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Doughnut Hedonism

Can we use the double dividend of alternative hedonism to get us into the 'safe and just space' of the doughnut model?

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Abstract

Globally we are struggling to match the need for development with the available resources. Kate Raworth's (2012) developed the idea of a "safe and just space" as a balance between the planetary boundary approach and ensuring a level of basic needs satisfaction for everyone. O'Neill et al. (2018) argue that countries are currently not able to provide their populations with basic needs without concurrently exceeding planetary boundary measures. While attempts have been made to get people to change their habits through moral self-sacrifice, this has not been successful. Kate Soper (2008) argues that a change towards sustainability will only be possible if an alternative to high consumption is offered, without trade-offs in well-being. Technological improvements are often thought to end up providing solutions to the problem of overconsumption, but as Jackson (2005) shows convincingly, this is highly unlikely due to the overwhelming scale of changes required. 'Alternative hedonism' (Soper 2008) is a philosophical approach that has been proposed to solve this dilemma. By changing what humanity pursues to be less focused on consumption and more linked to community interaction and living healthy, fulfilling lives, we would simultaneously reduce stress on the globally limited resources and sinks. By developing and understanding satiation points – the point beyond which well-being no longer increases because of increased consumption - affluence that wastes resources without improving well-being could be reduced. This paper explores how 'alternative hedonism' and the development of 'satiation points' could be helpful in getting humanity closer to the 'safe and just space'. The paper concludes with a discussion of some of the challenges that taking up of 'alternative hedonism' would entail.

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Introduction

Ecological systems and the finite resource bases on which they depend are being compromised and the services they provide for economic activity are being threatened by our current lifestyles (Arrow et al. 1995; Beddoe et al. 2009; Ripple et al. 2017). Humans cannot, in the long run, continue with our current conditions and trends in ecological and biophysical terms as well as in economic and social realms, without destroying the climate and harming the people and biodiversity of the planet (Speth 2017; Gibson 2006).

Interest in sustainability has increased in the past decades as ecological deterioration through increased consumption has led to greater depletion of coal, oil and other important resources (Wu 2013). The mere fact that 'the Paris agreement' on climate change was signed and ratified by so many nations showed that some of these issues have at least moved to the forefront of global discussions and negotiations to some degree. Wu (2013) claims that in the last decade, some of the recommendations, which were first proposed in "Our Common Journey" (NRC 1999), have become more widely accepted as a basic requirement for sustainability. This includes the supply of high quality fresh water, protection of the oceans, limiting atmospheric emissions and ecosystem maintenance. What hasn't changed much in some ways is how we have illustrated this predicament or a way forward.

Probably still the most widely used definition of sustainable development is the "Brundtland definition" from the United Nations (UN) report "Our Common Future": ''development that meets the needs of the present without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs'' (WCED 1987, p.41). Perhaps one of the reasons this definition has been so successful, is that it is quite vague – what for example are "needs" and how can it be decided what qualifies and what does not? At what point is a need met? If we struggle with understanding our current

needs and how to meet these, then it is clearly much more difficult to understand what the needs of future generations could be and how to guarantee them now, with imperfect information. Yet, as a starting point this definition positions sustainability as being, at its core, concerned with inter- and intra-generational equity, by providing for needs provisions now and in the future. But how can change towards this greater equity be initiated?

There have been a number of attempts at operationalizing the Brundtland definition, including the Millennium and Sustainable Development Goals for the UN. The concept has also become more relevant in business and economics, with the advent of the 'triple bottom line' (Gimenez et al. 2012), where social and environmental impacts are taken into account in addition to the usual profit motive, as well as sustainable yield (Briggs 2017) and attempts to redefine corporations (Sjåfjell 2018) among others.

In the last decade, the development of the planetary boundary concept has made an impact, with the defining of a 'safe operating space' for humanity being one big step forward (Rockström et al. 2009; Steffen et al. 2015). This concept considers limits within which humanity needs to keep its environmental impacts, in order to maintain the conditions that are currently ideal for our survival. The planetary boundaries are informed by our increasing understanding of tipping points, and various biogeographical dynamics that affect earth's resilience (Leach et al. 2013). Exceeding these planetary boundaries over the long-term can lead to unexpected and catastrophic changes (Rockström et al. 2009). The planetary boundary concept is very focused on intergenerational equity and long-term sustainability as the aim is to keep conditions persistent and similar to how they are now. Some of the boundaries considered in this concept include: climate change, biodiversity loss, and nitrogen and phosphorus use, all of which are considered to have already been exceeded (Rockström et al. 2009). Stratospheric ozone depletion, ocean

acidification, land use change and global freshwater are several boundaries not yet exceeded. Finally, the remaining boundaries considered by this concept: atmospheric aerosol pollution and chemical pollution have not yet been quantified, thus it is not clear whether they have exceeded their boundaries.

Also important in this context is that different boundaries interact and that the precautionary principle should be implemented so as not to risk overshooting boundaries that are interlinked. Once one boundary has been exceeded for an extended period, other boundaries are likely to change, thus themselves becoming more likely to be exceeded. Therefore, there is a great urgency in the attempt to stay within all the 9 measures that are often used (Rockström et al. 2009). Although the precise figures of all boundaries are by no means agreed upon, this approach has been popular due to its ability to formulate exact targets and to help in managing human impact by providing limits (Ragnarsdottir et al. 2011). However, the focus of the planetary boundary approach approach is limited in its scope as it is focused primarily on intergenerational equity.

The planetary boundaries approach does not examine current needs, or consider what has caused the situation humans are in. It has been criticized for downplaying the need for more fundamental changes and supporting top-down decision-making structures that restrict power of some communities (Leach 2014). Kofinas and Chapin (2009) suggest that if basic material human needs are not met, there is likely to be ecological damage because these needs have a higher ranking than long-term goals of stewardship. Raworth (2012) proposed a doughnut model to address precisely this gap, by incorporating 11 basic social needs dimensions as a counterweight to the planetary boundaries (as can be seen in figure 1). In this model, success and progress would effectively be measured by our ability to get all of humanity into the 'safe and just space'. This means a level of increased justice due to the basic needs being met globally, while safety comes from the planetary boundaries not being exceeded. This

would be a significant change from the current focus on much narrower measures of economic growth such as gross domestic product (GDP), which is "not up to the task of measuring what matters for social justice and environmental integrity" (Raworth 2012, p. 6).

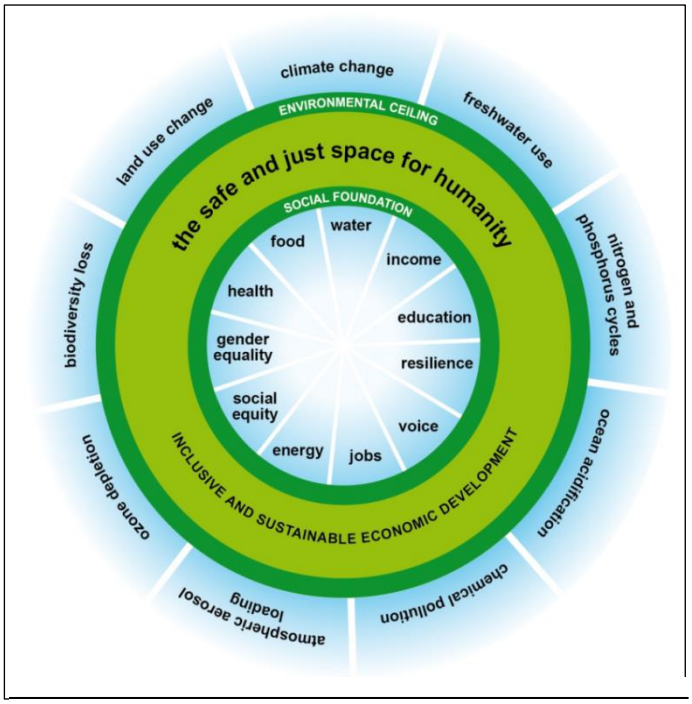

Figure 1 Raworth's Doughnut model (Raworth 2012)

The doughnut model has a lot of potential to make it clearer where humanity needs to head to become sustainable, providing guidelines for both social and planetary boundaries. The model is also operationalizable because humans can measure if we are achieving the aims or thresholds that are set out by the model, or if we are moving further away from them. O'Neill et al. (2018) show, for example, that no countries are currently able to provide their populations with at least a level of basic needs, while staying within the planetary boundary measures they used. In general, either a country does well on social measures, while also exceeding planetary boundaries; or it does not achieve the social minima, while also staying below planetary boundary levels. Yet it is not clear at all from the model, how the social foundations are related to the planetary boundaries. No attempt is made to illustrate at which level of social needs satisfaction the planetary boundaries will be exceeded.

Some of the questions developed to guide this paper are as follows: at what level can the social aims outlined by Raworth be considered to have been met? Is it possible to modify what constitutes individual 'wants' to

better align with 'needs' for such social measures? This latter question forms the core question of this thesis.

It is not the meeting of minimum material needs that is causing us to exceed planetary boundaries, but rather the frivolous consumptive behavior of affluent societies and the continued increase in use of resources after basic material needs have been met. It is the material 'wants' that seem unlimited, where many affluent people seem to never reach satiation, where they would no longer seek increased consumption. In other words, although the model provides guidance regarding where the social foundation is, the model provides no 'acceptable' point where the maximum sustainable social level could be.

To achieve a life for everyone within the doughnut, or 'safe and just space', transformative system changes are required. O'Neill et al. (2018) suggest the provisioning systems will need to be completely overhauled for the basic needs to be achieved at far reduced input from what we are currently achieving. This is a technical solution that Jackson (2005) claims cannot be achieved due the sheer scale of the changes we would need.

Rather than looking for technical solutions, one option would be creating 'satiation points' by finding a level of consumption beyond which there is little or no improvement of well-being in the different social dimensions Raworth uses. This point would be a subjective point at which an individual is satisfied with the amount of well-being they receive from that particular social dimension. For example, beyond a certain level of income, it has been shown that subjective well-being no longer improves with income, but rather that expectations increase and well-being remains flat (Easterlin 2001, 1974). This satiation point could then be compared to the level at which this social dimension causes planetary boundaries to be exceeded.

It is often assumed that sacrifices will need to be made in well-being or quality of life in order for us to be able to achieve sustainability or

sustainable development (Dodds 1997; Broome 2010), or in this case, to end up in the 'safe and just space'. Jackson (2005), however, argues that we do not need to make these trade-offs between a better life and sustainability, we just need to change our approach to what we want to achieve to receive a double dividend – improvements in both the quality of our lives and our environmental impact. For example, we can walk to the local grocery store to reduce our carbon footprint and contribute to our health, or on a larger scale reduce working hours to reduce stress levels, which could in turn reduce the need to consume as a way of compensating for high stress.

It seems like one of the proposed ways this double dividend could be achieved is through 'alternative hedonism' (Soper 2008). This philosophy does "not deny the complexities of human desires, including…quests for novelty, excitement, distraction, self-expression" Soper (2016, p. 50), but rather focuses on achieving this by non-consumptive measures. Through changes in what values humans act on and the maximization of these outcomes, systematic changes could be achieved. These changes increase social interconnectedness and improve the quality of our lives, while also making our communities more sustainable. However, the question remains whether these changes could be sufficient to move us into Raworth's (2012) 'safe and just space', which no country is currently achieving (O'Neill et al. 2018).

In this paper I will examine Raworth's (2012) doughnut model and the associated 'safe and just space' in more detail, as well as at the potential to develop satiation points for the different dimensions on a development curve. Next, I will scrutinize Soper's (2008) 'alternative hedonism' as a possible way to enter the 'safe and just space'. I then discuss energy, income and nutrition as three examples of Raworth's (2012) social goals where a satiation points would be a step forward. The chosen measures are ones in which humanity generally is still not satisfied once levels well above a basic needs level have been achieved, even when there is little or

no further well-being improvement from greater consumption. I will end with a look at some of the possible problems and barriers 'alternative hedonism' would face in challenging existing dominant global philosophies and development pathways, including the obsession with growth and measuring GDP.

Raworth's Doughnut Model

Ideally, a model aimed at showing what we need to be able to achieve sustainability, needs to deal with both inter- and intra-generational equity. It needs to show the interrelated planetary boundaries within which our progress needs to occur, but it must also indicate a minimum social level of basic needs satisfaction that all people should reach. The doughnut model (Raworth 2012, p. 6) achieves the former by using the planetary boundaries approach for the upper bound of the 'safe and just space', calling it 'environmental ceiling' while the latter is achieved by introducing the 'social foundation' as the minimum boundary (see figure 1). This model is described as a "compass" for us to understand our current position by indicating where we stand relative to these boundaries of the 'safe and just space'. This space can be seen as a target zone, to achieve a society where "both human well-being and planetary well-being are assured, and their interdependence is respected" (Raworth 2012, p. 7). Well-being here refers to a post-consumerist understanding, where basic material needs are met and there is the chance of striving towards subjective happiness, with people leading a life of fulfilment and creativity. The measures used in the model are based on both the millennium development goals and the UN human rights declarations (Musabasic 2015).

Within the doughnut model, the social foundation is measured in 11 dimensions (see table 1), that need to be met to provide a social foundation for people to have a chance of living a dignified life. These 11

dimensions were most mentioned issues in government submissions to the Rio+20 conference (Raworth 2012).

Table 1. Raworth's 11 social dimensions and threshold values. Adapted from Raworth (2012).

Social dimension	Description / measure
Water / sanitation	% with access to drinking water / sanitation
Income	Population with under $1.25 per person per day
Education	Children not enrolled in primary school
Resilience	Population facing multiple poverty dimensions
Political Voice	Restrictions on political participation and freedom of expression
Jobs	Labor force without decent work
Energy	% lacking access to electricity and clean cooking facilities
Social Equity	Population with less than median income in countries with GINI>0.35
Gender Equality	Employment gap between men and woman in waged work / parliamentary gender representation gap
Health	Without regular access to essential medicines
Food	Population undernourished

In the model, the environmental ceiling has nine different dimensions that should not be crossed if we want to ensure the pressure we exert on the planet is such that we can "safeguard critical processes that regulate Earth's ability to sustain Holocene-like conditions" Raworth (2017, pg. 48). A challenge with understanding precise effects of exceeding planetary boundaries is that there are often no immediate consequences for exceeding them. There is good theoretical and model evidence that time-lag after an action, delays negative effects on well-being (Raudsepp-Hearne et al. 2010). When consequences do occur, they are also often hard to follow back to their origin. Due to reinforcing feedback loops and complex interrelationships between different factors, true repercussions are often slow to manifest. In addition to the high costs of mitigation and the threat that necessary policy changes pose to powerful industrial players (Levy 2003), the above may be some of the reasons why the response to global climate change and other sustainability problems have been so slow (Heltberg et al. 2009).

For example, a slowly warming atmosphere is causing areas with permafrost to melt very gradually, releasing large amounts of methane (a greenhouse gas) which further speeds up the warming process. Also, the large amounts of CO_2 being absorbed by the ocean, are causing ocean acidification, which in turn reduces the oceans ability to absorb more CO_2 – but because of the size of the systems under discussion, changes occur very slowly and are very difficult to stop or reverse, once started. Planetary boundaries are also not static and are related to important biophysical functions that keep systems in the atmosphere, the oceans and on land stable. The longer these boundaries are exceeded, or the more sink capacity is filled, the more a biophysical system's ability to perform its current 'function' will be compromised, lowering planetary boundaries. Some effects may only be gradual, but none of these boundaries can be exceeded for extended periods without jeopardizing the ideal conditions humans have been living in for thousands of years (Musabasic 2015). This is an issue of intergenerational equity, it is our obligation to take these issues into account, because future generations have no say in our decisions (Summers and Smith 2014).

Within this doughnut framework there is recognition of well-being relying on everyone's right to "dignity and opportunity, while also safeguarding the integrity of Earth's life-supporting systems" Raworth (2017, p. 48). While it is clear that some specific social foundations need to be set, it is less clear how meaningful these are. Differences in cultural, educational, geographical and socio-economic backgrounds will cause these to differ markedly in different contexts. For example, an acceptable basic income in some developing countries would only be a small percentage of minimum wage or the poverty line in many western countries. Once this income has been achieved in a western country, this person would hardly have a chance of living in Raworth's 'safe and just space'!

Satisfaction, satiation and well-being

O'Neill et al. (2018) claim that the amount of resources used to achieve basic needs need to be drastically reduced for everyone to lead a good life within planetary boundaries. Increased resource use threatens the transgression of planetary boundaries because, among others, the acquisition of resources converts more land, destroys habitat, contributes to biodiversity loss and creates pollution. However, O'Neill et al. (2018) seem to not question to what level the basic needs must be satisfied. Health and life satisfaction, dimensions with intrinsic value, are seen by O'Neill et al. (2018) as necessary for well-being, while all other dimensions of social outcomes are assumed to be related to 'basic needs'.

Soper (2016), on the other hand, claims that it would only require a slight increase in resource use to achieve a basic needs level globally. Let us consider basic needs to have been met once the inner circle or "social foundation" level in the doughnut has been reached. The problem of not satisfying needs within planetary boundaries occurs due to consumption and resource use that far exceeds the 'social foundation'. This would mean that it is the inability of humans to be satisfied with what we have after we have achieved basic needs and the fact that we continue to aim (directly or indirectly) for higher and higher consumption levels that causes the sustainability problems. We need to find a maximum 'want' level, a level of needs achievement that does not need to be exceeded. This is especially so for wants that only have instrumental value – income for example has no real intrinsic value, but has instrumental value as long as things can get purchased with it that improve our well-being. Searching for a maximum want level would not apply to some wants with intrinsic value, such as increase in voice that would improve well-being directly by giving people a greater feeling of self-worth and being an integral part of a community

For the sake of clarity, we should define a few concepts as they are used here (see Figure 2). The illustrated solid line curve is the development trajectory associated with consumption – at low levels of well-being, increased consumption leads to higher well-being, which levels off later. Everything along the development trajectory to the left of 'a', is below Raworth's (2012) social foundation level. The social foundation level (see figure 1) is point 'a' in figure 2. Beyond this point, we find ourselves in the 'safe and just space'. Satiation point ('b' in Figure 2) is the subjective point beyond which there is generally no further or only a very marginal improvement in well-being with a further increase in consumption, in some cases the association is even negative. The satiation point can be

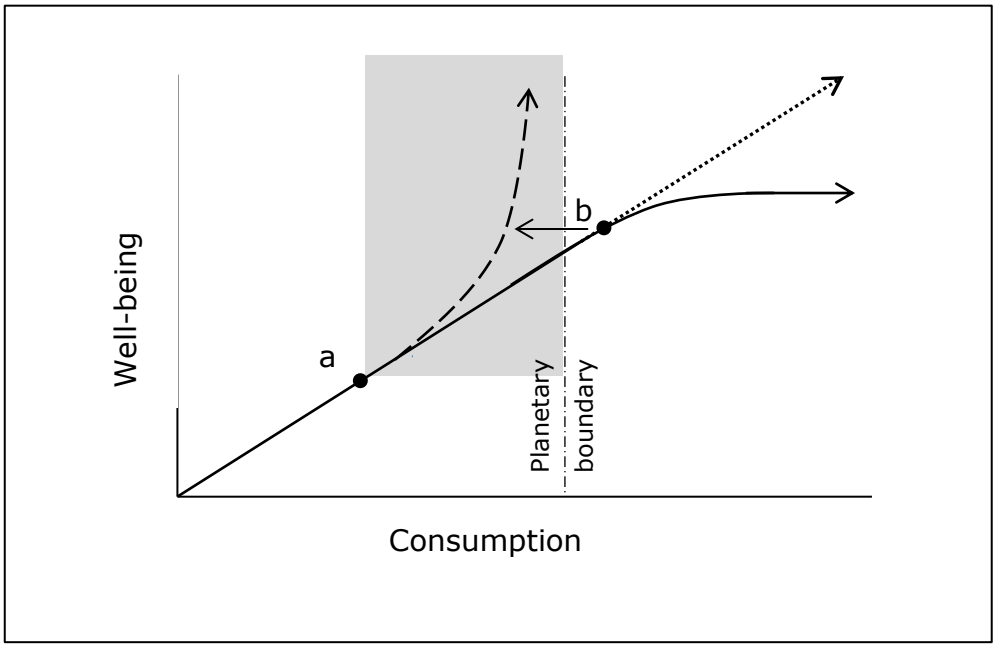

Figure 2. Points on the development curve

The solid line is the wellbeing curve associated with consumption. The dotted line is the assumption that seems prevalent in many Western societies, where greater consumption is expected to continue to increase well-being. The planetary boundary line indicates at which level of consumption of resources, planetary boundaries are exceeded. This line can be can be further to the left or right – meaning the satiation point could be within or outside the planetary boundary. The dashed line indicates an 'alternative hedonism' curve that gets covered later in the paper. Raworth's 'safe and just space' exists to the right of and above 'a' and left of the planetary boundary line – indicated by the lightly shaded area. This figure would look slightly different for every dimension illustrated, depending on the intensity of resource consumption required for its improvement.

sited differently for different individuals and can change when values placed on social dimensions change in that person's life. These satiation points would also vary for the different social dimensions. For example, income might have a relatively high satiation point as someone starts out in a job for the first time, but as they get older this may lower as other dimensions such as health or social equity for example might get more important for the individual. The dotted line in the figure is the trajectory we would expect if we look at Western economies and the seeming lack of satiation points for consumption. In this context, affluence is conceptualized as the holding or attaining of a level of resource use that is beyond the satiation point, that is, consumption of resources, despite this not contributing to well-being improvements. Affluence is here considered to be to the right of 'b'. In everyday terms this affluence would include current trends towards ever higher levels of luxury – or the acquisition of status goods. Well-being includes aspects of leisure, work and health, feeling as an integral part of a community (Diener et al. 2006), contributing to this community, having a sense of purpose and a genuine interest in a global satisfaction of basic needs into the future. It is often thought that once basic needs are met, there is greater interest in goods and services that rely less heavily on resources.

Do improvements in well-being come at environmental costs?

O'Neill et al. (2018, p. 90) claim that "the more social thresholds a country achieves, the more biophysical boundaries it transgresses". While they claim that it is likely that we would be able to meet physical needs of humanity while we stay within planetary boundaries, it seems that "the universal achievement of more qualitative goals (for example, high life satisfaction) would require a level of resource use that is 2–6 times the sustainable level, based on current relationships" (O'Neill et al. 2018, p. 88). Due to rebound effects, efficiency improvements will not be able to

achieve this alone (O'Neill et al. 2018). Even at current levels, where no social foundations have been achieved for all people globally, 4 of 7 planetary boundary dimensions used in this paper have been transgressed. It seems like the wealthy nations that are able to achieve many of the social foundations, do so at an impact rate that is far above a number of the global planetary boundaries.

So the question is, how do we achieve both targets in the doughnut model: globally achieving minimum values in all of the 11 social factors, while also staying within the 9 planetary boundaries? And how do we resolve conflicts between them when these arise? Is it not possible that a high level of well-being can be achieved without the current very high level of resource use? If the status quo has gotten us into the trouble we are now in, with no country able to achieve both the social foundation and the environmental ceiling (O'Neill et al. 2018), we clearly need to find a way to achieve more with less.

'Alternative hedonism' is shown here as an approach that could benefit both the achievement of our 'social foundation' as well as reducing our resource use to within or near planetary boundaries (see figure 1).

Alternative hedonism

Hedonism sees the pursuit of pleasure as the most important goal to target. Currently, the growth economy supports and requires the high levels of consumption to uphold what is understood as the 'good life' in much of western society and is associated with high consumption and affluence (Soper 2016). This cycle of interdependence between economic growth and hedonistic consumption needs to be broken for humanity to stand a chance to remain within the planetary boundaries (Gambrel and Cafaro 2010; Jackson 2009), although it is always easier to look for solutions within this economic system than to question the system itself. What is needed is a way to reduce the maximum social 'wants', which would then possibly allow a reduction in consumption to below the

planetary boundary level and into the 'safe and just space' for everyone. One way of achieving reduced wants that has been proposed is the 'alternative hedonism' approach, which tries to achieve an anti-consumerist understanding of flourishing, trying to meet both material and spiritual needs (Soper 2008). This challenges the status quo in Western societies, where individuals usually act to maximize material consumption. Economic and social systems currently support people acting to maximize material consumption, even when this causes "pollution, congestion, stress, noise, ill health, loss of community" Soper (2008, p. 571). Humans need to act on what has intrinsic value and be misled less by forces that distort what seems like it might improve our well-being – greater consumption. The question is whether a change in our wants would change the relationship between the social foundation and planetary boundaries enough that we could achieve the targeted 'safe and just space' for everyone? Could everyone flourish sustainably with 'alternative hedonism' as their approach? Could the more biophysical measures, where we now overshoot planetary boundaries - energy, income and nutrition for example, be reduced enough as a result of 'alternative hedonism', for us to enter the 'safe and just space'?

Soper (2016) and Verhofstadt et al. (2016) suggest that it is unlikely that we will be able to move away from the current Euro-American understanding of the good life, without offering an appealing alternative. The way reduction in affluence has been targeted thus far, by concerned scientists for example, is through the appeal to conscience, hoping people will reduce their consumption behavior for moral reasons - because it is the 'right thing to do' both for the environment as well as the rest of humanity (Ripple et al. 2017). This has not been a successful strategy at all as can be seen by our continued path towards higher consumption. Although there are small communities, outside the mainstream in industrial countries that have been moving to lower their consumption – it is still a clear minority (Soper 2008). Additionally it has been shown and

argued that rebound and backfire effects reduce the effectiveness of these efficiency and sufficiency changes (Alcott 2010; Murray 2013).

Too often there is only a focus on achieving higher financial income as a simple measure of well-being, while other factors like family status, health and political and human rights are given far less weight, especially before basic needs are satisfied. With the continued development along the lines of growth and increased consumerism no longer being supportable (Jackson 2009), the alternative would be "an altered conception of pleasure and enjoyment" (Soper 2016, p. 46). If improvements in living standards are seen separately from levels of material consumption, it would be possible to achieve higher levels of subjective well-being, without the currently 'required' high level of material consumption and associated resource use.

It has been shown that most changes in life circumstances have almost no long-term effect on subjective measures of well-being like happiness or life-satisfaction (Kahneman and Krueger 2006). Resources focussed on achieving this ever greater level of quality of life would thus not only be ineffective, but a waste of resources that are already scarce and edging us either towards or beyond our planetary boundaries.

In the transdisciplinary sustainability field, an attempt is ideally made to find solutions that produce win-win situations and avoid trade-offs between biophysical considerations and social and economic goals (Muradian et al. 2013). Trade-offs that balance different targets are generally only acceptable as a last resort (Gibson 2006). It can be argued that 'alternative hedonism' is just such a solution – where the well-being of people is positively affected and long-term sustainability of the planet is supported at the same time. But what it does require is a changed concept of what we need in order to improve our quality of life and what we consider valuable. This change in values can then influence a change in preferences (Norton et al. 1998).

The idea is that 'alternative hedonism' would bend the development curve leftwards after basic needs have been satisfied at the social foundation level, and well-being continues to rise, while it is decoupled from consumption or resource use. The same level of well-being (through the adjustment of needs and the values we act on) could be achieved, at a lower rate of consumption – the arrow in figure 2. Through 'alternative hedonism', the satiation point would occur at a lower level of consumption because the maximum social 'wants' in terms of consumption would be lowered. Ideally this would then cause point 'b' – the resource to remain below the planetary boundary level and within the 'safe and just space'.

Let us imagine we live in a world of 'alternative hedonism':

There is "a different vision of human prosperity" (Soper 2016), that influences everything in society, with a dramatic change having occurred from the previously normal status quo. With a reduced focus on consumer products, priorities have shifted to other ways of achieving greater well-being. Through reduced pressure for people to increase financial resources, especially in richer countries, there is greater enjoyment of increased free time and better health due to lowered levels of stress and an interest in healthier food. Employment is generally more meaningful, with greater value placed on support and development of healthy communities and less on profit maximization, technical efficiency and mechanization. An increased appreciation for healthy food means that many people grow their own vegetables and value local produce more highly as well as spending time preparing and enjoying meals. A greater understanding of our place within the general ecosystem means there is also a reduced acceptance of harmful agricultural chemicals and activities that reduce the health and natural capital of our surroundings. The tension between needs and desires mentioned by Soper (2016) has been reduced through more restrictive regulations on advertising as well as lower effectiveness of advertisers due to the reduction in importance of status goods.

Let us look at three of the social measures a little more closely.

Energy, income and nutrition as examples

Here are three of Raworth's (2012) social measures in a little more detail: energy (including transportation), income and nutrition. What most of the 11 social measures have in common is that once the social foundations have been achieved there is usually a desire to continue to increase this measure to a more comfortable level. The difference with these three is that they are all factors where, once even high levels have been achieved, there seems to be no sign of satiation, even when no further well-being benefit occurs. In communities with high levels of affluence, these three generally occur at relatively high levels. These are all measures, where not wanting to maximize, but rather to not exceed the satiation level, ends up being much more sustainable with a similar well-being value. Reaching the social foundation levels for food, energy and income could be achieved with a small increase of just 1, 1 and 0,2 percent of current global levels respectively if this was to be distributed correctly (Raworth 2012). Once these levels were achieved, nobody would consider that these communities, having just achieved these basic needs, would be happy with them remaining at that level. It is understandable to want to continue to improve well-being and access to food, energy and income. But what level of these different dimensions is enough? Where is the satiation point?

Energy:

In the O'Neill et al. (2018) analysis, "access to energy" is used as the measure that should be achieved as the social foundation. A large portion of the world's population still has very limited access to energy - if everyone had access to a small amount of energy, this would likely not cause us to exceed the planetary boundary globally. The problem comes in when thirst for energy seems unquenchable and energy consumption continues to increase with development. If all new energy sources were

renewable, the impact of energy would clearly be reduced to resources needed for infrastructure construction and the products running on the energy itself, but this is unlikely to happen quickly, due to currently still very high prices of some renewable energy and energy storage capabilities.

If we were to live in a world of 'alternative hedonism', lower consumption generally may have reduced the energy used in high-consumption societies due to reduced production. Production of many unnecessary and low quality products with built-in obsolescence could be lowered and a move towards higher quality products with a longer lifespan could be well underway. A large portion of the world's energy consumption currently goes into industrial production of iron, steel and cement for example – these resources could be used more sparingly, with a greater proportion being recycled. A higher valuation placed on locally produced goods could reduce transportation energy requirements wherever local products are available. Through increased use of renewable energy production with methods that work best for local circumstances, the need to transport power over huge distances might have been reduced and numerous regions could be self-sufficient in energy provision.

Looking specifically at transportation within the energy complex, the idea that everyone should own a private vehicle might no longer the norm and an efficient public transportation network forms the basis of mobility everywhere. In addition to the reduced production and running costs of a private transportation fleet, there could be a reduction in stress due to lower pressure on roads and less time spent sitting in traffic, especially around the larger concentrations of humans (and vehicles) in cities. Strict emissions regulations for the remaining private vehicles might have been imposed due to an increased interest in clean air and manufacturers are held to account by politicians and an informed and involved public alike when these regulations are not met (Ripple et al. 2018).

Currently, people living an affluent lifestyle not only expect a private vehicle, but there seems no limit to the number and types of vehicles people strive to own – registered vehicles in the US exceed people registered to drive them by 50 million for example (Owen 2010). Private transport status goods does not stop at cars, but increases to private yachts, jets and helicopters as affluence increases. By being less reliant on these kinds of status goods, the environmental impact could be reduced in the energy/transportation sector. Even the widespread acceptance of, for example air-conditioning and refrigeration as commonplace, now puts pressure on our energy needs.

Income:

O'Neill et al. (2018) define the social foundation to be achieved as 95% of the population earning US$1.90 per day. One problem with a figure like this is that its value is extremely dependant on context. In many poorer countries, this may be a sufficient amount of money to achieve an acceptable level of well-being, while in most Western or developed countries, this would not even come close to the minimum wage or a living wage. But again the main issue is the lack of a satiation point. This is despite it being acknowledged that there is generally no further improvement in well-being beyond a certain level of income (van den Bergh 2011; Easterlin 1974); at a minimum there is a reduced marginal return. The acquisition of status goods is a zero-sum game (Clark et al. 2008) and increased consumption does not improve our well-being because of our adaptation to the new circumstances (Diener et al. 2006). In other words, living an affluent life, is not necessary for a high level of well-being. The level at which this happens is of course a long way beyond basic needs level, but well below level that many of the industrial countries are at. Precise levels are obviously variable and depend on factors such as culture, social standing and others, although some attempts have been made to define universal basic goods and services (Rao and Baer 2012).

In a world with 'alternative hedonism' and its associated lower dependence on consumption, income required for a good level of well-being would be reduced in Western economies. While this would clearly not get anywhere near as low as the 'social foundation' in Raworth's model, the satiation point could occur at a lower level of income than it would occur if we were to define a satiation point now. A reduction in income for the affluent might not be seen as a reduction in quality of life.

The dimension 'income' is a bit more complex than the other 2 measures due to its instrumental value – the ability to help achieve some of the other social foundations. For example, usually nutritional basic needs should be met if there is sufficient income available. It has been shown that the impact of increased income on well-being is only brief, with very few long term effects, compared to improvements in health, employment and family circumstances (Deaton 2008). However, income is needed to acquire both food an energy in most cases, unless people are self-sufficient. But with income, even more than with the other 2 dimensions, there is generally no targeted satiation point and affluence is seen as desirable. Understandably, once basic needs are first met there is a continued interest in higher incomes, but this continues well beyond where this clearly improves well-being.

Nutrition:

The 2,700 calories as a social foundation in O'Neill et al. (2018) is again very context-driven, also there is value in a balanced diet and a move away from malnourishment rather than just sufficient calories. Some parts of the world are struggling to provide either or both of these measures. High levels of overconsumption of food are leading to serious negative impacts, including being one of the factors leading to obesity and other health problems, while around a third of food, sometimes more (Gunders 2012) gets wasted after harvest, without ever getting consumed. Once again, if the target was achieving basic needs levels,

there would probably not be a planetary boundary issue, but this is nowhere near what many people are used to and would expect to have.

In 'alternative hedonism', there is a greater focus on good food rather than fast and convenient high-energy food. Through increased awareness of where food comes from and what it contains, people may once again grow their own wherever possible. There could be a greater focus on locally produced food, increasing other impacts through knock-on effects, such as transportation and more closely-knit and identifiable communities with well-developed local supply chains. A focus on local and seasonal products might have the added benefits of improving local self-sufficiency networks and reduce energy requirements for produce transportation. Greater value placed on healthy food should lower insecticide and pesticide use, as well as a reduced reliance on high fertilizer input.

Food wastage is another big issue – this could be reduced drastically with reduced long-distance transportation of exotic produce. Reductions in food waste also reduces the other inputs that are effectively thrown away with the food, such as fertilizer, pesticides and transportation costs (Owen 2010). All this is possible through implementing alternative farming methods, with less large-scale and intensive monocultures.

In many developing countries, one of the major contributions to environmental impact of a growing middle class is the massive increase in the consumption of meat (Delgado 2003) – a change that further increases humanity's resource use. In most industrialized countries meat consumption is even higher. 'Alternative hedonism' could drive down high meat consumption, which can be seen as affluence as it is not required and is looked at as a status good in many communities. Reduced meat production would mean the ability to supply larger populations with the same agricultural land area, providing greater food security. The meat that is still consumed could be produced in less intensive means, lowering eutrophication levels, limiting use of antibiotics and a greater public

interest in the conditions under which this production occurs. Tracts of land for renaturalization could be opened up due to this reduced meat consumption and more eco-friendly production on agricultural land would slow down or reverse the destruction of insect and other animal populations.

As with our preceding examples there seems to be no maximum level or satiation point of normal nutritional consumption. As the level of affluence grows, there seems to be no reduction in desire to have more - although in this case it may be more meat or more exotic foods rather than an absolute amount and a reduced concern for food waste.

By adapting our global nutritional practices, we would drastically improve the current levels of numerous measures in Raworth's (2012) model and get us to within or nearer to the 'safe and just space'. As briefly touched on above, this could include improvements in land use change, nitrogen and phosphorous cycles, biodiversity loss and chemical pollution.

The question remains: would energy, income and nutrition (as biophysical examples) be reduced enough to get us into the 'safe and just space', where all social foundations are met, but we don't exceed planetary boundaries?

What tradeoff?

O'Neill (2008, p. 2) says that the ability to decouple growth in consumption from well-being, enables us to achieve sustainability "without making excessive demands of moral self-sacrifice". To a greater or lesser degree all developed countries rely on high levels of consumption to uphold their economies, so this assumption, which is based on measures of current conditions, cannot take into account what a change in approach to the question of how we define and achieve well-being would cause. I argue here, that by introducing 'alternative hedonism' we don't in fact need to make any sacrifice at all to achieve

this through the double dividend idea of Jackson (2005). If anything, looking at a change of reduced consumption through the glasses of 'alternative hedonism' would lead us to the understanding that this would be positive in both our well-being as well as reducing our environmental impact.

Sufficiency and efficiency strategies are both criticized due to rebound effects making them less effective than they would first seem (Alcott 2008, 2010). 'Alternative hedonism' does not target greater efficiency – improved input/output ratio (although this would be welcomed), but rather a change in philosophy that ends up with reduced consumption – improved efficiency could be used to reduce the required input, while the output remains the same. Alcott's (2008) criticism of sufficiency strategies, which attempt to reduce unnecessary high consumption in affluent societies, is that reduced demand would lower prices of the goods that are no longer wanted, making these goods affordable for people that were not able to buy them previously. This reason for the ineffectiveness of these strategies does not apply to 'alternative hedonism' because the philosophy is not just targeted at the affluent group, so no new market would develop for the rejected goods. 'Alternative hedonism' targets reduced income and a reduced need for consumer goods. Of course this philosophy would need to spread globally or at least regionally, for consumption not to just migrate to other areas that are still focussed on material goods (Alcott 2008).

There is no doubt that at a basic needs level of income, nutrition and energy, as examples, small increases can lead to substantial improvements in well-being. Once higher levels of affluence have been reached, further increases in these measures, show diminishing returns in terms of well-being effect – at the extreme, further income increases may in fact cause negative returns to overall well-being (Dietz et al. 2009). Findings in the O'Neill et al. (2018) study show that in rich countries, resource consumption can be reduced drastically, without a concurrent

reduction in human well-being – should this not be where we concentrate our efforts to make a change? They suggest that a restructuring of provisioning systems will be required in order to achieve at least basic needs at a much lower rate of resource use.

The difference between economic growth and development needs to be made clear. While development needs to continue, this should not rely on economic growth. Material throughput as the engine that drives economic growth cannot continue to increase due to the existence of planetary boundaries (Goodland and Daly 1996). The cycle of interdependence between economic growth and development needs to be broken (Fischer et al. 2012). What is needed is a way to reduce the maximum social wants, which would then cause a reduction in consumption – possibly to a level below the planetary boundaries and into the 'safe and just space' for everyone.

Problems with this solution

We have seen that 'alternative hedonism' would indeed be a way that humanity could move ahead positively towards, and possibly into a 'safe and just space' to live. The challenge would be achieving this change and convincing people that this is both possible and desirable, where we will all not be worse off. It should be made clear that any changes in policy that support 'alternative hedonism' are not a restriction of freedoms, but an opportunity to more easily live a better life. Because we are looking at social aims as well as planetary boundaries, it would be acceptable to support changes that improve lower consumption for example, if this improves overall well-being and a reduced existential risk from environmental degradation. Precise satiation figures would differ due to various factors such as culture, religion or other circumstances.

I have deliberately not tried to look into the ways the transition from our current situation to 'alternative hedonism' could occur, as this would be too much for a piece like this. What does seem clear is for this change to

be effective, it must be implemented as widely as possible, ideally globally to avoid rebound issues, where consumption is just shifted into other areas (Alcott 2008) and for development to not follow the same unsustainable pathways, with its inevitable increase in consumption. Rich Western countries should take the lead after causing most of the sustainability problems we are faced with now (Goodland and Daly 1996; Verhofstadt et al. 2016). This would mean this change could be taken more seriously, with a greater chance it would be taken up by developing countries too, counting as a move towards improved global social justice and equality.

This would possibly avoid developing countries going through the same high-consumption economy that most Western countries are in now. If this was not the case, planetary boundary problems would escalate and any changes made in developed countries would lead to rebound in developing countries (Alcott 2008). This is not an attempt to keep the developing countries underdeveloped, but rather to shift the focus so that all countries can move in a direct way towards well-being, rather than towards higher consumption. This would reverse the current trend of further economic divergence, towards greater levels of equality. "Psychology, sociology, economics, behavior and culture" are the major obstacles of achieving sustainability, rather than our scientific understanding of the problems (Levin 2012, p. 433). Changing all of these at the same time is hugely challenging of course, especially in extremely variable social and cultural contexts.

Currently there are a small number of groups trying to move in this direction and away from reliance on consumerism (Soper 2008), but this is happening despite the system. Social and political systems would have to change drastically to ensure support for precisely these groups that manage to simplify their lives and reduce levels of consumption (Gambrel and Cafaro 2010). The current interest in plastic pollution is an example of an awakening of awareness of humanity's environmental impact – this

must translate into new social attitudes that then affect policy-makers and production lines, where practices like unnecessary packaging and deliberate obsolescence are no longer tolerated. Conviction to internalize the externalities for carbon emissions as proposed by Broome (2010), is another example of great changes that could make a difference.

While corporations and advertisers have the power to convince us that we need things that do not lead to greater well-being, it is difficult for more people to behave sustainably as this is not readily supported. In this scenario, reduced consumption is not seen as an automatic trade-off, but an alternative lifestyle, associated with a lower stress level and more time to spend within a stronger and happier society. Upscaling of 'alternative hedonism' from small alternative local groups would have to happen with the help of numerous concurrent changes that make this scenario self-supporting. These could include changes to taxation policy (Fernández et al. 2011) and campaign-finance regulation for example, to restore decision-making power to the people directly affected, rather than those profiting from consumption-reliant policies. Policies and regulations should be built to directly benefit well-being as the goal (Diener and Seligman 2004), focussing on improvements in the social, health and economic spheres of people and communities, rather than indirect and limited measures, such as GDP (Kubiszewski et al. 2013). For example, the ability to define realistic goals and to then develop the skills to achieve them should be a target of a stable upbringing (Lerner 1997) – within an atmosphere of 'alternative hedonism', these goals would contribute to social development, rather than a narrower economic measure. Despite many objections, (Costanza et al. 2009) GDP is still often used as the easiest way of measuring 'progress' and its growth is targeted by economists and politicians,.

Once large numbers of people are convinced of a world built around 'alternative hedonism', there could be a snowballing effect, with an

increase in political support, followed by, for example legislative changes to further speed up the continuing societal evolution.

It is sometimes argued that prosperity needs to be achieved before we can turn our attention to changing and reducing our impact and becoming more sustainable. At a basic needs level this is understandable, but this is no longer possible when we already have such a large impact on the planet and planetary boundaries eliminate the option of a continued status quo, the way it was developed when the world had a much lower population (Daly 2005).

Even though it is not clear if 'alternative hedonism' would allow us to reach the 'safe and just space', the changes that would occur with this philosophy would be positive. People that do not rely on consumption to improve their well-being could more readily accept that further reductions in consumption are necessary, because of greater empathy shown to others, including future generations and other species that share our planet. Even if this strategy fails to reach the 'safe and just space', there is very little potential downside, with the double dividend of the strategy ensuring improved quality of life, while also promoting improved living conditions for those living below basic needs.

Conclusion

Developing satiation points would be a great way that we can better understand at what point of consumption their well-being no longer increases. By acting on this understanding, progress could be made to reduce unnecessary consumption and get us closer to the 'safe and just space'. 'Alternative hedonism' is a way to change what is most important to people – a move away from valuing consumption and towards appreciating a strong society and the value that can be gained from that. By acting on these values, which have been distorted by Western society, well-being will depend less on consumption and humanity should be able

to move satiation points to lower levels of consumption, increasing the chances of ending up inside the 'safe and just space'.

It should not be about how to keep up economic growth, but how well-being can be improved in a sustainable way. As Dodds (1997) makes clear, well-being is undermined by insatiability, because of environment limitations we have. By aiming for endless growth and consumption, humanity will end up changing the conditions we live in and end up forcing harsher restrictions on ourselves. We need to handle limited resources in a way that our hand is not forced in the future. 'Alternative hedonism' is an opportunity to restrict resource use, ultimately allowing humans to enter the 'safe and just space'.

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Ich versichere, dass ich diese Master-Arbeit – bei einer Gruppenarbeit den entsprechend gekennzeichneten Teil der Master-Arbeit – selbstständig verfasst und keine anderen als die angegebenen Quellen und Hilfsmittel benutzt habe. Ich versichere, alle Stellen der Arbeit, die wortwörtlich oder sinngemäß aus anderen Quellen übernommen wurden, als solche kenntlich gemacht und die Arbeit in gleicher oder ähnlicher Form noch keiner Prüfungsbehörde vorgelegt zu haben.

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