduces them to consumers. And the structures – that's exactly what they can't change. They are not allowed to vote, and the political system is not built to take account of their future, the world in 40 years' time.

I am confused, sad, and angry. Why don't the older generation stand up when they see the desperation of their children? Many of my colleagues at universities worldwide are researching the causes of "passivity" in the face of the crisis; or rather the activity in the direction of the status quo (for an

overview: Stoddard et al 2021). They systematise different dimensions: the structural ones like the late capitalistic class society, including its "hegemonial" narrative of justifying exploitation; the economic power structures which influence the financial system, media, and education; the sometimes criminal lobbying and the enormous interests behind all of this for people who own the fossil fuel, agricultural and forestry industry, unimaginable wealth. But they also mention psychological reasons: the ability and need to look away and deny (Birnbacher 2022 refers to the often spatially and temporally distanced effects of actions with climate impact); and ideological ones: racism, white supremacy, patriarchy, and so on (for alternatives, see the chapter about the WEF in Davos). I would add: what is lacking is an understanding of the substance of democracy, the caring meeting on equal footing, even at universities; the reduction of democracy to formal processes, for example of elections (see the chapter about democracy). But still, I think, most people in high-income countries could act. They could stand up and organise. And I see the young people doing exactly that.

The Christmas celebration in Mynttorget

Mynttorget is one of the only places where the young people strike every week for seven hours. In other countries, they march through the city once every three weeks, but the Swedish activists keep going with this huge effort, at personal risk. They come along week after week, miss lessons, and have to catch up over the weekend. Without them, there would be no strike movement in Stockholm. But that also ties them together, not least on public holidays. Obviously, they celebrate Christmas together, Easter, Midsommar, and all their birthdays. And now, they hope that the new year will finally bring a change. What if thousands of pupils were also to leave their schools in Sweden? They are still the "outlaws", they sit on their mats and fight for their future.

On Friday evenings and on Saturdays, some of them read hundreds of notifications on Twitter. Where are strikes taking place? Who can they draw attention to? As soon as a group appears with strike placards in any town, or even better with a video clip, they tweet back. Regardless of whether it's a single child or tens of thousands. A huge collection emerges, – and so they gradually build up a global network: Bangladesh gets in touch, Japan, Uganda, the Czech Republic, France, and all the German-speaking places. They also get support from Céline in Germany, who is responsible for the German XR Twitter account.

This network stretches across the world, bringing together sad, angry, and spirited teenagers and young adults in thousands of cities, who are watching in panic as the hesitation of politicians makes their future ever darker. As soon as they use the hashtag #FridaysForFuture and mention their city or town in the tweet, they become part of the biggest ever environmental youth movement and help to spur on the other strikers.

Early on Friday, some of the Mynttorget activists turn up with advent decorations. In the middle of the square, there are two huge flowerpots with a few straggly shrubs, just strong enough to hold Christmas decorations. As always, it is absurdly cold, the wind is blowing from Lake Mälaren and trying to drag us out to sea. Despite this, they sit down between the flowerpots as they do every week, and come up with a new recipe for their fictional cooking program, taking it in turns to improvise an ingredient. This time it's a Christmas recipe:

Take one Christmas bauble,
made of plastic,
fill it with pine needles,
cut it in half
and put a single grain of rice inside it
which has to be painted green
with acrylic paint
and then add plenty of snot
and melt it over a flame.
Then it's time for a sauce made of melted snow
And spit in it one more time
Et voilà.

Almost every week, new countries are now joining the chats with hundreds of young people; the band of rebels is being formed. In the days towards the end of December, the idea emerges of organising "deep" strikes in some countries which would take place roughly every month rather than each week. That's how the Swiss are doing it. Anna and her friends from England decide on the 15th of February, and are joined by France. Luisa plans something for the 24th of January in Berlin. And the discussions about the global strike on the 15th of March continue. I'm amazed at the ability of these young people to think ahead. How brave, I think to myself, that they are agreeing on a date in the future and risking that it won't be possible to mobilise and that it will all fizzle out. But nothing fizzles out.

How to teach commitment to sustainability – playing animals

In these days before Christmas, it's finally time to teach the seminars which I prepared for the trainee primary school teachers when Greta was beginning her strike. The basic idea for the improvisation was co-created with my colleagues: the students travel to a climate conference. They can choose whether they are politicians, researchers, civil society, media people or activists. We work out the whole scientific background and they have to prepare five-minute speeches in small groups and then present those speeches – while the "media", the "activists" and so on come up with their reactions. This form of creative work seems like a wiser idea than the typical games in which people are supposed to represent the interests of a specific country, "egoistically".

At the end of the conference, I claim that everything has been broadcast live to a northern Swedish forest, the whole conference. The students become animals who have gathered in the woods and are commenting on what the humans are up to, and how quickly they've been changing the animals' habitat. There they sit, elk, bears, ants, and birds of every kind, reflecting on what they've seen. I join them as a journalist who is going to report on their conversation in a big newspaper, and thus lower my status among the students, since I'm representing a rather irresponsible species. The north of Sweden is getting warmer much more quickly than the world on average: two degrees of warming elsewhere means 4 to 6 degrees for the animals and the indigenous Sami people, whose economic existence is completely dependent on nature.

The permafrost in Russia, which is in exactly the direction of the window in our theatre space, is melting during these winters (Welch 2019). Enormous amounts of methane are released. Of all the tipping points of the earth system, the one which makes me panic the most is that such tremendous amounts of methane could potentially contribute to a three-degree increase in global temperatures – and this point may already have been passed.

In these sessions, sometimes grief takes hold, but it is a liberating kind of grief; it can be mixed adequately with anger or it can be quietly expressed. The students, or the elk, can connect with the valuable dimension within themselves, which connects us with others and with nature. Are they being led to take action? With these "multimodal" forms of learning (theatre, painting backdrops, rhetoric etc), am I teaching them "agency", "resilience" and "empowerment", as the jargon has it, the will to change the conditions of their lives and the belief in their own power to act and potential to shape the world? It seems to me that something more fundamental comes about; they are "in

contact" with themselves and others, and with an overarching humane dimension – one which is often funny – from which everything possible can then emerge (see Fopp 2016 for the difference between "being humane" and "being human"). That might also be at the root of what many people call "spirituality", which could be the core of many religions.

In these sessions, we don't just prepare ourselves, we don't just strengthen our skills, we don't just increase our knowledge, but we also just spend time together in a good way. If education is just preparation, and not life, many things go wrong, I think to myself then and look out at the winter landscape. And so we all leave for the hibernation of the Christmas holidays.

The new year begins

From then on, their outlines become clear, the European and then the global core group of strikers. Through Greta's speeches and their own national documents, they have come up with basic principles. They meet on Sunday evenings in the virtual Zoom space and for 24 hours a day in the chats, often linked together by people from Mynttorget, which becomes a kind of global hub.

During the holidays, the movement explodes across Europe and starts to become confusingly complex. What kind of structures are needed, they ask themselves. Are any structures needed at all? But most importantly: what kind of strategy? The real struggle is only just beginning. Giant companies in the fossil industry are puffing out millions of tons of CO_2 into the air, as we read every day on Twitter, supported by the banks and even by Swedish pension funds.

How is a small number of 16-year-olds supposed to tackle that? It's easy to become afraid just by thinking of the powerful people who have so much to lose. Then Greta decides to travel to Davos to meet that very elite.

The Swiss activists talk about the coming strike. They have chosen a different strategy from most other countries and alternate Fridays with Saturdays so that apprentices and parents can also join. And a week later, the Swiss pupils leave their classrooms. There are thousands and thousands of them; in Lausanne, Geneva, and Zurich alone there are 10 000 in each city mounting the barricades. The 18th of January becomes the biggest strike so far in the German-speaking region, then on the 2nd of February it is even bigger, with parents and grandparents showing solidarity and support.

The whole route along the Limmat in Zurich, which connects the train station area with Bellevue, is a mass of dots, heads, people holding their cardboard

placards. The citizens of Zurich will soon be voting in a new parliament in the city and in the canton, and what the media are calling the "Greta hype" will lead to a shift towards left-wing and green candidates. The new parliament implies that it will adopt into law the basic demand of the climate strike, net zero emissions by 2030.

Hope is growing, but with it the challenges: in these weeks, people keep appearing who want to transform the Fridays for Future plant, which is only just beginning to grow, into a hierarchical association, or who want to water down the demands. Evening after evening, the young people in Mynttorget discuss these suggestions, some of which are quite bizarre. They all refer to Kevin Anderson's research, trying to defend Fridays for Future and the ideas which come from the square against these "hostile takeovers". And then, finally, German names appear in the international chats. Behind the scenes, after Luisa's meeting with Greta in Katowice there is so much going on that it's hard to imagine: WhatsApp groups are formed, schools and youth associations join together; NGOs help in some places with infrastructure and know how. One local group after another springs up. And they plan a meeting in Berlin. In Stockholm, new helpers appear in the square and make a big difference: Helena has been dedicated to the climate for a long time and helps Greta with media relations, free of charge. She has a small PR office in the realm of popular culture, and almost from the start she is in the square during the lunchtime hours with her husband Erik, who runs an online conservation magazine.

But those who pass the young people and go into the parliament building, the ones who have the formal power to make rules for a sustainable society – they literally do almost nothing. Sweden in turn gets a red-green government in these January days, supported by the two liberal centre parties. But this government still says nothing about the call for an emissions budget, and barely comes up with any plans showing how society could become renewable and sustainable sector by sector in around ten years on a socially just basis, as set out in the Paris Agreement (Anderson et al 2020). By what means could the rules actually be changed?