

# Some thoughts on policy legitimacy and the role of visions in transformation of passenger mobility

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Mistra **SAMS**



SUSTAINABLE ACCESSIBILITY AND MOBILITY SERVICES



# Contents

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1. Doughnut economics
2. Less and slower mobility
3. Lack of legitimacy
4. The need of positive visions
5. Who should engage in this?





# 1. Doughnut economics

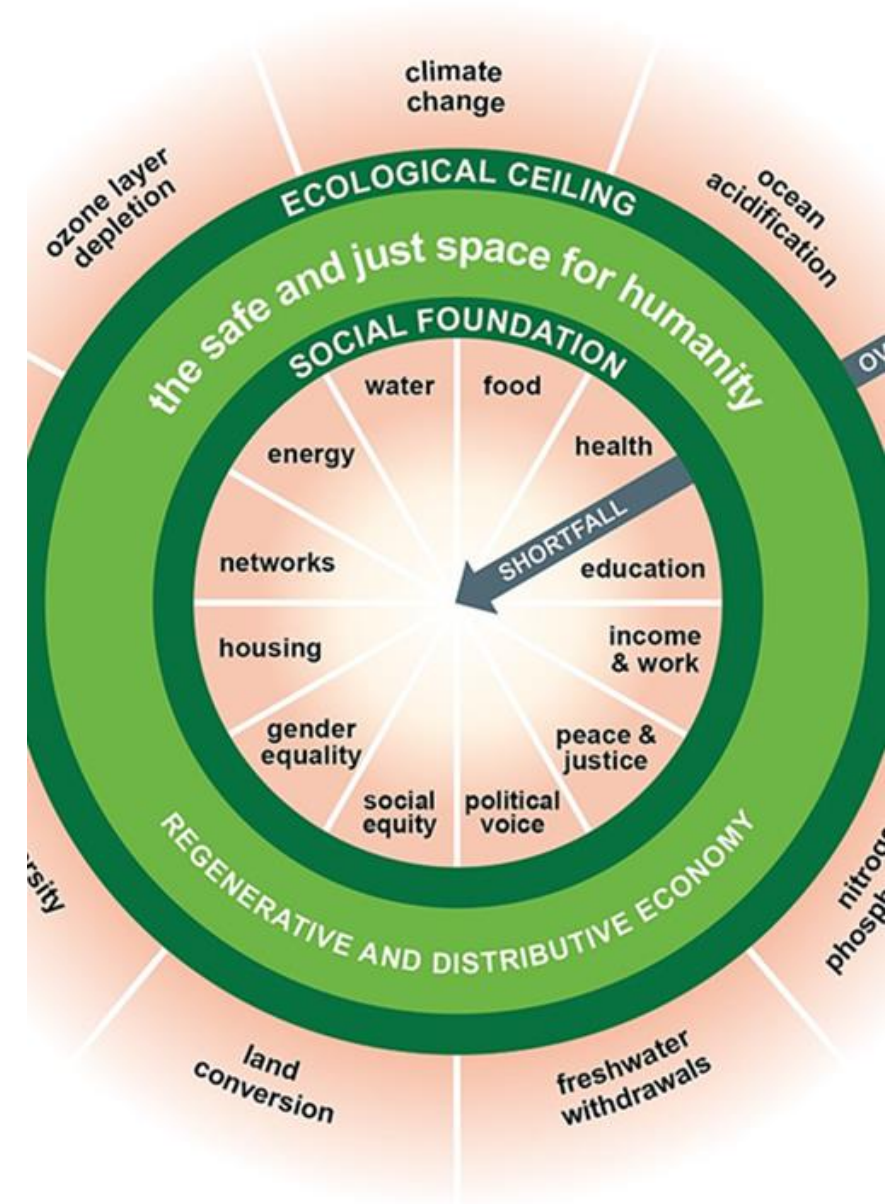
Point of departure in Doughnut Economics (Raworth, 2012, 2018)

The doughnut combines an ecological ceiling of nine planetary with a social foundation of 12 human needs.

Outside the ecological ceiling lies serious planetary challenges

Inside the border of the social foundation lies human distress and suffering.

Within the two rings, we find the doughnut. That is the space where all needs can be fulfilled with the resources available at the planet (Raworth, 2012, 2018).





# Implications for living

Humankind has to reduce our use of space and resources and limit pollution.

More fair or equal distribution of wealth is needed.

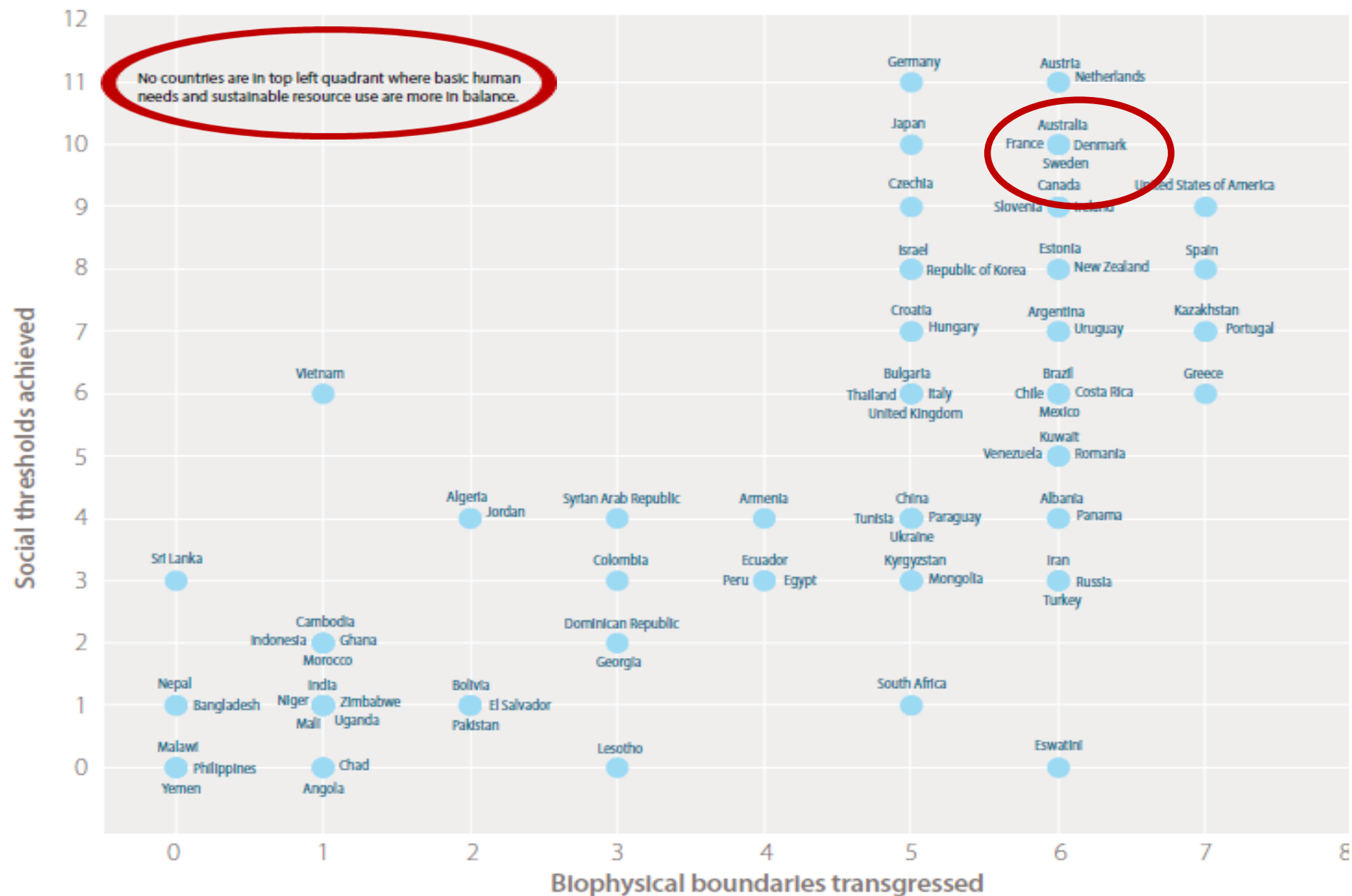
In particular in rich countries this impacts on residence, consumption, food, travel etc

*“There is a very clear and well-recognized detrimental relationship between the standard of living and the ecological footprint” (United Nations, 2019)*



Figure 1-9

Striking the balance: no country is meeting basic human goals within biophysical boundaries





## 2. Less and slower mobility

What are the implications for passenger transport and mobility?

Mistra SAMS is based in the avoid-shift-improve approach to achieving sustainable mobility:

- Avoid = reducing transport
- Shift = modal shift to less polluting modes
- Improve = Technological improvements

(Banister, 2008; United Nations, 2016).





# Believing that new, shared modes will help us out

“In order to become a serious competitor to private motorized transport, non-private motorized mobility modes must reach a level of service as high as that provided by private cars, which means providing a transport solution to people at anytime, from anywhere to everywhere” (Audouin & Finger, 2018 on MaaS)

A point of departure that is also sometimes repeated by other colleagues, PTAs etc.





# Dis-believing that new shared modes will help us out

Audouin & Finger's vision – I think - is only possible in the centre of big cities, where it is difficult for the car to compete, and in particular favourable relations between cities

On the outskirts of big cities, in smaller towns, in most relations between cities, and in international relations, alternatives cannot compete in speed, comfort (and price) with travelling by car and air





# What is the consequence?

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New technical solutions are extremely important, but not sufficient

To the current focus on improve, also shift and avoid has to be added.

The consequence: **A future mobility system within planetary and social boundaries, for most people in Sweden will be less and slower.**





### 3. Lack of legitimacy

Gaining public support and legitimacy for a policy of less and slower mobility is very difficult.

It is hard to gain policy legitimacy for measures reducing and slowing down transport

And why is it so?





# The global middle class...

... perhaps exist of about 2 billion humans in Asia, Latin America, Africa, North America and Europe (Raworth, 2018)

The current global middle class mostly find that our generation and the previous one or two generations have gained from the high mobility society (Kaufman & Viry, 2015) with fast, comfortable and cheap mobility.

We are used to long commuting distances, visit friends and family easily all over the world.

In Denmark we often quote H.C. Andersen (2020): To travel is to live ("at rejse er at leve")

**It is great to be able to travel to and experience other continents; go to Latin America or Asia for a couple of months; continuously visiting my and my wife's family, children and friends in Jutland; live in Roskilde and work in Lund and Oslo; and go on conferences in Mumbai, San Francisco, Istanbul etc.**



# The politicians...

... know that many people find we have gained from increased mobility options.

Therefore, most politicians are reluctant to introduce policy instruments limiting and slowing down mobility options

They expect protests like *Mouvement des gilets jaunes*, *Bränsleupproret*, *Folkeaksjonen nei til mer bompenger* etc.

... and I find their concern is real





# How to gain legitimacy for policies reducing and slowing down mobility?

A number of *implementation focused* policy instruments are relevant (Howlett, 2008; Sørensen et al., 2023)

- Justice and equity in focus of solutions – (Martens, 2017; Mullen & Marsden, 2016)
- Policy packages that combine advantages and disadvantages (Givoni, 2014; Thaller et al., 2021)
- Citizen participation (Hansson et al., 2023; Sørensen & Isaksson, 2021)
- Positive visions about the better life with less and slower mobility (Hedrén, 2009; McPhearson et al., 2016)



## 4. The need of positive visions

Visions about the *better* life with less and slower mobility are needed because

- The believe that climate disasters will cause political action and create legitimacy seems to have failed
- The wish to suffer for the greater good is limited





# Catastrophes are not sufficient

Despite:

- The worst drought in Italy for 70 years
- 1/3 of Pakistan flooded
- The hurricane Ian in the US

climate was hardly an issue in general elections this autumn in Sweden, Italy and the US

The belief that climate catastrophes will make citizens require action, seems to be wrong (Latour & Schultz, 2022)

Gu





# Dystopian visions can cause apathy

"Dystopian visions can cause apathy, lack of empowerment, intransigence, and stymie efforts about how to transform [...] However, positive visioning can help guide decision-making for plausible, desirable, and sustainable urban futures"

(McPhearson et al., 2016, p. 33)



# The wish to suffer for the greater good

There are in history examples of people choosing to suffer for the greater good, e.g.

- Men voluntarily signed up as soldiers in World War 1 (Knausgaard, 2011) – and now in Ukraine
- Covid-19 experiences tell us that people willingly suffer for the greater good (Trafkanalys, 2020)
- Some people limit and change travel habits due to concerns for the climate (Westlake, 2017)



Gator och torg är nästan  
tomma och tysta.





# The potential of a suffer strategy

A "suffer strategy" most likely will have limited potential. There will be heavy protests and politicians will not be re-elected (and even dictators will experience problems).

"Would people be interested in giving up their cars, if it was not for something that would offer them the same, **if not even better**, advantages? Probably not" (Audouin & Finger, 2018)

**... POSTIVE VISIONS FOR A *BETTER* LIFE WITH LESS AND SLOWER MOBILITY IS NEEDED.**





# Content of visions for less and slower mobility



- Attractive, livable cities, towns, and villages with less traffic, more shops and services
- Better health: less cardiovascular diseases (noise), less cancer and less respiratory disease (air pollution) and more exercises (cycle, walk)
- More beautiful, more silent, less noisy, less harmed landscapes and nature
- More relaxing, less stressful lives at a lower pace – speed in transport (and life) is reduced
- More and closer neighbourhood relations
- Slow travelling opens for other aspects: reading, thinking, watching, making friends – we should not only see travel time as wasted time



## 5. Who should engage in this

Visioning could be among the roles of

- politicians
- authors, painters, artists (theatre and movies)
- think tanks
- NGOs

...and researchers

McPhearson et al.  
(2016):

“Researchers have an important role in creating visions” (p. 39)



Thanks for listening  
and for  
critical comments

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