

Chapter 5: Davos and the World Economic Forum

January – February 2019: What is valuable and what is a science of economy?

Davos

The crisis must first be established as a crisis in people's minds; this is still the young people's basic idea – in the minds of ordinary people, and of the people in power.

Davos is located high up in a wide Alpine valley. For several years, it has been the home of the World Economic Forum: the meeting of the “masters of the world”, as described in a tweet by Naomi Klein, climate activist and architect of the American plan for a “green new deal” (Klein 2019). Here, the world elite in finance, politics and the economy meet annually for a conference at New Year. Behind closed doors, deals are done (or at least arranged), new networks emerge, and ideas are exchanged.

Meanwhile, with my students, I'm sitting in a seminar room at the university, watching the official livestream of the World Economic Forum in Davos, often in the breaks between lectures, but also as part of my seminars on sustainability, democracy, and theory of science. Between the ever more frequent news reports on Greta's arrival from the Swiss media, the monitors in the seminar room show images of the various conference rooms in Davos. Rich people present their latest ideas for how the world could be a better place. Among them are those who run the hundred joint-stock companies that produce more than 60 percent of greenhouse gas emissions (Riley 2017). Aren't they the ones who should instantly be changing their business model? Or is it actually about the politicians who are legitimising that business model? The people who have gathered here could set the course for a real transformation. Could they change our democracy fundamentally, we ask ourselves in Stockholm. “Ideas about the

21st century economy.” “The future of education.” “AI: opportunities and risks.” Those are the names of the panels.

If we want to understand the real reasons for the climate crisis, and also how we can get out of it, I think as I watch the screen in the university, then perhaps the most important step is understanding this. The logic behind this little group of people, the workings of the financial sector and how it is intertwined with the rest of the economic system, including its context of political regulations. How nature and the people of the Global South are often either excluded from this or exploited. And how we can change that, where we can start. Children and young people are nowhere to be seen in these spaces. They don't fit into this worldview. Nor do their dreams, voices, ideas, or their future.

But then things get hectic. On Thursday and Friday in the third week of January, so much happens that by late afternoon in Mynttorget, all our phones have died. It is not only that Greta is in Davos – in Berlin, the first ever really big strike in Germany is taking place. Suddenly, from one moment to the next, young people who were previously unknown, such as Jakob and Luisa, are being interviewed on TV, where Fridays For Future is being presented as if it were obviously an established youth movement.

And over all that hangs the question of what a sustainable economy would mean, and what we scientists have to say about that. In many conversations everywhere in the world, the young people of Fridays for Future are asked: “What do you want instead? Show us a plan for transformation into a sustainable society. What do you even want? What, if not growth?”

It is Thursday afternoon. Greta makes a short speech to the gathered elite in the congress centre. She goes looking for a direct confrontation, and demands democracy. Greta makes no secret of the fact that she is on the territory of the people she is fighting. She says that they, the economic and political elite, are the ones, with their mania for wealth, who are destroying the world. And those who get themselves photographed with her for magazines, the Trudeaus, Merckels and Macrons, don't truly realise that her criticism is aimed at them. Why don't they listen to their advisors? Greta and fourteen other young people will soon prosecute them at the UN and start legal proceedings against them in Germany, Brazil, France, and Canada (Gonzalez 2020).

The young people signal in these days to the whole world that we don't have to accept the fact that some people are weakening democracy and poisoning the planet. Because of Davos, the Swiss activists become even more central to the international FFF movement. It is Thursday evening. Many long phone calls take place. Loukina, Jonas, Lena, Miri, Marie-Claire and all the others are

well-read and think strategically. They report on the openings there might be in Swiss legislation that would allow big, sustainable changes to be made quickly, in the financial sector, for instance, which is shaped by *Crédit Suisse* and *UBS* and is responsible, through investment, for carbon emissions that dwarf the entire emissions of Switzerland as a country. How could laws be formulated to prevent this and reshape the financial sector so that the money goes to those who treat nature well? There could be a petition for a referendum demanding a ban on the financing of fossil industry. But how long would that process take? What counts as valuable in a society?

Meanwhile, in Germany – the coal commission is meeting

It is still Thursday evening. A Twitter notification comes up on the activists' phones which makes them all laugh for a long time. The Munich Fridays for Future group has published a letter written by the government, the education ministry to be precise, inviting the 16-year-olds to a conversation. FFF has established its power so quickly and unsettled the ministries of education to the point that they are compelled to offer discussions. The children can't be forced to go to school; how would that work? A few headteachers and cities want to introduce fines for the parents, but the public doesn't agree. A few schools insist that exams can be marked as failed.

Then I see FFF's answer to the Munich ministry: we would have liked to come, but we're away on Friday. We're travelling to the national strike in Berlin. And what a strike that is. The Berlin group has brought together the local groups which have been expanding across the whole country and delivered them all to the ministry of economic affairs in Berlin. More than ten thousand young activists confront Minister Altmaier who is leading the so-called coal commission (officially the Commission on Growth, Structural Change and Employment). Germany's coal power stations are some of the biggest carbon emitters in Europe. Who owns nature, and who owns the future?

“The house is on fire” – what would a prosperous society be? (On Kate Raworth)

In Davos, it is Friday lunchtime, time for the press conference. Swiss television is covering it live. Then Greta says the words that immediately become canonical: “I want you to panic. I want you to act as if the house was on fire. Because it

is.” The house is on fire, and we have to extinguish it. Later, the young activists will explain that people should obviously not be running around in panic but reacting sensibly. But sensibly in response to an emergency situation.

At Stockholm University, we ask ourselves: How should we react? What would it mean to extinguish the fire? In my institution, we use the ideas of Kate Raworth. The students are familiar with Kate, the economist, from a lecture she gave at the World Economic Forum in Davos last year, which I uploaded to their shared learning platform. She has been in contact with FFF and has inspired many young people. As usual, she talks at an incredible pace about her invention, the Doughnut Economy (Figure 4).

Raworth's *Doughnut Economy* (2018) and Maja Göpel's *The Great Mindshift* (2016) are two of the books on the reshaping of the political economy which inspire the Fridays for Future movement. They discuss them – in webinars, for example – and the young activists have a range of opinions on these approaches. Somehow, “our” way of managing the economy and teaching and thinking about economics at universities has terrible consequences, say both Göpel and Raworth. How can we change that?

Raworth explains her basic idea as follows, as I understand it watching the videos: The inside of the doughnut, is the ‘safe and fair space’ for a future society. That’s where we want to get to. And the surface on the outside of the doughnut is the zone where we are ignoring and transgressing the limits of the planet. We want to get away from that. Away from global warming, from acidification, from the extinction of animal species, from the loss of biodiversity, from pollution. And in the hole in the middle of the doughnut are the dangers of neglecting people’s basic needs: space to live, food, political rights, education, equality, and so on. We have to transform our societies so that we find our way into the doughnut. Doing justice to everyone’s needs, and without transgressing the limits of the planet. How do we get there? That is the basic economic question: how do we organise the economy so that social and ecological sustainability are possible, meaning that societies flourish? The question is not how we create growth. We have to change the aim of society.

We know the phrase “planetary limits”. One of its inventors was my colleague at Stockholm University, Johan Rockström, who headed the Stockholm Resilience Centre for years (Rockström et al. 2009).

This kind of research may always have emphasised that ecological sustainability is most important, and that economic sustainability must be shaped by it – and for that, social sustainability is required. But green growth and similar concepts were only rarely questioned; at most, they were up for debate.

Fridays for Future shake up this discourse within a very short time, with the help of Göpel and Raworth. They turn the basic question inside out.

Figure 4: Kate Raworth's Doughnut idea

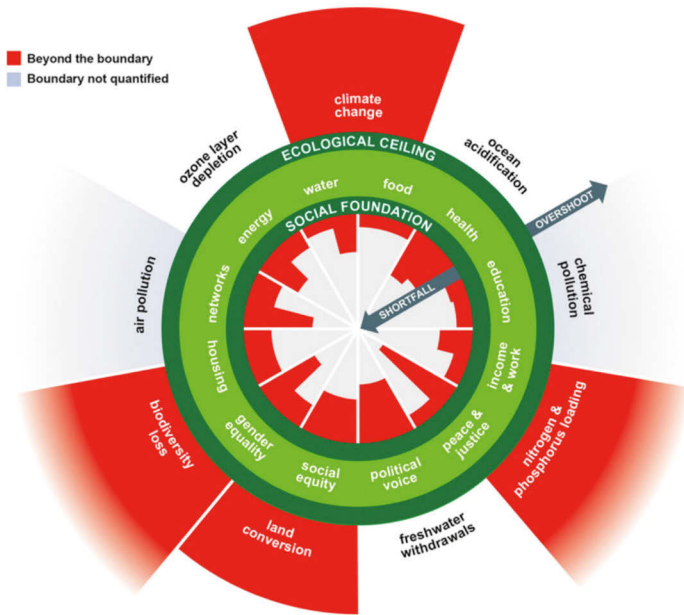


Image: Kate Raworth and Christian Guthrie/The Lancet Planetary Health

Because the actual issue behind all this is the following: what is a dignified, prosperous life for all, a real global democracy, in which everyone has enough without exploiting others or exploiting nature? What would a society be like that offered true safety and security? And: which structures prevent us from making such a society a reality? In contrast with this, the question we've been asking so far is: how do we guarantee growth? Not that every kind of growth is wrong, says Raworth (2018; chapter 1), but prioritising this question is not just strange for activists. Most of them can see that we must first consider whether we have a shortage of water and whether the soil can provide enough food for everyone, and that we must treat each other respectfully and fairly and dis-

mantle problematic power relations before we commit to other goals or to an economic dogma.

“But what would be the consequences of that for the economy? In particular: for the financial sector, for monetary policy?” Marie-Claire is one of the most active Swiss climate strikers. She is a student, four or five years older than Jonas and Loukina, Fanny, Lena, Miri, and Paula, who are still in high school. She is studying politics and environmental studies at the University of Zurich. And she met Greta two months earlier in Katowice at the COP24 meeting and went on strike with her. Not long afterwards, she visits us in Mynttorget in Sweden in the name of the “Glacier Initiative”. She has just finished working on a book edited by Club of Rome president Graeme Maxton, called *Change!* (2018).

In the months that follow, we have long discussions about the question that is uppermost in her mind: what should we say when people from the UN or the Swiss banks ask: what is it that you want? We must start with the financial sector – that’s a point we keep returning to. Or the logic behind it, meaning the logic of investments, but also that of “invented” money which could be replaced by “positive” money (Raworth 2018, chapter 5), and the logic of the current form of economy, late capitalism. At the moment, money and production flow to the place where investment is worth it, meaning the places where a profit can be made, regardless of whether nature is destroyed, either in the extraction of raw materials or in the consumption of these materials and the subsequent pollution. And for this concept of profitability, people’s wellbeing is often irrelevant. As is the question of whether this supply and demand logic actually produces what is needed, what is necessary for us as a global population.

In these conversations, the Swiss activists keep coming back to the idea of an emissions budget, connecting it with the doughnut concept. Emissions budgets would define what a “safe and fair” space would be in relation to the climate.

As soon as this framework is established, it is clear how drastically the economy would have to change. If we are supposed to be making sure that within twelve years in richer countries (and within twenty years globally) there are no emissions worth mentioning, then we will not be able to avoid tightening standards and regulations by about ten percent every year from now on (see Anderson 2019).

Hijacking the university – “Rethinking Economics”

In the live broadcast of the WEF, hardly anyone talks about these ideas, which are so central for the young people. And nor do they talk about them at the university. Or do they? Sometimes, on these Thursday evenings in winter, after all the students have gone home, an international organisation meets in our university rooms. A colleague from our institute runs the Swedish branch, and I sometimes go to their meetings. It is called “Rethinking Economics” and its aim is to change how economics is studied at all universities in the world, to open it up and make it more scientific.

Those who do not study economics and don't have time to familiarise themselves with the syllabi of the most important universities might have the idea that the study of economics is structured in a similar way to that of politics, psychology, education, or sociology. Meaning that every student is offered a whole range of approaches and perspectives, in terms of theory and method. In political science, this could mean looking at liberalism, socialism, conservatism and other movements, feminism, ecologism, and posthumanism. But the study of economics is practically never like that, as I realise after a few meetings of “Rethinking Economics”. Instead, a kind of monotonous uniformity is poured over everything, at almost every university in the world. This is known as neoclassicism. Of course, there are plenty of alternative theories (Kelly 2019; Felber's (2018) economy for the common good; post-growth approaches; Hickel 2020), but they are barely mentioned. In the textbooks of neoclassicism, which include most economic textbooks in existence, after the first three pages you find yourself in a world of mathematical representations of supply and demand curves and market mechanisms which are supposed to lead to prices. Planetary limits and basic human needs are barely mentioned. Why do universities allow entire courses of study to be structured so unscientifically, we ask ourselves. So that there is no discussion of different theories or different basic questions, or methodological exploration of these theories and questions?

And then comes the question that overshadows everything else: how are the students supposed to study economics in a sensible way – or history, education, architecture – if they don't know that the “house is on fire”? I walk along the corridors and think about how I can change the institution of the university, together with my colleagues: by introducing something like a “studium generale” for all students, in which they get to know the existential threat of the ecological crisis. But it is also necessary to explain the societal context which produces this crisis, the root causes.

The problem with the basic economic model – what is wealth?

Göpel and Raworth have similar ways of describing why mainstream economics and the current approach to the economy are problematic. The initial question is: what defines work – or being economically active? What is good “production”? The basic neoclassical model stipulates that there are a few ingredients, and the way in which they are mixed together determines what it means to be economically active, regardless of whether someone is making a pasta bake for children or producing an electric bike in a huge company. On the one hand, matter is required, nature, basic raw material; then capital, financial means; plus tools and knowledge, and finally human labour. Combined with economic knowhow, this produces a bake or a bike, meaning on the one hand a product or a service with a use (“goods/services” with “utility”), and on the other a kind of investment profit, something that is worth it. And if you want to do good work, you must ensure that all ingredients are good quality. Correspondingly, a business can fail because of any one of these components.

The two economists say that there is already a problem with this picture. But that becomes much more obvious when it is developed a bit further, as it is in the traditional textbooks. Already in the first pages, we are told: what is produced, the goods and services, can be sold at a price – they are often seen immediately as products for the market. And the market itself decides how high the price is, based on supply and demand. That makes it possible for a profit to be made when the product is sold, as well as allowing the product to be consumed or used. This step is anything but natural: many valuable things cannot be described in this way, for instance when we create something for each other without money being involved. Caring for our parents, raising children – in short, all the “care” work or core work which represents about thirty percent of GDP and is done often by women, leading to a form of systemic injustice in terms of gender (NEF 2010; Schmelzer/Vetter 2019).

And much of what happens when things are produced is not included in this basic model: the costs of the waste that is created; the exploitation of nature as a “resource”. Sometimes these elements make an appearance as “externalities”, but how is it possible to calculate the true value of nature?

At any rate, this is how the mainstream picture looks in all economics textbooks, according to Göpel (2016, chapter 3.1); what is known as micro- and macroeconomics. More precisely, all of economics is expressed by the neoclassical model as follows: there are two poles, households on the one hand and businesses on the other, and together they form a productive cycle. “House-

holds” provide employees who produce things in the businesses; they receive a wage. And they consume, which brings an income to the businesses. A closed system. Voilà. That is economics. Then there are the factors in society which can intervene benevolently (or destructively): banks; the state. They provide money when it is scarce, and collect taxes to finance the infrastructure of the welfare state: educating people, keeping them healthy, providing capital for the banks, raising interest rates, avoiding unemployment and so on. And everything is aimed at keeping the wheel turning, making sure more and more goods are produced, so that incomes and the welfare state are possible in the first place. This is how societies understand prosperity and wealth: healthy, educated people should produce lots of goods and services, because this makes it possible for them to consume and spend their salaries and pay their taxes. The end of the story: the aim is to increase GDP, meaning the value of all goods produced, and this shapes all kinds of legislation, including climate legislation. If there are discussions between the powerful in Davos, these discussions remain within the framework of this basic model.

Criticising the basic model and outlining an alternative – what are needs?

At first glance, the model seems plausible, as Raworth and Göpel argue, but it turns out to be abysmal. Such an economy would collapse, for instance, if everyone only produced and used the things they needed for a dignified life, meaning durable products that could be used for years – the form of economy which we should now be introducing very quickly, according to UN reports. Some people call this “degrowth” (Hickel 2020); others call it a “post-growth model” (Schmelzer/Vetter 2019). Tax revenues would take a nosedive – they are tied to incomes, and these are tied to turnover and consumption. Jobs would disappear, and schools and hospitals could no longer be financed. Something is fundamentally wrong here.

How can we solve this problem? In their criticism of the model and in the alternatives they suggest, Raworth and Göpel once again have similar approaches. They say: what we need to change right now, both in our laws and in the minds and hearts of the population, is the aim of our economy. It should be about meeting the needs of all people, without going beyond the planet’s limits (climate system, biodiversity, ...). But what are needs? Raworth defines them using the UN’s 2030 agenda goals as the inner boundary of the doughnut: enough food, water, space to live, a political voice, equality, and so

on. Göpel (2016; Chapter 3.2) uses a slightly different model drawn from Manfred Max-Neef: being able to live, be protected, be looked after, be understood, participate, enjoy oneself, be creative; as well as identity and freedom. But for both authors, these needs are defined as the primary focus of all economic activity. The model in the economics books is wrong: after all, the focus on growth need not have anything to do with the more fundamental goal that we should all have something to eat and a roof over our heads, meaningful work, and a politically equal say.



And the world would really be a different one if we focused on the needs of all people when we designed the political framework of legislation, nationally and globally. There is still enormous poverty worldwide; access to drinking wa-

ter and sanitation is not a given; more than two billion people have no running water at home. The children across the world who join the Mynttorget group understand this. During these months, they document their strikes on Twitter.

So, according to Göpel and Raworth, the economy has to be sustainable, both socially and ecologically; “redistributive” and “regenerative” is what they call it, including such sectors as transport, the clothing industry and agriculture. Correspondingly, the taxation model must also be “redistributive” and “regenerative” (Raworth 2018, Chapter 5/6). A regenerative economy creates products that can be used for a long time, in such a way that they fit into a “circular economy”; when they are worn out, they can be reused to a large extent as raw material. And their production does not simply destroy nature: cutting down forests and burning them, digging coal mines and so on. On the contrary: forests must expand. So how can we reorganise the economy? Raworth and Göpel say: we must redefine the relationship between market, state, citizens, and “commons” (what is owned and produced jointly or cooperatively), including in law; the market alone will not regulate that.

On the peculiarities of the capitalist market economy

In her analysis, Maja Göpel also focuses on the fact that most countries are organised not only as market economies, but as market economies along capitalist lines (2016, chapter 3.3). That difference is established in political science and emphasising it does not immediately constitute a political value judgement. In Davos, the people Greta faces are some of the figures who most embody this capitalist approach to the economy. Again: around 60 percent of global emissions are produced by one hundred corporations. And those that manage and own the most capital emit disproportionately more than the poorer part of the population (Gore 2015). Political measures targeting their consumption of resources are therefore particularly effective (Anderson 2019). And the specific way in which our economic system is structured means that they become increasingly rich without having to do anything at all. Their wealth works for them. They can withdraw it as capital whenever a more lucrative investment appears. These few people and their decisions shape the living and working conditions of so many more people.

But we could also live, according to Göpel and Raworth, in such a way that everyone would have roughly the same control over what is produced and how – democratically. That is the fundamental difference between corpora-

tions and “ordinary” businesses: shareholders do not make investments or profits in the same way that independent dance studios or hair salons do; with the risk of losing everything. The terms may sound the same, but profit and investment are structured differently in a corporation. The business model is not even primarily about producing goods, but about the multiplication, the accumulation of capital, money (Göpel 2016, chapter 3.3).

In the form of capital, the notion of “property” is suddenly uncoupled from responsibility, care, and identification with that which is “owned”. That goes just as much for the way in which banks are organised and managed as for the oil, gas, cement, steel, and coal industries; those corporations which are most responsible for global warming, and which absolutely want to hang onto the business model of increasing capital. (Wind and sun cannot be owned as easily as coal and oil, or sold as goods.) Apart from this, “fossil” businesses organised on capitalist lines only work when they grow exponentially and always draw more resources into their cycle (Göpel 2016). They are legally bound to this – they must primarily increase the property of their owners; which is structurally something different from making a profit through a successful business.

For that reason, it makes sense, according to one tradition in political science, to talk of several different classes in society. Historically, so much wealth has been concentrated in the hands of a few people; of very few people (Piketty 2018). The richest ten percent in Sweden and in Switzerland own more than eighty percent of all wealth; often these are white men in the middle and upper classes.

The temptation is very great to develop business models in such a way that nature and humanity are pushed further and further towards the limits of their resilience. And it is often women in the Global South who are working in insecure and underpaid jobs. And they often live near factories and power stations or in poorer areas which are most affected by air pollution. Every year, this kills seven million people (WHO 2014).

From this point of view, my students find that the enormously productive global economy is unjust in multiple ways. We talk for a long time about precisely the term justice. Injustices based on ethnicity, gender and class seem to be intertwined. It is the women from BIPOC communities who are often the most disadvantaged, and it is a few white men who are already rich who profit the most (Fraser 2022).

How could we organise all of that more democratically, we ask ourselves; more democratically in terms of people having a say at work, but also in terms

of property relations – so that everyone would be on an equal footing and have roughly the same amount of power?

The “destructive” aspects disappear, according to Göpel and Raworth, when the economy is reorganised through social relations and property forms (on a post-capitalist basis) which focus on the needs of all people, for instance when communities have their own solar panels or wind farms (Felber 2018; Raworth 2018, chapter 6). The logic of the relationship to nature is then at least not automatically connected with extracting or taking out natural and human resources – as must inevitably happen in the current economic system, quite apart from the “decoupling” of economic growth from the increase in other parameters (wearing out of materials; pollution; energy consumption etc.), which research results show is probably not possible (Hickel/Kallis 2019). Instead – and this is the constructive project – we should now develop everything in such a way as to strengthen our resources – rather than taking them out of the system. The question of how exactly that could look is one which is increasingly discussed by Scientists for Future, the group which is now beginning to form.

The economic causes of the climate crisis

I continue with the lecture at the university and ask the fundamental question: why is the climate crisis actually happening? What is the reason for it, and is the crisis connected with the way we structure our economy?

First of all, the climate crisis is obviously due to the fact that we are razing forests, keeping animals in intensive factory farms, and continuing to burn coal, gas and oil. Andreas Malm, my Swedish university colleague from Lund, says (2016): at the beginning of the industrial revolution, capitalism was established as a political economic system, and was then imposed and normalised – and machines were invented, with engines that take over the work of transport, heat and so on. And – and this is crucial – because the natural materials used for this literally come in the form of goods or can be transformed easily into goods. In contrast with wind, water and sunlight, lumps of coal and oil can be placed in containers and become the quintessential products. Mining them, distributing them and selling them can be organised perfectly along capitalist lines. For this, slaves are used, at first, and then mineworkers who toil away and have nothing but their labour (Hickel 2018). In this way, a product is created that can easily be transported and sold on the

market in portions that can be decided at will, often leading to the exploitation of indigenous populations and the destruction of their ways of life.



This has been pointed out again and again by Jamie Margolin, the 17-year-old climate activist in the USA (Margolin 2020). She has also pointed out that this story has still not really be told. At this time, many activists from the indigenous population appear in the Fridays For Future chats, especially from North and South America, but also from Australia. Unimaginable riches were appropriated simply through the ownership of coal and oil extracting companies, through the investments of the big banks in this fossil infrastructure and the corresponding corporations. How was this legitimate? Why should nature belong to them, and to those who live in the Global North? Why should the work

of the miners go to them? And above all: what are we to do with this history, which has damaged our shared “fabric of integrity”, as I call it in my lectures? At its core, then, for Andreas Malm, responding to the climate crisis means rectifying this form of property relations and socio-economic relations, which means gaining power over investments and the flow of money, democratically, abolishing private ownership of shares, so that these resources can be focused on expanding renewable energy.

Criticism of Raworth and Göpel – what the doughnut is made of, and what ultimately holds the world together

We can change all of that immediately, say Raworth and Göpel, along with so many other researchers who are close to the young activists of Fridays for Future. States and communities (and even UN institutions) could adopt the doughnut model into legislation as their economic aim; the city of Amsterdam has done so (Boffey 2020). A universal basic income or “basic services” could be introduced, globally, because otherwise it would only increase the inequality between the Global North and South; this would mean that the care work that is often carried out by women would be appreciated, and everybody’s dignity would be taken seriously. It could be partly tied to locality (through currencies, for instance), as suggested by Hornborg (2017), so that fewer resources go to transport and shipping. Emissions would have to be reduced by more than ten percent annually in Europe in all areas, with regulatory measures to drive society in a more sustainable direction in the realms of transport, food and so on (Anderson 2019; Hickel 2020). “Real money” could be introduced so that the attraction of making a profit and the financial sector would be subordinated to the doughnut goal (Raworth 2018): a more sustainable economy would gradually emerge. What slowly becomes clear in all these critical points: the economy needs a “mindshift”, as Göpel calls it, when it comes to our relationship to each other and to nature, especially in terms of what is seen as valuable and worthwhile.

How are worth and value measured? That seems to be the central question. Göpel and Raworth answer: “worth” should be measured according to whether needs are met, rather than being based on market mechanisms of supply and demand, and also according to what they call “well-being” (Raworth 2018, chapter 1; Göpel 2016, chapter 3.1.5). This can be defined in different ways. Through the Human Development Index of the UN, or the “Happy Planet Index” of the New Economics Foundation, as suggested by Gough (2017; chapter 4): using a

formula which includes the parameters of life expectancy, subjective life satisfaction, income equality and ecological footprint.

In discussions with my students, we ask ourselves the question: could there be a more fundamental measure for our future societies and economies than one based on people's needs and individual well-being? I try to capture the basic problem differently. The question of needs and of property forms, including whether or to what extent the fossil industry should be made into state property and then quickly scaled back, is an important one. But it does not solve all problems, because even states must be guided by a compass of some sort in their actions, and this compass is not simply defined by the property question. Vattenfall is a Swedish state company which was running the coal power stations south of Berlin. In summer 2016, some of us blocked those power stations with Ende Gelände, using civil disobedience, and prevented carbon emissions at least for a few hours. But Sweden did not then decide to keep the coal in the ground when it withdrew from ownership; instead, it sold to a Czech consortium (Reuters 2016).

Don't we need a better compass for our economies than that of GDP growth, or Göpel and Raworth's focus on needs and well-being? Well-being and needs do not completely capture what economic activity should really be about, I would argue – namely about building up and strengthening our resources, and creating a sustainable “being-towards-the world” (as Merleau-Ponty would say), a humane relation and exchange. What is missing here is the centre, the definition of the dough from which the doughnut is made; what holds the sustainable world together at its core – and what we explore in the course at Stockholm University every day in the theatre spaces, with our social interactions and our existential situatedness in a concrete environment. In research, the notion of being “connected” or “disconnected” turns up in this context, the experience of being in contact with oneself and with others, which can strengthen us (see the chapter on education for literature). In other theoretical traditions, this is called a non-alienated relationship with the world and with oneself, a real exchange and meeting; or “resonance”, “democratic acceptance on equal footing”, and so on (Rosa 2020).

A crucial insight here is: if we tense up, even slightly, we lose contact with what we really think and feel, but also our connection with others and the environment. Our view of the world becomes slightly diffuse, as if we were under a bell jar, no longer able to breathe properly or communicate. In extreme cases, we become ill, either mentally or physically or both; this has been analysed from a neuro-physiological point of view by Immordino-Yang (2015) in her empathy

studies; physiologically, the Alexander technique can offer explanations. Philip Pullman (2001), in the *Dark Materials* trilogy, came up with the metaphor of the daemon which every person has: a living alter ego in the form of an animal, which jumps and plays around us as a kind of external soul, and can talk with us and advise us – from which the dark powers want to separate us, cut us off, by making us indifferent to it. The developmental psychologist Winnicott (2005) calls it the relationship to our “true self”. Being cut off from it (often as a reaction of protection against different forms of oppression) can (but not always does) lead to what Adorno (1995) and others after him have called the “authoritarian character”, which shapes the political rulers of so many countries which do not take the climate crisis seriously.

Then we become like the fictional miser, Scrooge, in Charles Dickens’ *A Christmas Carol*, which our students are acting out during these days – and which reminds us very much of the powerful elite in Davos. “That was intense,” they say later; “really working together and including everyone’s ideas – we have strong personalities here...” But it is clearly fun to inhabit the character of a villain, and not to suppress the impulse to dominate others. At least as an experiment.

Beyond “well-being”

Again and again, we go back to the socio-psychological theories which explain how an authoritarian character develops, and how they can learn to interact with children in the playground in such a way as to give them security and freedom at the same time, and thus strengthen their characters and open them to the world. Playing with dominant high-status characters is a good way to do that, we realise, because this makes it clear to everyone what domination is, a violent form of behaviour (even if it is subtly hidden) – and what the alternatives would be, humane democracy (see for the following also the chapter about education in this book).

If we are really comfortable, we are able not to dominate; to meet on eye level, to connect, according to the research. In this sense, it is not even just about “well-being,” but about a more fundamental phenomenon. It is a relational concept (being connected with...; or: really meeting), in contrast with “need” or “well-being”, which are rather European, quite individualistic concepts. The research (Bowlby, Winnicott, Stern) also demonstrates something significant: this sense of being “in non-dominating, democratic exchange”, without which so many things would be meaningless, cannot – contrary to

Raworth and Göpel's theories – be defined as a “need”. In fact, our needs can actually prevent us from finding our way into this domain. This is the conclusion drawn by one of the most thoroughly researched theories in the humanities, attachment theory. The basic need for closeness and protection is so important for small children that they “sacrifice” real connection with themselves and others in order to receive them. If they see their parents or teachers look away in irritation when they express anger or joy, they will suppress, with time, the expression of these feelings, to satisfy their basic need for closeness and protection (Broberg et al 2006). Masks are created which become part of muscle memory, shape personalities, and prevent real democratic encounters on an equal footing. We subordinate ourselves or try to dominate.

However, we could perhaps say that there is something like a longing for affirmative connection which is even deeper than what we call a need. Yes, we can view needs and how they are met according to whether a real democratic exchange is made possible or prevented. This means that we can talk about whether we are “doing well” (see Fopp 2015), are “connected” to ourselves and others (and thereby to the idea of being humane), instead of “wellbeing”, as a measure of economic activity which is not only individual but societal.

This “doing well” can come about above all if we have spaces in which a democratic exchange and real connection and meeting can happen. For these, I suggest in my lectures, we could use the term “humane spaces.” What we need is not a dusty humanism modelled on the notion of reason developed by white male colonisers; but also not posthumanism, which doesn't even see humanity as an authentic value, but instead a form of “humane-ism”. This means: it is impossible to be “in contact” if you are constantly hungry or fearful of not having enough to eat or a roof over your head, or of being unable to find work – or if you are in a state of permanent competition (in this sense, this viewpoint could redefine the “capabilities approach” to global transformation, see the work of Martha Nussbaum and Sen 2001). And this tendency to cut oneself off or to enter into a good exchange with others, the weakening or strengthening of resources, also takes place in university spaces, at workplaces and schools, in the way we listen to children and so on; in all areas of life.

Here, a criticism of Raworth and Göpel's economic theory comes into play which has consequences for how we understand university disciplines, not only economics. We cannot simply ignore the scientific and philosophical research which tells us what it means to strengthen resources; or become disconnected from each other and ourselves. And that applies at all levels, from social spaces to the spaces of the environment: starting from whether we

are tense or alert as we move through, work in and interact with nature; up to the way we structure democratic institutions and finally to the way all areas are shaped politically, from food production to transport.

An overall picture emerges from the research: it is in a substantially democratic context that being “in contact” is possible. When we can count on everyone to respect each other and nature, we don’t have to tense up anymore. And: we won’t reach that point just through fine ethical and political declarations like “we are all equal,” but by actually creating such spaces, in concrete terms, and in the process playing with and seeing through the things that make contact impossible: (violent) domination. If we cannot meet on an equal footing, it is difficult and in the long run impossible to remain in contact. This applies to the small-scale intersubjective relationships between people, but also on a large scale: entering into contact means that power relations based on gender, ethnicity, class, sexual orientation and so on are dissolved and replaced with democratic encounters at eye level, as part of the concrete structure of everyday life.

A new logic: freedom, and integrity

In my lectures, I use a metaphor to explain what is created or damaged in this way: the shared fabric of integrity. It is harmed when we destroy the soil and the forests, when we allow hunger and poverty; when we make children cramp up in school rooms and later establish dominating power relations in the world of work and discriminate against each other. This fabric of integrity which connects us with each other and with nature, or which expresses this connection, is strengthened when we look after each other, not just by recognising each other but also by sharing material resources. It has a historical dimension, too: the wrongs of colonialism still destroy our collective fabric of integrity now, and they have to be repaired; this would be a possible description of the situation in which we find ourselves, as vulnerable beings on this living planet.

What is “worthwhile” and “valuable” can – as it is in so many books for children and young people – be measured against whether it helps to weave this collective fabric of integrity, or whether it damages it. This measure is not freely chosen by us; it is rather a given, like the limits of the planet. Even if everyone in a society agreed to ignore it, it would still be there, nagging at us in the background and leading to suffering when it was neglected.

Theories at universities fail to take account of this when they rely on “deliberation”, the joint negotiation of democratic goals. We cannot negoti-

ate away the fact that domination can cause us to tense up and lose contact with ourselves and others. That is our inner planetary limit, we could say. But that doesn't mean that through this we simply become a part of nature, as claimed by posthumanist research and "new materialism" (Latour 2018), theories which are currently as influential at our universities as poststructuralism once was. We are "agents" in quite a different way from hills, lamps, or computers, even if it is important to emphasise how we are intertwined with nature. We have responsibility in a different sense. Alf Hornborg (2015) and Andreas Malm (2017) point out that there is a gulf between us, our social activities and decisions, and nature. And that it is dangerous to underplay this difference, as posthumanism/Latour (2018) do, and correspondingly play down our responsibility and our scope for action. Conversely, one could object that Malm and Hornborg exaggerate the gap between nature and culture and thus miss the phenomenon of "being connected" and democratic exchange as found in Gestalt theory (Merleau-Ponty 1974).

If we reshape our societies now in such a way that we reach this point, see through problematic power relations and abolish them, make affirming contact possible and establish a "humane energy system", we will find ourselves with something researchers call convivialism (Vetter 2021). Democratisation is then not limited to property relations but is focused on all the ways in which we organise the quality of our relationships with each other and to nature. It is not just about the formal "by and for the people", but about the substance; that we should not go against the outer framework of planetary limits (by cutting down the rainforests, etc), or against our own inner framework, because both determine our collective fabric of integrity.

In the university lecture room, we are once again watching the live stream from the WEF in Davos. Davos. The place of healing, the health resort. We see the incredible snowy landscape in the background of the recording. The air is special, the forests up here above a thousand metres smell more intense, the light and the colours are stronger. But this world of the "masters of the universe" in their limousines does not look healing. Not even when they are holding panel discussions about the health industry of the future.

Ever more urgently, the question comes up in our seminar rooms of how exactly "value", "freedom", and "integrity" are connected, and who should define them. If someone changes our notion of what integrity means, they will change the world, I think. Right now, an adult man can insist on flying to Davos in his private jet, even though he and everyone around him knows that he is harming the lives of others by doing so. The carbon emissions are enormous; a

direct (small) contribution to global warming with all the disastrous lethal consequences. Like a three-year-old child in its tantrum phase, he throws himself on the ground, kicks, waves his fists on the ground and screams: but I want to fly, even if it harms people in Mozambique. Or I want to eat my steak. Or sit in a traffic jam in my SUV. I want to own this forest and chop it down. And and and. And this is seen as acceptable, because anything else would curtail his freedom. This is what the politically established concept of freedom looks like, which is inseparable from our concept of property rights and territorial integrity (von Redecker 2021). We imagine that we each own ourselves and can do what we like with ourselves and our own property; anyone who limits our autonomy is regarded as a threat to our individual integrity.

But this approach to integrity is not without alternatives. For instance, it abstracts away from every sensation (see the chapter on education). Many children sense that something is not right, that I cannot really own the forest. The UN programs emphasise again and again during these months how important it is to protect the forests, to switch to a plant-based diet, a shift in approach which would mean that we no longer mistreat nature and animals, but also other people (see e.g. the IPBES reports). This is the kind of integrity that must be preserved and strengthened; freedom can be seen as a result of such processes which create integrity; and this is what school and university education should be organised around.

But all that can come later. Right now, there is a crisis. Emergency laws must be formulated and introduced, to halt emissions and build a sustainable society within the next ten years. How is that possible? Across the world, we have to reinvent democracy.

At this time, we receive the alarming news that the glaciers in the Himalayas are melting (Carrington 2019). One and a half billion people are affected. The social conflicts that will result are scarcely imaginable.

