TRANSCRIPT

Moving Toward the Doughnut: Differences Between Nations

Rohan Hazell:

Achieving regenerative and distributive economies is the new paradigm set out by Oxford economist, Kate Raworth.

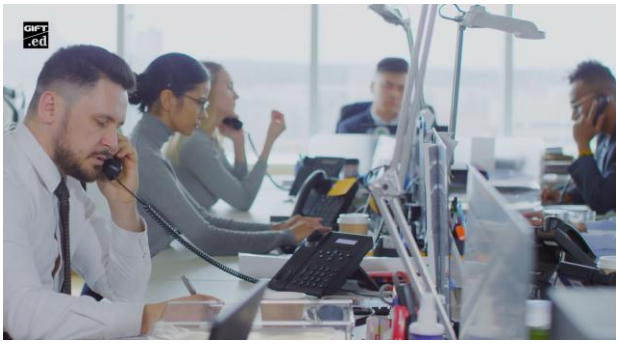
But how can we get there? This journey, while universal in its goal, varies significantly based on each nation's unique starting point and resources.

Ms Raworth explores how lower- and middle-income countries can benefit from leapfrogging, while higher-income nations need to overcome the challenge of “lock-in.”

Kate Raworth:

Every nation in the world needs to move towards the Doughnut. And I believe every country needs to put in practice dynamics of becoming regenerative and distributive. And that's going to look different according to each country's starting point.

In some ways, lower-income and middle-income countries have the chance of leapfrogging past lock-in of degenerative technologies, as they have already done with smartphones and telecommunications. They didn't go through the stage of telephones being attached to buildings. They've leapt into everybody having a phone. And that's distributed by design. It means everybody is connected to an information network. It has the potential of a far more distributed future.



Think, too, of energy. The 20th century energy model was oil rigs and pipelines owned by large corporations who centralised the value in a few hands. 21st century, we have solar panels and wind turbines, which can be dotted across houses and schools and hospitals and government offices, and can be distributed in their ownership, so people can own the capacity to generate energy, clean energy, which can be an income stream for a school, a house, a hospital, a home. These lower income countries, when they get the investment to invest in that solar energy, can actually leapfrog towards a more distributed form. And it's really important that as countries create that clean energy system, it doesn't become owned and centralised in a few hands, but it actually fulfils its potential for being distributed by design. It's asking to be, because it's a distributed technology.

Thinking about regenerative industries, again, we've all around the world inherited industries that are degenerative by design. But I think many lower- and middle-income countries that have also kept closer to traditional practices, of course, have been circular economies. There are, I'm sure, villages around the world that still have a very circular relationship with the resources that are produced and the waste that is de-composted and then regrown in the village, strong connection with the materials that are locally available. And it's the stream of plastic pollution that breaks that cycle.

How can everybody in the world learn from those countries and those societies that have actually long practised a circular system? Even my own nation, I would say 100 years ago, before the arrival of fossil fuels and plastics, had a much more circular system in play in communities, in its use of textiles and woods and cloth and the soil.

We need to recover what our great-great-grandparents knew. We need to recover that and then connect it with 21st century technologies of electrification through distributed solar and renewable energy, through 21st century communications and technologies that allow us for ideas to travel through the commons so ideas can travel globally and materials circulate more locally. It's called cosmo-local production, and I think it's the future for rural economies, especially in the global south. I think it brings the potential everywhere. Let me say that high-income countries, they have the finances, they have the resources, for sure. They also have the lock-in.

I was in London yesterday, a city that has been locked into cars. Like many cities in the United States, locked into the private car, locked into fossil energy, locked into transport networks and energy systems that need to be dismantled. And there's a real struggle to unlock that lock-in. So

countries that are at the point of investing in the future of our energy system, in the future of our transport system, that is a key moment.

Are we going to create a degenerative, divisive one that centralises value and locks us into degenerative material use? Or are we going to leap, as we've all done with smartphones? Are we going to leap to renewable energies and leap into circular manufacturing? That to me is the potential of this for lower-income countries to not make the mistakes and the degradations that high-income countries have locked themselves into.

Rohan Hazell:

While lower-income countries face the dual challenge of meeting people's basic needs while remaining within planetary boundaries, they can learn from the experiences of higher-income nations and reimagine their pathways to prosperity to be more regenerative and distributive. For their part, high-income nations can adopt more circular practices to minimise resource consumption.

Sharing of ideas, learning and best practices through the commons and creating localised solutions are therefore key to facilitating collaboration while also enabling countries to address challenges that are unique to them.