

Chapter 8: The War, Fuel, and the Global Social Contract

January – August 2022: Towards a new world order
to lead us out of the crises

The war and the new world order

Then the world order changes.

A few weeks have passed since our trip to Glasgow. Christmas is over, and the UN environment conference in Stockholm is approaching, along with the first Swedish elections since the founding of Fridays For Future four years ago.

A group of activists climbs up the hill over Lake Mälaren. It is late winter 2022. They look around them, down at the lake which surrounds the islands of Stockholm, and then they continue, down into the crowd which has gathered in front of the Russian embassy. Many of them painted blue and yellow signs the previous evening, and planned to go together to demonstrate their solidarity with Ukraine. Because on the 24th of February, the Russian government launched an attack on the Ukraine, crossing the borders and beginning a terrible war – and now it is trying to mark out new territory, against international law.

How does it feel for these mainly young people, I wonder, when they have just survived the corona time and are finally allowed to leave their flats? How can we make a space in which they feel safe? How can we think up a transition to a new, safe world order together with them, and make it a reality? Because a new geopolitical order is emerging, but so is a conflict between worldviews.

For many of them, the final year of school is nearing its end. Adult life is beginning. Many were 15 or 16 years old at the start of the strike, and now they are 19 or 20. New tasks are waiting, new flats, if they find them, new relationships, and studies. The pandemic is no longer so oppressively palpable in Eu-

rope; the climate crisis is all the more so. Temperatures in the Arctic are rising to unheard-of levels. Suddenly normal temperatures are exceeded by 30 degrees (Harvey 2022). The news agency Reuters announces on all channels that 2021 was the year with the highest levels of CO₂ emissions in human history (Twidale/Chestney 2022). But they would have to sink by more than ten percent annually, at least in Europe. They are rising because coal, oil, and gas are still being extracted and burned. And all of this is connected, as soon becomes clear.

That is also the big question in all the newspaper articles about the world situation: the question of how to ensure security for everyone. Amitav Ghosh (2022) sees colonial history as the root cause of both the climate crisis and the war. In activist circles, too, connections are discovered between the two crises. The war appears to be about nationalism, authoritarian patriarchal attitudes, and the logic of energy production – but specifically also about fossil fuels and thus the causes of the climate crisis (Milman 2022). It is also, I think to myself based on my research, about the violation of spaces of integrity and of relationships which create real freedom; it is about clinging to a dominant, violent ideology.

In this sense, a different struggle suddenly emerges: the struggle over worldviews and philosophies which stick to what is dominant – and those which would make sustainability and democracy possible. In front of the Russian embassy, memories surface of the security conference in Munich in winter 2018–19, when Chancellor Angela Merkel commented on Fridays For Future for the first time. In the improvised “Q and A” section, she seemed to claim that Russian trolls were involved in the rise of the youth movement, and in a context in which she also praised the Nord Stream pipeline to Russia, the German car industry and borderless trade in general as a peacekeeping measure. And now we can read in the newspapers: holding on to the fossil society which drives climate change has not only made so many countries and their governments dependent on Russia, but is now also financing the war. The Russian gas and oil oligarchs and the regime are revealed to be closely associated with European states. An almost unimaginable estimated 80 percent of the Russian trade in raw materials takes place through Swiss banks (Parlament 2022). Material is transformed into wealth that has no physical location – an enormously lucrative business. Switzerland will then also initially reject the EU sanctions against Russia, and will only later react to protests by the international community (Pfaff 2022).

What Scientists For Future have been pointing out for years: this dependence also highlights the hesitancy of European countries to develop renewable energy, especially solar and wind power, with the necessary electricity grid. Wind and sun are free, they don't obey territorial borders and they can also be turned into energy and shared wealth on a small scale, decentrally, which means that they don't fit into the thinking, the worldview or the political and economic order which has tied together the governments of Europe and Russia in a joint project: that of corporations which transform nature into burnable commodities, through which individuals become rich in a peculiar mixture of maintaining territorial national borders, including the marking out of property, and the borderless movement of goods and money between Moscow, Zurich and London. And now, the poorest and most vulnerable across the world are paying the price for the fact that many have held onto the trade in fossil fuels and cooperated with those who do not obey international law.

Solidarity

Now, in these February days, it seems almost cynical to spend time analysing energy policies. The priority should be the people in the cities which have been bombed, and the people who are fleeing; and also our own dismay and fear. Combined with the climate crisis, the war is soon affecting the whole world. The horn of Africa is suffering from the most terrible famines (Unicef 2022). The shared fabric of integrity is literally falling apart. How can it be woven back together, is then the question, when these problems are discussed as a whole.

Only a few days later, on a Wednesday evening, the climate activists stand in Sergels torg, the main square in Stockholm, and take part in the solidarity demonstration. Those who have fled describe the horrific crimes of the war. They are real people with names, speaking to the crowd as the whole environmental movement stands in the square in front of the "Kulturhuset", the huge cultural centre which forms something like the central point in the city. The Ukrainian ambassador nods at the young people, joins them and thanks them for being there. What a good thing they have the movement and are in contact with each other, I think to myself. And: how can we comfort each other? How can we talk about this war? How can we even think about security and safety and communicate those ideas?

Ideas about a new order

During these days, researchers such as Julia Steinberger, with whom the young people are cooperating, open up a new perspective on a possible more secure order. They point out that there are actually enough resources for everyone (Millward-Hopkins et al. 2020, Hickel et al. 2022). Looking at the world from a distance, at the situation now and in thirty years – if we do react to the climate crisis – they see that it is possible to organise our shared life in such a way that everyone has enough to live a good life, without breaking the limits of the planet with an enormous “throughput”, wearing out materials and using up energy. It just doesn't work – they show – with the way in which clothes, food and so on are currently produced, or with how their production and distribution are organised in economic and political terms. Geopolitics must be conceptualised together with a new economy, they say.

This groundbreaking research seems like good news. The wrong idea of global coexistence has been institutionalised, and that idea is coming to an end – or else we have to ensure that it does, I think to myself, as the activists, young and old, climb the snowy hill and look out at the city and into their future.

Why, for example, does the UN just sit by while one of the members of the Security Council is so clearly contravening Articles 1 and 2 of the Charter, governing the protection of territorial integrity? Why does the global community not react in such a way as to ensure peace, and what could that reaction look like? How could all of this relate to a new concept of security or “stewardship”, which would include respect for autonomy as well as keeping nature intact, and distributing “resources” as something shared, as part of the commons (see Dixon-Declève et al. 2022)?

And why do no politicians go ahead and begin to create new global rules, as was at least attempted after the Second World War, with the Declaration of Human Rights and the UN Charter? It would be possible for politicians to discuss the war and the energy crisis, but only if this new global framework, which is political and democratic in the broadest sense, is debated at the same time. Instead, many seem to be cobbling together quick solutions for how new gas, new coal, and new oil can be extracted if Russian fuels are soon no longer available.

How can we make it possible to shape the world on the basis of transnational justice, and at the same time respond to the environmental crises?

At exactly this moment, the world is looking to Sweden when it comes to the environment. Fifty years after the first international environmental conference of all, opened by Olof Palme, the anniversary conference Stockholm+50 is coming up. Many people are wondering how the idea of a new post-fossil world order can be advanced in concrete terms. What should really happen when the governments of all countries meet? How might we be able to present a new global social contract? In the coming weeks, we all learn a lot: about ways in which the UN might be reformed, but also about ways of building a radically new, global community.

The Fossil Fuel Treaty group and the social contract

Every Thursday evening, before the weekly Friday strike, the older adults in the People For Future group meet up online. Some of them belong to Scientists For Future, others to Parents For Future, and others to Artists For Future, while others don't belong to any particular subgroup.

Many of them work closely with the “Fossil Fuel Treaty” group, the group I stumbled on back in Madrid during the COP conference, which is guided by the model of the nuclear disarmament treaty. It is a team of researchers, politicians and activists who want to establish an international treaty for a just end to the fossil society (www.fossilfueltreaty.org). Would that be a solution for the new global security policy?

We have to expand the Paris Agreement, they argue, because it says nothing about the background of the crisis, the burning of oil, gas, and coal. Many of them want to come to the conference in Stockholm. The goal: cities and countries should join the new treaty. This treaty should first of all bring about an immediate moratorium on all new fossil infrastructure. There can be no new oil drilling, no new pipelines – and no financing of such projects. The next focus is the dramatic annual downscaling of fossil infrastructure, including the expansion of renewable structures worldwide (with the UNEP Production Gap Report as a guide). And these two points should, thirdly, be connected with a fair global transformation (from finance to a new economic order between the Global South and North), through which workers in the fossil sector should also be helped (see Appendix).

A great deal has happened since Madrid, when I sat in a dark theatre with about twenty researchers and activists. I kept in touch with the people involved, and my own research often overlapped with their work. Many city

governments have officially joined the call for a treaty: Barcelona, Vancouver, Paris. And more than one hundred Nobel Prize winners have joined, too (Garric 2022).

Many of the young people are campaigning for a new social contract worldwide, together with Brenna Two Bears and other representatives of indigenous populations. Loukina from Switzerland – part of the steering committee – is pushing the developments forward in Swiss cities, together with a small group. So, in next to no time, a very active international organisation has emerged under the direction of Tzeporah Berman from Canada – with a communications team, research, and representatives in all continents, including specialists in questions of global justice.

Many are working specifically on the “Marshall Plan” policy which would be necessary: from policies in all sectors (such as establishing local renewable energy systems owned by communities themselves), to proposals for systemic change, including global, unconditional basic services, a circular economy, debt forgiveness for MAPA regions, or a basic income (Hällström 2021). Environmental organisations across the world, such as Friends of the Earth and the For Future groups, adopt the idea of a Treaty Initiative and form local groups. Soon, behind the scenes, diplomatic paths lead to more city governments being convinced, as well as countries such as Vanuatu. They publicly demand a treaty and join the project for a new global order. And now the project might reach a bigger breakthrough in Stockholm.

But at the meetings, one challenge keeps on being discussed. It is not enough if individual cities and countries are won over to this new order beyond the fossil society. Why should the governments of oil states suddenly cooperate and transform their economies? That is hardly likely to happen, I argue, unless we simultaneously create global pressure and worldwide solidarity from the streets.

So a plan is formed. We need a dual approach: the grassroots movements should be expanded worldwide, with the help of FFF, XR and PeopleFF. They can create pressure for this new order, partly through civil disobedience, and they can push for system change, while the Treaty group works with civil society and from within at a political level to organise binding legal changes. The idea behind both approaches: we have to make this notion of a shared humanity and a shared humane attitude visible in the first place – a humanity which lives on one planet and actually has enough resources, if we organise them carefully and justly, and are fair in our dealings with each other.

Sometimes during these weeks, I think about the website on which – in the year before the school strike – I naively outlined and called for a conference, somewhat different from the Treaty group. Because the global community could put an end to the worst fears in one day. It could agree what quantity of coal, oil, and gas should be extracted where (and what should be left in the ground), so that we can be sure that we have control of the quantity which will not lead to more than 1.5 degrees of global warming. Then, practically overnight, the main danger would be averted. That would be possible. Such a decision can be imagined. But we don't have the organised global community, the order that would be necessary to make such a decision. Not yet.

A new scenario – the four secret rooms

While we older ones work on this plan, a year of strike preparations and marches begins for the young people. Strike activists across the world have agreed on the 25th of March as the next global day. This will be followed by the strike on the 3rd of June during the UN environmental conference. And the Friday directly before the national elections on the 9th of September is also planned in for the Swedish activists.

That is how the plan looks for the climate activists. In addition, as the “Aurora” association, they want to prosecute the state for doing too little against the crisis, and for not behaving fairly in a global context. And similar things are happening across the world, in all local FFF groups, in metropolises and tiny villages. In the regions most affected by the climate crisis, other protest forms are often sought and preferred, because strikes are often too dangerous. From there, many of the young people make their way to the conference, to visit the Stockholmers whom they know so well from the chats, and who have spent months preparing for the days in June.

What ought to happen during the three-day conference? We need a scenario for what ought to happen within and outside the trade fair site in the south of Stockholm. I set out to write a scene that aims to make the problem clear. Couldn't the cultural institutions of the city focus on this – on what ought to come out of such a global, new social contract – and present the results during the conference, also as a reaction to the war? An email with my scenario soon lands in many inboxes. The Royal Dramatic Theatre reacts with interest. It is located in the centre of Stockholm, almost within eyeshot of Mynttorget. In a conversation with two interested dramaturgs and directors, we decide to

form a group of theatre people who will take up these questions and develop projects. We need a new story, without drifting into propaganda or instrumentalising art.

For the meeting, I have sketched out the following basic scene: passers-by go past four rooms and hear conversations and debates arising around this new social contract. In the first room, a transformation plan including CO₂ budgets is being formed, and reductions in emissions are being broken down, across the system and in all sectors; in the second, the stopping of the fossil industry and the regeneration of forests and soil beyond the production of animal protein is being determined, inspired by what the Treaty group has been working on every day; in the third, the discussion is about providing for everyone's basic needs and organising fair sources of funding, so that everyone across the world has enough resources and infrastructure for a dignified life beyond poverty and hunger, including cooperation on financing a renewable energy system (Jacobson 2019; Teske 2019).

But the most important room is the fourth one, to which the people in the other rooms are constantly hurrying. There, the questions of global justice are discussed, questions of an intersectional analysis of structures of domination, the deepening of democratic processes, and the legal restructuring of our current order, including that of the UN: how the charter could be reshaped and peace could be secured; how reparations and debt forgiveness could be organised, as well as a fair reorganisation of the flow of resources between the Global North and South; how to distribute the CO₂ budget fairly, as well as help for workers in the fossil sector; in short, how the crisis plan should look which will make our global society sustainably and democratically fair. The fictional passers-by listen, are drawn into the debates and set out the conditions which should characterise this new social contract.

And that is really what the members of the Fossil Fuel Treaty Group are aiming for. Soon, a first group of countries is to make a start and establish a prototype for this new cooperative world order. This is about a kind of global democracy which will extend the model of compromise between national and often nationalist governments – as well as circumventing and replacing that model.

What about the UN Security Council?

At this moment, a new group turns up which says: aren't there already instruments to shape global politics in this way? This is all taking far too long. Don't we already have the Charter, the General Assembly, and the Security Council of the UN? Why should we now suddenly develop a completely new form of international cooperation for safety and security?

During these weeks, some Scientists For Future get in touch who have been researching this question in the context of Security Studies. They organise a meeting at the Marc Bloch Centre, an institute for social studies and the humanities at the Humboldt University, with the title, "The Climatization of International Peace and Security". How can we approach the climate crisis, the war and security for young people together, through a reform of the UN? This question is raised, among others, by the researchers Judith Hardt, Anne Di-enelt, and Adrien Estève. They are also in contact with Louis Kotzé (2022), who has a published key research on this question, as well as with researchers and decision makers in all the countries represented in the Security Council. But does it even make sense to hope for a solution to this question from the very top of the UN, or to work on such a solution? Which texts and which parts of the law would have to change, and how?

Apparently in the context of the work of the Security Council there is a "draft", a sketch of a redefinition of what should be understood as security, the researchers report, so that the climate crisis is better integrated (this is also a subject of research for the Secretary-General's High-Level Advisory Board on Effective Multilateralism). However: the Security Council is not a democratic reflection of the world population. And this sketch seems to be full of holes. The causes of the crises, for example, are entirely ignored. There is no mention of climate justice, and only the effects of the crises, such as migration, are discussed. The rights of future generations and of young people are deliberately not mentioned. The focus is almost entirely one-sidedly on the security of states, and barely on the security of people or nature beyond state organisations, at most when populations are threatened by regimes so that humanitarian interventions might be necessary. The concept of security itself is understood in a truncated, military and "masculine" way, according to some, so that the existential dimension of help with poverty, drought, floods, and social conflicts is missing (see Hardt et al. 2023).

At least the researchers also say: while there may not be any legal framework within the UN to create security in relation to the climate and biodiver-

sity, there certainly would be potential for this, through resolutions, for instance; through changes to the Charter, or through the invention of new institutions such as a new court to supervise the implementation of the Paris Agreement – for which the Paris Agreement would have to be expanded. There is no legal basis *per se* which would place limits on this; there is only a lack of political will to think beyond conflicts between nation states.

A reform of the security council's decision process is also not in sight, but it is possible. It could prioritise protecting people and nature, not only states, perhaps through the softening of the veto power and a more democratic representation of the populations of all countries. It is also unlikely that the General Assembly will be equipped with more rights, according to the prognosis; after all, it consists of governments which are often nationalistically motivated, and which often precisely do not see themselves as the joint representation of one whole human race. And even more dangerously: behind all these processes loom think-tanks and private economic actors which want to present the environmental crises as if they could be solved by private military means, according to Adrien Estève. These problems are also reflected in the other UN organisations which are directly responsible for dealing with the climate crises, including the UNFCCC, the framework for the COP meetings where the nations cannot even agree to name fossil fuels as the problem.

That is why the Fossil Fuel Treaty Group was formed – as a kind of answer to the failure of officially established international cooperation. Because a top-down process from the Security Council, the UN General Assembly and the COP meetings is not going to lead to any binding guarantees of security for human beings or for the planet, a new social contract is needed: so that the towns, regions, and then individual countries can try “from below” to join together gradually, with help from civil society and from mass movements. Despite this, the Scientists argue in Berlin, it clearly makes sense to push for the radical democratic reform of the UN. Again and again, they argue against the Treaty Group: why should gas and oil states ultimately join, if all of this is organised voluntarily “from below”? Isn't the same thing happening here as with the treaty for nuclear disarmament, meaning that those who ought to be the first to make a move, because they own such weapons, are the ones who don't participate? The Treaty Group disagrees. They insist that the UN is not acting, and that moral pressure needs to be built up so that oil states are seen as rogue states. So the arguments go back and forth.

And soon it is possible to see that in June, during the environmental conference, neither the Fossil Treaty Group, nor the proposals to reshape the UN will

be able to take on an official role. All such applications, which spend months going through the official channels, are rejected in the final weeks before the conference by the representatives of the Swedish government, the host of the conference.

Thus, the global FFF group which is preparing for the conference in the chats only finds its position confirmed: a third way is needed, global cooperation from below in the form of a disruptive mass movement. What FFF and XR have built up in the previous years must be expanded further and broadened: as a form of organised people power. And so, they plan the march through the city, including a program of events on stage, anchoring this plan in the worldwide chats – as a small step in the multiyear strategy to strengthen an uprising of quite ordinary people from below; of schoolchildren and all concerned adults, led by those who are most affected.

The idea of a second chamber – cosmopolitanism and global democracy

One question remains unanswered. These approaches still adhere to a model that is mainly based on nation states with their nationalist governments. What if we need to anchor democracy in transnational thinking?

Taking their cue from this idea of bottom-up global democracy, other activists are also searching for ways in which the basis could be changed, which other approaches leave untouched: how citizenship and democracy can be expanded and defined worldwide; how borders and spaces of freedom, ownership and the stewardship of nature can be redefined on the basis of cosmopolitanism (see www.globalassembly.org; for a philosophical debate on cosmopolitanism, see Hooft's (2009) discussion of classical analytical texts by Scheffler, Rawls, Nussbaum and others).

An element of this is the question of how decision processes can be changed at a global level; for example, by creating a “global assembly” of representative but ordinary people. Some say that this could parallel the UN General Assembly formed by heads of state, as a “second chamber”, while others say that it could replace it. Some like the idea that the ordinary parties which compete locally, nationally and (for example) at EU level should also come up with global policies, so that a global Green New Deal could be established, for instance (Taylor 2021). But many dread the prospect of a Star Wars-inspired world government

which would trump the national and local levels – most focus more on a grass-roots democratic path such as that of the global assembly.

The idea of a “second chamber” becomes increasingly influential in the movements and takes on a central role in democracy research (Pelluchon 2019): what if we invent a second chamber which could also become part of global, local and national parliaments? It would be composed of people chosen at random but representatively, who would be guided by scientific climate and justice experts and advocates for children, for nature, for non-humans and for future generations, and would develop plans and reach decisions – which cannot simply be ignored, as currently often seems to be the case with such citizens’ councils (for a critical analysis, see Machin 2023). This would mean that there would be a kind of guarantee that planetary and human limits as well as the dignity of all people would be taken into account – a democracy “task force” chamber, for which the grassroots movements could stand up until it is established at all political levels. The substantially democratic idea of the second chamber would give the demands of the climate movements for citizens’ assemblies (Extinction Rebellion; Last Generation; Global Assembly; Occupy; etc.) a permanent democratic form.

All of that often sounds utopian to the researchers in Security Studies, who point out that such processes of transforming democratic infrastructure take an incredibly long time – and even then, there is the problem that in a certain sense these assemblies simply reflect unjust power relations, such as between classes, rather than dismantling them. Workers’ movements have pointed this out (Bell 2020).

Geoengineering: the balloon stays on the ground

From one day to the next, this struggle for a new world order and different worldviews, which had seemed so abstract, suddenly becomes very concrete.

Once again, the Fridays and People For Future are on a Zoom call, this time together with representatives of many environmental organisations in Sweden. Researchers linked to Harvard professor David Keith want to use the space station in Kiruna in northern Sweden, of all things, to conduct the world’s most important experiment in “solar geoengineering”. A balloon is to be sent high into the sky. It could theoretically distribute sulphur particles, later, as a possible step in a gigantic experiment. The sun would be dimmed for years – or forever – and thus the temperature on earth would be reduced; as well as droughts

and floods. Some scientists see such an intervention in nature as unavoidable if emissions cannot immediately be stopped – otherwise, billions of people will be exposed to lethal heat.

Here, different worldviews collide, I think to myself on the Zoom call. Could this be the biggest debate of our time – whether we should continue to insist on using a specific form of technology to intervene, subjugating nature and concentrating power in the hands of a few, or whether we should try to find our way to a new form of cooperation between nature and technology, by deepening democracy globally?

The experiment seems to be the counter-model to democratic cooperation between nature and technology – in a crude form which brings together economic interests and research. Individual researchers have an interest in profiting from these projects, and many private universities often are closely associated with the fossil industry.

The opposite philosophical model would focus on a sustainable democratisation of the energy sector and the economy, on fair ways to put a stop to emissions, and on making essential resources available to everyone equally (on this, see Dixson-Declève et al. 2022). Instead, researchers, think-tanks with economic interests, and whole scientific academies such as the American “National Academies of Sciences, Engineering, and Medicine” (NASEM) as well as well-known journals, are demanding that the global community research how to obscure the sun with small particles for ever (Voosen 2021). This might mean that we never see blue sky again.

At the meetings of the environmental movements, leading researchers gather and exchange the most controversial arguments. After thorough investigations, some of them decide to stop this technological quick fix process. That is why they are now all on a Zoom call, thinking about how the balloon experiment can be prevented. Should they travel to the space station in the forests of northern Sweden and block the way?

In some activist contexts, doubts spring up: what is really so bad about this experiment, some people ask. It is just an experiment, after all. And if it is realised, it can be used as an emergency brake when the earth is burning and billions are dying. Isn't it better never to see blue skies again than to make billions of people go without water?

The specialists point that a widespread use of geo-engineering, towards which this experiment would be a first step, faces massive problems in terms of ethics, politics, physics, and tactics (on these arguments, see Biermann et al. 2022; Hållström in Thunberg 2022): as a technological quick-fix, geo-

engineering would draw decision-makers' focus away from what should be the main priority: avoiding carbon emissions. Reliance on geoengineering means also that our dependence on technology could never be stopped: a sudden heat shock would follow any interruption in the artificial regulation of climate. Geoengineering would thus make humanity's future dependant on technologies that would likely be controlled by a few powerful corporations. Besides, keeping the infrastructure necessary for continuous geo-engineering seems entirely impossible in global political terms. Finally, unpredictable consequences of geoengineering could be negative for various parts of the world. For example, the monsoon rains in India could suddenly change their pattern. Who decides on which risks should be taken, by whom? The UN Security Council?

Another problem: the acidification of the oceans and many other things will not be affected at all by this "solution". Whereas those could be solved by a radical reduction in greenhouse gas emissions, by stopping the burning of fossil fuels. "Wouldn't that be a real solution?" an activist asks the world-famous physicist Michael Mann, who developed the hockey stick graph which illustrates global warming and CO₂ increases (CIEL 2021).

What we could instead think up and realise, I think then with my research in the background, would be a humane technology that would be compatible with nature, interacting with it gently, protecting ecosystems (see Vetter 2022); and a basic attitude which anticipates problems and acts preventatively. And focuses on democracy, unlike the suggestions of Bill Gates (2021), David Keith, Elon Musk, and Mark Zuckerberg, whose purely technological approaches without real consideration for democracy shape the climate debate during these months. Many activists are very concerned that mainstream society will suddenly be convinced by their attitude and that the world really will drift in the direction of geoengineering; that all of this will be normalised. (And in these months, most of them shift entirely to open source tools, away from the capitalist-organised tech platforms Twitter, Meta, Alphabet, etc.)

Finally, this most renowned of geoengineering projects is successfully stopped. The process is led by a few organisations of indigenous populations in northern Europe. Led by Åsa Larsson Blind, they write an open letter to Harvard University – or rather, to the ethics commission which is supposed to be monitoring the project (Goering 2021). This startles the commission, and the project is postponed indefinitely. The earth thus seems to be more than just a territory to be controlled – it is a place for life.

The five dimensions of convivialism

At the university, I brood on the previous weeks: the worldview behind “geo-engineering”; the relationship between technology and nature; the war and Security Studies; the crises and the scene I wrote, which was supposed to propose a new social contract.

I try to develop the perspective which still often seems to be missing, and which only becomes apparent to me at all in conversations with the young people and with indigenous activists and thinkers. It is a kind of compilation of collective knowledge, or joint research. Central to this is the idea that we should think about states and geopolitics by connecting this thinking with the studies of what people regard as a “good life”; what enables them to live and be in contact with themselves, with nature and with others, without shutting down because of fear, poverty, hunger, or violence. The social and political spaces which make this possible are the ones which enable substantial democracy, along with the protection of the essentials of life beyond power relations.

With that, we end up at a different point of departure from most of the theories of “global governance”, which argue that we have to leave aside the sociopsychological and anthropological and ecological conditions of life, either for reasons relating to the political “reality” or for reasons of “liberal” caution about colonial universalisations of values.

But anyone who argues in this way is arguing from a purely formal understanding of democracy, and neglecting crucial aspects of the question of how a political order can be scientifically justified at all. Can we just “elect” certain worldviews and ideas about global cooperation, or do investigations of reality offer us a framework to measure this? What is the point of a science of democracy? How should we measure a successful way of living, globally? And if we have found the framework, what form of society results from that?

I try to record the whole picture in a kind of table. First of all, the form of society can be called “convivialism”, based on a French research tradition (Adloff/Leggewie 2014). On the structural level, it is characterised by the dismantling of relationships of domination. This means that it can be combined with a post-growth economy which does not force us into an exponential throughput of material and energy, but instead means treating what there is or what we create in a caring, regenerative manner. There should be enough resources for everyone, without the underlying ecosystem being exhausted.

Secondly, a shared project for humanity becomes visible through this (the repairing and weaving of a common fabric of integrity), which connects us with

each other historically: with all interactions that damage us or make it possible to develop a space of integrity. We can work on this fabric: for instance, the Global North can cancel the Global South's unfair debts, and the economy can be reshaped so that it is no longer based on exploitation. Thirdly, the form of society and this fabric are thus connected with the project of helping each other develop social and individual spaces of integrity (education, health, etc.). Fourthly, through this, exploring and creating "connectedness" becomes central; meaning gentle contact and democratic exchange on an equal footing, as research in sociopsychology and neurophysiology has discovered and could discover further (Stern 1985; Immordio-Yang 2015; see the chapter on reorganising universities). And fifthly, this can then be described on a level which combines all these aspects and aims to capture them: humanity and integrity as a replacement for dominant relationships with the self and the world. From there we can develop a new thinking regarding property, rights, nature, and making democracy possible in political structures, including transnational cooperation.

Thus, at the institute, we incorporate the question of sustainable coexistence, by endeavouring to connect the smallest scale with the biggest: the way in which we can successfully meet each other through substantial democracy, as parents and children, or as people in educational institutions by ensuring that we do not force people to lose contact with themselves and others, and by fostering a "humane energy" (Fopp 2015) – and the way in which cooperation between states or supranational democracy can be organised. Seen like this, institutionalised political structures at a local, national, and global level would have the task, as "formal" structures, of enabling substantial democracy, meaning encounters on an equal footing, in freedom and equality.

If we look at the theories in the realm of political science, international relations, or global governance, some of them claim to be descriptive (realism, liberalism), while others offer a normative compass. This approach here does the latter, attempting to combine intersectional approaches (queer feminism, postsocialism, postcolonialism) with ecological perspectives (theories of sustainability, posthumanism etc.) and to find common ground. If we understand what allows us to open up a space of integrity for each other and develop it by organising our lives – using rules and resources – in such a way that this is possible for everyone, then we have a compass which also helps to determine how the higher levels should be arranged, such as the organisation of social spaces and the global political order. The proposal is therefore: the compass is

already provided by the way in which we humans work, because we are capable of losing democratic contact with ourselves, of breaking it off or restoring it.

Nature as property or as “commons”

But how to make this all happen? Not in an utopian world, but here and now? Many of the young activists are working with a proposal from the Earth4All group which takes a similar line. They want to redefine how we treat nature globally, and thus create security and a new global order. Nature should not be treated primarily as private property, but as the “commons”, something we have to look after together (Dixson-Declève et al. 2022).

The Arctic, the rainforests, the permafrost regions, all these sensitive ecosystems which are approaching devastating tipping points so rapidly, ought to be assigned to all of us or to no one. Anyone who “uses” them should pay a contribution which goes into a fund. From that – some of us continue the thought experiment – it would be possible to pay for global basic services (living space, transport, education, health) or for a basic income (Bidadanure 2019). This would help fight poverty and hunger, according to this approach. This is compatible with the core idea of the Treaty Group and with the cause we are fighting for in the global movements.

Two interpretations

But when considering this proposal, it seems to me that there are two ways of interpreting the basic idea which aims for “cooperation between all of humanity on one planet”. The point of departure seems to be the same in both cases. The climate crisis and satisfying everyone’s basic needs should move to the centre of global cooperation – and this should take place through the redefinition of nature and how we provide resources to each other and distribute them.

The basic idea seems plausible to me: the big ecosystems should be defined as commons, and in that sense the approach would be close to some indigenous traditions which have long inspired many activists. But the form this takes in political and economic terms still seems problematic. In their approach to the commons, Dixson, Göpel, Gaffney, and Rockström take their cue from Elinor Oström’s theories and start from the assumption that this is mainly about limiting the use of shared resources. However, this means leaving aside the actual

concepts of nature (as anything other than a “resource”) and of property (in John Locke’s tradition, as something we can dispose of and abuse), as well as the concept of integrity. It is mainly about restricting exploitation and damage.

A different – partly complementary and partly competing – approach would be to take a “holistic” and “structurally relational” view (Shiva 2020). This would mean asking how we can prioritise the regenerative treatment of nature, so that all people and non-humans can live a dignified life together beyond relationships of domination: this would entail providing enough resources for all. Rather than primarily starting from the limits that are to be placed on whichever capitalist markets and forces, we would focus on the fact that nature does not primarily belong to anyone and that it can be preserved for everyone by everyone and treated regeneratively. That involves focusing on our relationships with each other and with nature (and not only how nature is separated from us and commodified), and on what a more sustainable relationship with nature would be.

Or in terms of formal and substantial democracy: this is once again a complementary approach to the individualistic non-relational logic of formal democracy, as reflected externally in property law and election procedures. The new, relational logic of substantial democracy prioritises a caring “metabolism” and a democratic process of exchange. All the terms we use can be adapted to this thought: this is no longer about a capitalist market (1) in which users of resources (2) ought to be limited by boundaries (3); it is not an appeal (4) to collective responsibility, to “stewardship of ecosystems”, and it is not only about sanctions for “free-riding” (5) – but instead it is about the regenerative organisation of non-dominant exchange, a productive kind of metabolism which allows full contact in a framework in which everyone’s needs are met. From this point of view, forests and so on don’t belong to anyone, not even to themselves (contrary to Wesche 2023). They are not “things” which we all “share as resources”, but something different; they are the environment in which we live together and which feeds us, if we don’t dominate it but instead help to regenerate it.

Legally and politically, parts of these two models of nature as “the commons” (the model of Earth4All and the one sketched here) are complementary and can be realised immediately. However, other parts are mutually exclusive, especially when it comes to the underlying political economy (see Appendix). Still, both are based on a new, different view of the earth as the home of an interconnected humanity.

The poster, the police officer, and the UN conference

And so, early summer arrives. The Russian regime continues its war. Report after report comes in of terrible atrocities and suffering. What do the young people feel, I ask myself almost every day.

In Stockholm, the UN conference is drawing ever closer. Posters are designed. On two or three afternoons after school and university, the young activists walk through the city and stick them to walls and bus-stops, bridge parapets and houses, in the most impossible places, sometimes under the noses of the police. And the police don't know whether they should intervene when they see the familiar Fridays For Future faces. "You're making sure you follow the rules, right?" one of the police officers puts it, after some hemming and hawing. They laugh and move on, heading for the universities. These poster actions are a way for them to release the tension of the war and the crises, I think to myself, as I try to stick a poster to the wall of the university and end up sticking my thumb to the wall instead. But there are only a few funny moments like this which make the heavy atmosphere all the more noticeable.



The UN conference in June runs its course without any results at all. For the meetings of the Treaty Group, the conference is relevant, even though many of them take place outside the conference site. New cities soon join the global social contract.

Fridays For Future combined with People For Future are actually able to mobilise people on Friday the 3rd of June. The march starts close to the grand building of the city library. The MAPA activists from Brazil, Argentina, Kenya, Mexico, the Philippines and all the countries which are already affected by the crisis walk at the front. Behind them walk the Stockholmers, thousands of them.

A democratic global convivialism would approach and enable security and peace in a new, transnational manner. How would it be established?

First, an "Article Zero" in the UN Charter ought to describe us as an inter-dependent population on an earth which we must look after together, with all the consequences this would have for a stewardship of the commons (Dixson-Declève et al. 2022: "Earth4Aall") and for the global rights of citizens. Security should be redefined in all documents and realised through peaceful approaches, guaranteed through a democratically reorganised Security Council.

The General Assembly can be expanded through a "second chamber": through a Global Assembly, a grassroots democratic reflection of populations, which would also integrate care of children, non-humans and future generations, as well as scientific insights into the crises; and so would add a substantial crisis task force dimension to formal democracy, which would protect people and not just states, and legally control the implementation of the Paris Agreement. This "second chamber" (citizens' assemblies guided by scientists, which would pay attention to planetary limits and the needs of all, as well as incorporating responsibility for future generations, children, and non-humans), can also become part of the structure of local and national parliaments. This would mean that an element of "shared humanity" would be integrated into existing structures of political decision making.

Secondly, cities, regions and countries can join together "from below" without waiting for the UN, and can establish a new international social contract, a treaty to dismantle fossil fuels (www.fossilfuelstreaty.org), which is already in place in hundreds of locations. It firstly demands an immediate moratorium on all new fossil projects including their financing; secondly the downscaling of existing infrastructure, following the Paris Agreement, and thirdly, that this should take place on a fair basis, within and between countries, so that all people have fundamental security during this transformation, perhaps through universal unconditional basic services which would be financed

by defining critical ecosystems globally as “commons” and ensuring that they can only be used if a fee is paid (Earth4All).

But thirdly, and most importantly, pressure needs to be built up from below, from the streets, and grassroots movements for climate justice such as FFF, XR and PeopleFF must be strengthened so that they can use civil disobedience and other nonviolent means to enable the masses to stand up for a peaceful, globally democratic society and establish a crisis plan (see Appendix). Local and transnational democratisation can be regarded as the core of these demands – as well as being the key element of internal organisation in the movements themselves.

In March 2022, Antarctica is suddenly 40 degrees warmer than normal, completely beyond what was imaginable (Samenow/Patel 2022). The new IPCC report chronicles the global injustice dimension associated with the climate crisis (IPCC 2022). The Amazon is still being deforested at record speed (Spring/Kelly 2022). Europe and America are relying on new oil and gas infrastructure to compensate for the lack of gas from Russia. At the same time, millions of dollars in daily payments continue to be made to the regime in Russia for fossil fuels, while the country continues to wage war on Ukraine (AP 2022).

In the weeks of July, the whole of Europe suffers from enormous heat, exceeding 40 degrees. Many young people want to take part in the FFF meeting in Turin, but change their plans because forecasts predict 38 degrees.

In Europe, large rivers are almost drying up, including the Rhine and the Loire. The Yangtze in China is drying up (EUSI 2022).

Research shows how emissions and the climate crisis are making such disasters more frequent and more intense (Abnett 2023).

By the end of August 2022, a third of Pakistan is under water. Thousands of people are killed or injured, 33 million are affected (UNHCR 2022).

The forests in Portugal and California are on fire. Thousand-year-old trees are being burnt to ashes. New record temperatures are being measured in the UK and many places around the world, obliterating the old ones (Copernicus 2022). Soils are degraded; whole crops and the basis for the coming years are being damaged, especially in the Horn of Africa. Enormous hunger is spreading (WFP 2023).

