Chapter 2: Fridays for Future and Extinction Rebellion Start to Grow

October – November 2018: Civil disobedience and the laws of humanity

How to organise a rebellion

Week after week passes. Fridays for Future develops very slowly. But towards the end of October and the beginning of November, things start to move. The adults take up the young people's call for an emergency brake and create the movement Extinction Rebellion. But what kind of actions are justified? What are the limits of legitimate democratic action? Do we have to obey the letter of the law?

It is Saturday afternoon when I find myself standing next to Greta and a hundred other protesters of all ages in the middle of the central north-south axis of Stockholm's centre. We have to make a decision in the next few seconds. Either we refuse to leave, or we will be dragged away and possibly arrested. But will they really do that, the police officers who are coming straight for us? Will they risk a photo of the young people, who are blocking the central street of the capital of Sweden, in front of the Royal Palace – and police carrying them away because they are doing what they can to oppose the climate crisis and the mass destruction of living species? That would go right round the world, even now, although most people still don't know them. It is only a couple of months since they sat down with the strike sign in front of the Parliament and initiated the FFF movement. And now we are standing together on the street, young people and adults. And along with our despair over the climate crisis and our fear of the consequences of the blockade comes the question of responsibility. Can fifteen-year-olds be put in prison? For how long? Or kept in a cold police station? Do I have to intervene? Are we prepared to end up in prison, like many

people right now in London? What does it mean to take responsibility? How do we bring about real political change?

Extinction Rebellion is called that because this movement of rebels, freshly founded in Summer 2018, is fighting against the human-caused extinction of thousands of species and their habitats, as well as the obliteration of the human species via the climate crisis (Extinction Rebellion 2019). It is about showing how the picture fits together. On the sheet of paper which Greta hands out in the first weeks is the following sentence: "According to the Living Planet Report, humans have eradicated 83 % of all wild mammals, 15 % of all fish and 50 % of all plants." Anyone faced with this statistic (see Carrington 2018) will realise that because of humans' destruction of natural habitats in the last few centuries, there are barely any wild animals left on the planet, only about 4 percent; that together with our "livestock" of cows, sheep and chickens, we represent the absolute majority of all living beings, and that eating animals is one of the ways in which we most contribute to the climate crisis: forests have to be cleared, methane is emitted (Foer 2019) – the homes of thousands of species are destroyed and with them the web of life, the interconnected "earth system." That is maybe a reason why Greta was present for the founding weekend of XR (Extinction Rebellion) and encouraged us adults in Stockholm to form our own group. As so often happens, the initiative comes from young people; we react. How can we stop all of that?

Evening after evening, we meet on the web platform Zoom, long before it becomes well-known through the pandemic, and prepare for the big blockade. Now it is Saturday afternoon. The police officer comes closer. We've been preparing this protest for weeks, together with ten other people I didn't know beforehand: teachers, nurses, students. A group of adult rebels is emerging. A lawyer for Greenpeace is available for advice. What has the most effect; what draws attention and reaches the "silent masses" of the public, rather than just causing a disturbance?

The basic idea of XR is to mobilise a mass movement and to occupy the centres of society and create a "disruption," using a form of civil society uprising to hold up "business as usual," ideally by blockading central sites in front of parliament buildings (see the discussion of tactics in Extinction Rebellion 2019). It makes too little difference to paralyse individual parts of the fossil industry for a few days, as some of us had done before with "Ende Gelände" in the previous summer, when we occupied the Vattenfall coal power station south of Berlin.

The system itself must be transformed democratically in a few years; otherwise, the world will be a nightmarish place, three or four degrees warmer,

by the time the children are growing old, the scientists tell us (Rahmstorf/Schellnhuber 2019). That is why the action focuses on centres of power – and why it must draw a different kind of attention from protest actions focusing locally on a coal power station, a bank, or another part of the cogs and wheels of fossil society. At the beginning, governments don't know how to categorise XR; precisely because the uprising is so clearly formulated as an idea. This makes the principle of nonviolence all the more important for us. We train ourselves in the history of civil disobedience (refusing to obey certain laws and thereby showing that they are not adequate because they don't respect everyone's dignity and have to be changed in order to deepen democracy; see Chenoweth 2012) and the risks associated with it; and in the tradition behind it, from Rosa Parks to Gandhi and Martin Luther King.

And now we find ourselves in the street, and I have no idea what we should do. The state, as we have agreed in our discussions, ought to protect us as citizens; it ought to ensure that in fifty years' time there will still be a dignified life for everyone. That's why this blockade is legitimate. This is not about the interests of one group in society, but about the dignity of all. I look across at the police officer, who represents the state. He seems determined, and he looks at the young people. How did they manage it this time? They have woven their way between queues of cars and through the hundred people blocking the street, and despite this confusing situation I always knew roughly where they were. But then they suddenly sat down in the middle of the street, in front of the palace, with a flash of their own instinct for political action and media communication. As if there were nothing unusual about the situation, they now turn to me: "We have to let the busses through." "We should let the busses through?" I ask. "Yes, there are old people on them." On the other side of the junction, there really are three or four busses lined up with older people on them, waiting to see what will happen. In front of them are at least ten people with cameras.

Before this, the young people spent an hour handing out *pepparkakor*, Swedish cinnamon biscuits, to the drivers stuck in their cars, and talking to them. Those in the biggest SUVs often seem to be the least friendly. The *pepparkakor* they had got hold of are the only ones without palm oil, the production of which destroys the rainforests of Indonesia, and they are vegan, which is just a detail, but an important one.

Suddenly someone yells. We are all startled, including the police officer. From the corner of my eye, I see a man punching a car, again and again. A driver who had been held up for twenty minutes had suddenly driven into the demonstrators and almost injured a child. It is the father who loses control.

We all stand up reflexively, go over there and try to diffuse the situation. This puts an end to our protest without a decision being made. What would I have done if the police had threatened to arrest us? How far do we have to go as individuals? How can we help each other build a truly strong global movement and change the political rules?

XR was formed by Gail Badbrooks, Roger Hallam, Clare Farrell, Nils Agger and others to make sure that people would draw attention to the climate crisis, with quite a different approach from the earlier generations of environmental activists. One of the first protests is an occupation of Greenpeace, to point out that their form of protest does not work, not sufficiently at least; the political framework can't be changed by NGO work, only specific policies. Normal people have to come together, in a democratic bottom-up movement. And it is about displaying civil disobedience, not covering it up. That is the only way social change can take place, as shown by history; that's their theory, anyway. If a few thousand people would come and stand next to us, I think, and in a city with millions of people that is not so many, it would change the world. History shows that the key locations have to be held for several days if society is really to be transformed (see also Chenoweth/Stephan 2012).

Later on, encouraging people to get arrested will also draw criticism within the movement: not everyone has the privilege of being able to get arrested, without putting their basic existence in danger.

I look across at the car. My reaction is to be furious with the furious father. Good sir, I think to myself, don't smash up that car. Don't let there be photos of violent activists. No violence. Civil disobedience, nonviolence; the two belong together. And then my anger turns in a different direction: why do we have to stand here on the streets of Stockholm, Bo, Jörg and I, and with us a hundred other ordinary citizens? Why is the XR movement spreading like wildfire, much faster in these first months than Fridays for Future, which still consists of the fifteen regular strikers? Why doesn't everyone react when a child sits on the street because our shared life on a living planet could be threatened during that child's lifetime – and already now people in the Global South are much more severely affected by it? Tipping points and feedback loops could mean that the next seven or eight years are historically crucial; if we don't change fundamentally now, it could be too late (see Schellnhuber 2015).

The newspapers report on us, and soon the plan emerges to expand our activities in the course of the coming April and block the capitals of western industrial states: London, Berlin, Amsterdam, Stockholm. But what are we trying to achieve? We spend hours standing, sitting, dancing, and blocking the

street in front of the parliament; what are those inside the building supposed to change?

The three demands of the global environmental rebels

What many people of all ages say after similar FFF and XR protests: in these hours together in front of the parliament at the road junction, they experience a kind of non-instrumental relationship to each other, and a kind of peaceful recovery of influence and social participation, which feels strong and liberating, even when the fears – of the crisis and of the police – and the grief may return very soon.

After the protest action, we all gather in the Franziskaner. The oldest German-speaking restaurant in the Stockholm old town is right by the sea. The tension only ebbs slowly, the stress of the situation in the street can still be felt. "Maybe we should have provoked an arrest," says Bo. "That's the basic idea of XR; that's the only way to get the attention which creates change in society." I have ended up between the yoga teacher Andrea and the doctor, Kasper, and opposite Bo. Almost all the hundred participants are between 30 and 55. They are teachers, unemployed people, doctors, immigrants, locals, relatively diverse. "We can't just organise blockades," I reply. "We need a political alternative, a global political movement which everyone can join easily, at any time, in all countries; and which formulates a clear alternative, names the things all governments have to change: first of all, staying within the tiny emission budgets; secondly, keeping coal, oil and gas in the ground; and thirdly, seeing this as a shared project, in which we all help each other and abolish unfair structures." Bo disagrees. "Why? No. First we disrupt, then we build; otherwise, we're just like another party and we don't change anything. Why should anything change if we don't stop this four-degree machinery?"

The basic question is this: previous generations have left the world in a desolate state. Now a program must be developed to counter this. Within ten or fifteen years, we have to have a society in which we treat each other and the treasures of this planet more peacefully, hardly eating animals anymore, producing electricity from sun, wind and water, dismantling the power relations of domination which exist in the economic system worldwide and nationally (racism, gender inequality, class), and equipping everyone with enough resources to lead a dignified life (see Göpel 2016). How can we achieve that?

Extinction Rebellion has three demands which are then formulated in a similar way by Fridays for Future. First: name the crisis as a crisis; inform the population at long last about the state of our planet and our treatment of it, from the climate crisis to ecological destruction and loss of biodiversity. Secondly: the government must put measures in place to make zero emissions of greenhouse gases possible by 2025, in all sectors, from transport, energy, finance, and agriculture to largescale industry. In Switzerland, FFF will agree on 2030 as the goal for zero emissions in the region known as the Global North, but will always point out that it is not about which dates we aim for, but the absolute level of greenhouse emissions, the global "budget," which is minuscule (Rahmstorf 2019). During these days, we get in contact with the world's leading researchers and discuss these aspects in detail – and we will not stop doing that. On the contrary, we continue to expand this cooperation in the university context as well; Scientists for Future emerges. But already early on, as we spend every free moment studying research papers, it becomes clear to us that the Paris Agreement itself actually compels governments, the governments of wealthy countries, to stop all emissions by 2030 (Anderson 2020); otherwise the goal of keeping the rise in temperature "well under two degrees" cannot be reached. The world must have eliminated well over half of all emissions within the next ten years, says even the conservative UN; emissions must go down by seven percent each year worldwide, says the UN GAP report. No country is even anywhere close to such a transformation.

In comparison with that, societies seem to have slipped into a kind of anaesthetised state, or else they have been put in this state by those who don't want the status quo to change, as explained by Harvard Professor Naomi Oreskes (2010), who has researched the lobbying work of the fossil industry sectors. More and more messages appear every day in our Twitter, Facebook and Instagram feeds: about the Arctic ice around the North Pole, which will probably melt completely in the summer within five years; about the melting permafrost ice in Russia, which was only supposed to begin to melt in seventy years; about the lethal droughts and the unimaginable suffering caused by floods in India and Mozambique, and about the forest fires in California (see Wallace-Wells 2019). It is only when we make it clear that we have a few years to turn everything around that we come to see how much work that would take.

We also become aware of how drastic that societal change would be in our conversations in the Zoom chats during these October weeks, as we go through the individual sectors. What needs to happen so that coal power

plants can be decommissioned without disrupting the whole of society? So that the transport system (cars, planes) can be shifted away from oil-based fuel options? Not only will many people have to re-train and change jobs. Our whole system relies completely on fossil fuels. If we were to introduce zero emissions tomorrow, within the shortest possible time our food supply chains would collapse, as would our transport system, our electricity supply, and so on. Partly because our "goods", from clothes to food, rely directly on production methods which emit greenhouse gases, and also because they often have to be transported right around the world before they reach us. We have to stop that, though, and replace it with a sustainable circular economy. This replacement could be humanity's best and most important project, a project for all of us (see the appendix of this book). So we have to start there, I think, as we reflect on our street blockade actions.

XR's third demand is supposed to ensure that this transformation of our societies takes place democratically and in a socially just manner. The basic idea is this: a societal change as drastic as the one required by an imminent zero-emissions society needs democratic oversight in the form of citizens' assemblies, which should advise and help decide which laws would guarantee a fair transformation for everyone. Otherwise, there is an enormous danger that

only privileged groups will redistribute power to their own advantage. Our argument is that we need more democracy, not less.

Does humanity have unwritten laws?

At the centre of all these discussions is a fundamental question: how do we legitimise our civil disobedience to other adults and convince a large enough proportion to join us (Chenoweth's research says that only three or four percent would be necessary for fundamental change; Chenoweth 2012)? Why is this not simply a violation of rights? Why does history show that societies can change in this way – and above all, that this is almost the only way that they can change?

During this time, my work at the university helps me, as does my work on an article for the culture section of the biggest Swedish daily newspaper, DN, which is soon published. Already two thousand years ago, Antigone made one of the famous speeches in literary history, challenging the ruler, Creon, on a stage in ancient Greece: in her speech, she says that there are "unwritten laws" of humanity, of reason, which are more important than the written laws. If we do not follow them, we are no longer human, and life makes no sense. And for those laws, it is worth risking everything. Just as Rosa Parks insisted on her seat in the part of the bus which was reserved for white people (having prepared as carefully as possible, as part of a hard-working grassroots human-rights organisation). The question then arises: what is this compass against which we can measure a law in a democracy and declare it illegitimate? What is it that is important to the strikers and which gives these unwritten laws of humanity legitimacy and allows them to turn against the existing laws in order to fight for other, more important ones, which are still unwritten? Why is this not just a riot by a mob (on the theory of civil disobedience: Braun 2017)?

In the last thirty years, including in the newer tradition of critical theory (from Habermas and Honneth to Menke and Forst – unlike Adorno and Marcuse, see Biro 2011 for the relation between critical theory and the sustainability crises), most humanities institutions at universities across the world have answered this question as follows: what is legal is not fixed, but results from negotiations, at the end of which equality and freedom often emerge as the compass, although they are often defined in different ways and can also be augmented with other norms. But in the time of "new materialism", and "convivialism" (Vetter 2021; Hickel 2020), this partly liberal, partly postmodern thinking (in popularised versions) now seems to be reaching its limits. Because you can't negotiate with planetary boundaries and tipping points. The oceans cannot be

cooled by the arguments of postmodernity; suffering does not disappear that way, either.

So what is the standard by which all laws must be measured (see also the chapter on democracy)? It is found in the declaration of human rights and in the constitutions of most countries: the equally inviolable dignity of all people (Menke/Pollmann 2017; Bieri 2016). (Extending this thought, during XR actions we draw attention to Swedish emergency law; our actions are legal because they protect people's lives and health.)

And at the same time, in my lectures at Stockholm University I test out the idea that this dignity can be viewed from two perspectives. Seeing people as having dignity means, on the one hand, not dominating others, and that means eliminating relations of domination, whether in terms of gender (patriarchy), ethnicity (racism), class (exploitation) or other realms of inequality (Collins 2019); that is familiar from all humanities and social science subjects. The second perspective is that of care and attention. It is not enough just to avoid dominating others. Seeing people as having dignity also means taking their needs seriously, not letting anyone starve or abandoning them to illness, and so on. Or with a metaphor: the standard measuring civil disobedience is the maintenance and repair of what we could call our shared "fabric of integrity", the material of our dignity; what breaks when someone starves, when someone is hit, when children are left alone with their fear (see Fopp 2016). This metaphor also aims to make clear how close we are to nature and to the material from which we are made, the living vulnerable physicality which connects us with the whole network of the plant and animal world. It is this dimension of the fabric of integrity which is most important for many of us activists; it is what many of the children's and YA books I discuss with my students are about, and it is what theories such as feminism, ecologism, postsocialism and postcolonialism aim to protect (Emmett/Nye 2017; Hickel 2020; Fraser 2022). Isn't it about upholding the laws of humanity, which Antigone was already talking about? In order to protect them, we adults have to join together just as the young people of FFF are showing us, when they refuse to go to school even though they are legally obliged to do so. That is what I think during these days. The children with their alarming future have no voice in our democratic constitutional state. That is why we have to stand up.

On the 28th of October, Jair Bolsonaro is elected as the new president of Brazil, with 55 percent of the vote.

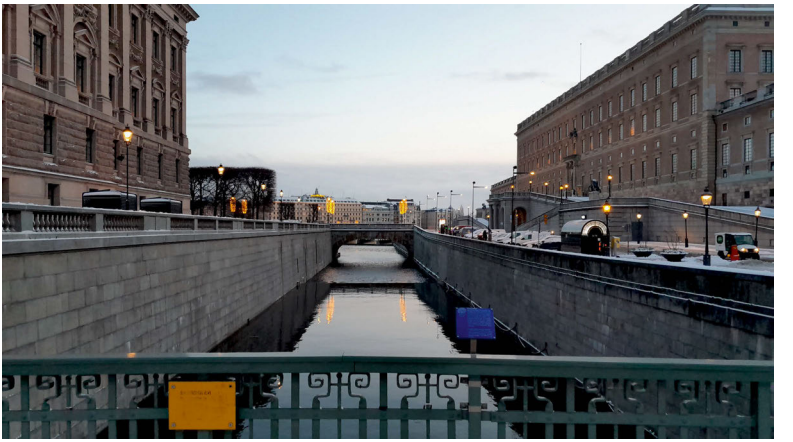
Magic in Mynttorget

It is raining again, and it is terribly cold, mid-November, a perfectly normal strike day. The young people are still sitting on the paving stones, on their yoga mats and rucksacks. Some stand to one side, with their raincoats and umbrellas. I look up from my place next to the flowerpot, lost in thought after a conversation with a journalist from one of the big international newspapers like *Le Monde*, *Der Spiegel* or *El Pais*, which now come to Mynttorget every week. It's not really raining properly, so it doesn't matter if you let an umbrella spin around. We look across at the parliament building. "Can't you float up like Mary Poppins?" I ask. "You could fly over there and shake everything up." That would be something. Magic. We are the creatures that can imagine. That might be what most distinguishes us from other animals. We can come up with fantasies of both good and evil. If the technology of the umbrella works together with the natural power of the wind and with the human will, then we're able to imagine that magic might come about.

That is the central formula of our lectures on the theory of imagination and fantasy: the magic of the imagination is somehow connected with the way in which humans elevate nature and technology to a freedom combining vulnerability and power. It becomes a problem if people set up nature or technology to use as forces against each other, rather than being united. We use this perspective to analyse children's books and films, from *Momo* to *Harry Potter* and *Titanic*, that megalomaniac masculine project of technology which collides with raw nature.

At some point months later, I begin to notice that there's something in Mynttorget that has become the centre of everything, something the children have "inherited", as they say. They are so obvious; they stand there so elegantly and naturally that they are practically hidden. The street lamps. Electricity is here in person. Maybe we as a society have still not really examined or understood what the mysterious scientist Tesla landed us all in when he succeeded in making alternating current travel long distance and thus made modern life and the modern city possible. They bring warmth, promise security, vivacity, community. And somewhere at the other end of the line is the coal, the oil, the gas, the atomic power plant. Where there ought to be wind, water, sun. Sustainability means creating structures in which nature and technology don't appear as opposites, you could argue. A wind turbine follows this better cooperative logic; not the logic of burning up resources. We ought to be expanding our use of a healthy form of electricity, just like the electricity in our nerves.

The young people stand there under the streetlamps, which always switch off just when they sit down early on Friday mornings, and use their brains. Little electric impulses jump across the synapses, connecting cell with cell, idea with idea, and out comes a plan.



The global network is born – the digital heart of Fridays for Future emerges, along with the idea of the global strike

It is an inhospitable November evening, ice is falling from the sky outside, and Fridays for Future is a good two months old. Every Friday, small groups of strikers gather in many locations, most of them still in Sweden, but also in Berlin: in front of the Brandenburg Gate, Barbara can be found happily tweeting out pictures of her six or seven companions into the world. And often that is around the number of people that turn up, six or seven, in some places they are a varied mix of young people and pensioners, gathering week after week behind a cardboard sign. Everything is registered and documented in Mynttorget and spread across the wide world.

I walk up and down too, trying to understand our role as scientists; there are about three or four of us now who turn up every week. Janine waves to me. It's about the preparations for an event as part of "Climate Alarm," which is organised every year by all the climate movements. She explains that Climate Alarm is an internationally coordinated demonstration with speeches. The

whole thing is supposed to take place in December on a Saturday, not a Friday. I nod, slightly sceptical. While the young people discuss whether they should start appearing in public under their real names and accepting the many requests for interviews, Janine tells me: "I've added you to the chat."

It is a small Facebook chat called "Climate Alarm FFF." Initially, there are only seven or eight of us taking part, a motley collection of people from different generations and different European countries, Brice from Luxembourg, Marta from Portugal, Benjamin from France, Andreas from Denmark. Young people from Sweden as well as their peers from Ireland, Scotland, Holland and so on. It is one of hundreds of chats which are started in these months. But it is a special one. All those who gather are volunteers who organise demonstrations and other activities in their local communities. It is precisely not about NGOs, but about real grassroots movements.

But chats or WhatsApp groups cannot replace actual meetings. The group soon plans a first Zoom meeting for this Climate Alarm project. Eight pm on a Sunday. So begins an important part of the history of the international Fridays for Future (online) network. Week by week, month by month, the pulse emerges which becomes the digital centre of FFF. In this chat and in Zoom meetings, the idea for a global strike is born, the date of the 15th of March is discussed and decided, the strike is coordinated and organised. In this chat, and soon also in the WhatsApp groups, the crisis over the Strasbourg trip to the EU parliament is dealt with and the numbers of participants are counted up after the global strikes. As an old relic, it will survive all technical innovations – the move to Discord, then Telegram – and it represents the information channel used by everyone when they want to reach the other central figures of the global movement quickly.

By January at the latest, there is a competing WhatsApp channel, but it is semi-anonymous, and everything quickly becomes a conflict. The same goes for the Telegram channels. This old Facebook chat keeps its name, and so the digital headquarters of FFF continues to be called "Climate Alarm". Much later, after the second global strike in May and the fights with the NGOs who join, the chat loses its function and abruptly goes quiet from one day to the next, after almost a year. It did a good job.

Early in December, like little seedlings from the original plant, other small chats sprout from it, as do regular Zoom meetings which blossom into the central communication channels of FFF: the strike dates chat, the chat for welcoming new countries, the logo/arts chat, and so on. There is no principle of meritocracy or representation here: someone may only have been to one strike, and

there could be ten participants from the same country. In these early times, this principle rules over all others. FFF is a network initiated and run by young people, not an organisation.

The movement has found its digital home, and even if these meetings still only have a few participants, most of whom come from Europe, the young activists know where the pulse beats, where people can find out what's happening across the world: the indigenous population of South America is soon represented, along with the rebels from Australia, the young graphic designers, led by Yacine from France, as well as the Canadians who are working on getting their government to declare a climate emergency. New groups form in India, Ukraine, Bangladesh. The agenda is usually put together on an ad hoc basis. Early on, "FFF's demands" are always on the list, a point which will put the whole movement to the test.

And suddenly someone has the idea of a global strike. Unlike Extinction Rebellion, Fridays for Future was always, from the beginning, focused on global social justice. "Equity" and "social justice" are terms which are sent out into the world early on by Greta and the Mynttorget group, as well as by the Swiss-wide meeting of activists. Not that this point was not important for XR, but XR's focus is on the capital of each country, on specific blockades and the idea of democratic citizens' assemblies. Meanwhile, the young people of Fridays for Future have seen themselves from the first moment onward as part of a whole generation, as a global movement: "There is no planet B," say those who live everywhere on this "planet A." So the idea of a globally coordinated strike is not so unlikely; on the contrary. The question keeps coming up: when should this huge strike take place? What can it achieve? As happens so often in these weeks, once an idea is in the air, it cannot be taken back. There are no hierarchies, and no one can insist on bans or priorities. Among those of us who are in Mynttorget, there is a certain level of scepticism: isn't it better just to keep on striking once a week? A huge strike could disrupt that tradition and tie up too many resources. But then someone suggests a date, the 15th of March, and from then on the ball is rolling.

"Why should we choose the 15th of March specifically for the strike?" "Yes, we know that XR is starting their big blockade of London on the 15th of April; shouldn't we choose the 7th of March instead? We need enough distance." They go through the holidays of the most active countries, as well as the bank holidays, making sure that there won't be many people who can't strike on the chosen day because they have a day off anyway. The 8th of March is International Women's Day, and FFF wants to honour that and not compete with it.

But the fact that the world will strike on the 15th of March is ultimately down to the environment representative of Stockholm, Katharina Luhr. The young people of Mynttorget want to approach her this autumn with their demands: they are calling on her to present a plan of how it could be possible to keep to the budget of greenhouse gas emissions drawn up for Stockholm by Professor Kevin Anderson and other researchers in Uppsala. The 15th of March seems to be an excellent date for a deadline; four months should be enough to make a plan. On the 15th of March, the city of Stockholm will not have come up with any plan to reduce emissions, but that will be forgotten amid the global uprising.

Sometimes, when a few countries suddenly lose their way, I post a reminder of FFF's basic numbers on the climate budget in this main chat. Otherwise, I back off as much as possible, and only intervene if I think everything is falling apart. Often – almost always – those moments come when a small group or an individual suddenly wants to speak for the whole movement or tries to change the direction of the network fundamentally, such as by changing its name. Or when adults push to the front. "We can support the young people, but we are not FFF. We have to respect that. The young people are the movement," I often say. I insist on that, and keep pointing to Roger Hart's text (Hart 1992), which he wrote for UNICEF, and which describes how adults can help young people with the projects they come up with, without suddenly taking over leadership of those projects. As adults, we have to organise ourselves, I think.

While Extinction Rebellion does not develop so well in the next months, Fridays for Future blossoms. The fact that the original Facebook chat and the online meetings have such success, at least at the beginning, is also because they are focused on action, organised to plan concrete events on concrete days, starting with the Climate Alarm on the 9th of December, and then the 15th of March. It was never purely an organisational chat or a crowd of all the people who want to work with FFF, but a quite pragmatic chat in which everyone is preparing something together. This means that it has a clear focus. All the people who are at the Zoom meetings are both more and less than themselves: they don't have to show how clever they are, but can also just listen to what ideas there are and what the others can agree on. People can also say that they are completely new and have no idea about anything. It is really a place without prestige, a village square in the best sense, a meeting place, a digital Mynttorget, where people can solve smaller problems directly, as well as concocting bigger plans and dividing them out into other chats and Zoom meetings.

Without this centre, even rebel movements probably don't work, we theorise as we shake our heads over those who are turning XR in Sweden into more and more of an NGO or organisation. XR Sweden also had a channel like that which guaranteed its success. When the channel dissolved in December, XR Sweden almost completely disappeared for months. There may be an organisation with clearly defined working groups and roles with tasks (based on the models of Holacracy and Self Organising Systems), but the centre falls away along with the focus on protest actions (see the chapter about grassroots movements later in the book for a new theoretical approach and the research literature). "Decentralised", desirable as it may be, then just means that those with the most resources and informal power do something without really involving the rest: the law of the strongest often prevails when people talk about "decentralisation".

FFF remains, in these crucial months, free of the influence of organised, paid climate professionals, from adults in NGOs and institutions. Among the adults who help out, none are employed to do so, and almost none belong to an NGO, let alone being paid by one; this is an organically growing grassroots movement. Many right-wing and some left-wing journalists and politicians don't want to believe that. But it is a youth strike. And in some countries, NGOs such as BUND, WWF, 350, Avaaz and Greenpeace try – at best – to support the strikers, which is appreciated, and at worst, to influence their methods of or-

ganising and their thematic focus. The young people themselves react critically to this. The basis of Fridays for Future consists of Tindra, Isabelle, Ell, Simon and Greta, and everyone else in the square; later, in Switzerland, it is Loukina, Lena, Fanny, Jonas, Matthias and Paula; in Uganda it is Hilda and Vanessa. Not paid, organised adults. But NGO-isation and the accompanying weakening of the actual youth uprising and their grassroots movement is a danger of which the young people themselves are aware; and it will never disappear.

The Climate Alarm day itself, for which the original FFF chat was initiated, is almost forgotten at the beginning of December, amid the excitement of FFF and XR events. It has fulfilled its historic role: it meant that a digital centre was created for the climate justice movements.