Reaching the Doughnut:
Civic Republicanism to Save The Planet

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Abstract

Considering the severity of the climate crisis, this dissertation argues for a political system shift, from neoliberalism to civic republicanism, for the effective implementation of the post-growth Doughnut Economic Model (DEM). The transition to post-growth systems- specifically the DEM- is essential for addressing the climate crisis. Green growth can no longer be the solution to the climate crisis, as the absolute decoupling of material resources and economic growth is not possible, instead an overall reduction in consumption and energy throughput through the post-growth transition is required. The DEM provides the first comprehensive post-growth economic model, prioritising both sustainability and human wellbeing through the ecological ceiling and social foundation.

The DEM's requirement for wealth redistribution, has raised implementation challenges with scholars claiming that citizens are too self-interested to embrace redistributive changes. The dissertation argues that this does not make the DEM unfeasible but rather brings into focus the need to shift political systems- to change citizens attitudes towards redistribution and just systems like the DEM. Neoliberalism's promotion of hyper individualism and economisation has created self-interested wealth-orientated citizens, who do not have a strong enough sense of civic duty for the promotion of the DEM. A move to civic republicanism for its advancement of citizen interdependence, self-governance, the common good and civic virtue, provides a promising political system for encouraging civic duty and willingness to overcome redistributive challenges for the DEM.

While the whole system transition from neoliberalism to civic republicanism will not be easy, elements of the civic republican tradition have been implemented or promoted in neoliberal society, with growing success. Citizens' assemblies and devolution can help promote self-governance and participatory democracy while also encouraging civic virtue by including citizens in decision making. Compulsory sustainability service provides a mechanism to begin working toward sustainability goals, while also encouraging civic virtue and support for the common good by involving citizens in community work. While these strategies show great promise, this is only the beginning for civic republican development. If civic republicanism is to successfully implement the DEM more research must be done to ensure participatory mechanisms can be adapted to successfully deal with the contentious wealth redistribution issues that are implicated in the DEM. However, given the urgency of the climate crisis, and the failings of neoliberal society to address the issue, progressing this research is necessary. Civic republicanism's commitment to developing virtuous interdependent citizens is our best hope for successfully implementing the Doughnut Economic Model, and dealing with the climate crisis.

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List of Abbreviations

DEM	Doughnut Economic Model
GGGI	Global Green Growth Institute

List of Diagrams

Introduction

The climate emergency is the defining crisis of our time. The planetary boundaries framework, which monitors nine critical earth systems essential for human survival, reveals the worsening of the crisis: six boundaries have now been crossed, pushing the planet into danger zones with potentially catastrophic irreversible consequences (Richardson et al, 2023: 4). A comparison between the 2009 and 2023 frameworks shows no meaningful progress in trying to alleviate planetary pressure- boundary transgressions have doubled, and none have returned to safe operating levels (Stockholm Resilience Centre, 2025).

Capitalism has played a significant role in the climate emergency. Its promotion of economic growth, profit maximisation, and mass consumption for capital accumulation, has led to alarming levels of pollution and waste as well as unsustainable levels of non-renewable resource extraction (Meadows et al, 2005; Jackson, 2019; Hickel and Kallis, 2020). Free market capitalism and the endorsement of hyper individualism has justified government's inaction in climate policy (and social policy more broadly) (Brown, 2015; Steger and Roy, 2021). Current voluntary carbon commitments such as the Paris Agreement's target to not surpass 1.5 degrees above pre-industrial level, have not been aggressive enough to tackle the severity of the crisis and the 1.5-degree target was surpassed in 2024 with no sanctions (World Meteorological Organization, 2025). There is now a serious call for "trail-blazing climate action in 2025" because the status quo of growth based economic systems is proving futile (United Nations, 2025). Effective prevention requires a re-evaluation of current economic and political systems and the adoption of radical climate policy (Barry, 2019a; Hickel, 2022; Kallis et al, 2025). Hence, contending that ecological sustainability is unattainable within the existing capitalist growth paradigm (Meadow et al, 2005; Jackson, 2017; Kallis et al, 2018), this dissertation advocates for the implementation of Raworth's Doughnut Economic Model (DEM) as an alternative approach (2017) and asks: **How can a shift from neoliberalism to civic republicanism support the promotion of Raworth's Doughnut Economic Model?**

This dissertation argues that neoliberalism's emphasis on hyper-individualism and self-interest is fundamentally incompatible with an economic framework grounded in collective, bottom-up action (Brown, 2015: 32). For the DEM to effectively challenge and transcend entrenched capitalist growth institutions, the political landscape must be reorientated around civic virtue, public deliberation, and collective responsibility- to promote effective civic duty (Honohan, 2002: 1). It is for this reason that civic republicanism is argued as essential to the DEM's successful realisation.

Chapter one unpacks how capitalism's growth-driven model fuels ecological harm and argues that transitioning to a post-growth system- specifically the DEM- is essential for addressing the climate crisis (York and McGee, 2016; Kallis et al, 2018). It demonstrates the incompatibility of economic growth and sustainability, arguing that continued mass consumption and production will cause irreversible planetary damage (Meadows et al, 2005: 147). It analyses Raworth's Doughnut Economic Model (2017) as the strongest working post growth model, arguing that it provides the most suitable replacement for capitalism. Instead of pursuing GDP, the model aims to create a system that "thrives in balance" (Raworth, 2017: 28), by including key aspects of post-growth economies like scaling back economic activity to remain within planetary limits, and prioritising social welfare (Fioramonti, 2024; Kallis et al, 2025). The chapter concludes by exploring the practicality and implementation challenges- especially regarding wealth redistribution- that have arisen within the model (Zamora Bonilla, 2022; Milanovic, 2018; Krauss, 2017; Schokkaert, 2017). These criticisms provide the basis for the second chapter on the promotion of Civic republicanism.

Chapter two argues that the implementation of the DEM requires a shift in political systems. First rejecting neoliberalism, it is argued that its promotion of hyper individualism and economisation make it incompatible with the DEM (Brown, 2015: 17-37). Neoliberalism- the promotion of the free market and individual liberty over government intervention (Steger and Roy, 2017: 6), has created an economised political system that views humankind only as *homoeconomicus*-rational and self-interested. This view has justified limited government intervention, leading to the erosion of community and civic virtue (Cahill and Konings, 2017: 26). It argues that implementation of the DEM- as an economic model rooted in bottom-up citizen action (Krauss, 2017: 456)- is unfeasible in a political system which is so rooted in self-interest.

By contrast, "civic republicanism promotes interdependent citizens who communally deliberate to realise societies common good" (Honohan, 2002: 1). The three components of civic republicanism: freedom as non-domination; common good; and civic virtue (Pettit, 1997; Honohan, 2002; Cannavò, 2016), cultivate the community and civic duty needed to successfully promote the DEM. The chapter rebuts liberalist criticisms of elitism and perfectionist political philosophy, arguing that these intrinsic concepts of good are a classic republican trait rather than civic republican, which understands virtue instrumentally (Lovett, 2015: 6-7). Civic republicanism can cultivate the communal participatory environment needed to justly implement the collective DEM, by organically promoting civic virtue and a common good.

Chapter three explores civic participation initiatives that have had some success in promoting civic duty in neoliberal society and show promise for the development of civic republican society: citizens' assemblies (Smith and Setälä, 2018), devolution (Berkes, 2010); and civic sustainability service (Barry, 2012). Citizens assemblies are becoming increasingly popular in Western states for advising on single-issue policies like Brexit,

reproductive rights, and climate change (Smith and Setälä, 2018). Further advancing participatory democracy, Ostbelgien has implemented a permanent assembly, while still nascent- only dealing with municipal issues- it shows great promise (Velghe et al, 2025). Devolution has been implemented, but mainly to appease independence tensions and boost economic growth (Mackinnon, 2015; Tomaney, 2016). However, scholars have noted it shows promise as a way to localise decision-making and involve citizens in policy making in large nation states (Berkes, 2010). Finally, sustainable citizenship service, a compulsory form of community service where citizens work to progress societies sustainability goals (Barry, 2012: 260). While sustainability service has not been implemented, compulsory service is a common part of neoliberal society with military and jury service (Barry, 2012: 260). Sustainable service would not only provide ecological benefits but citizenship benefits- building civic virtue and connecting citizens to the community (Dagger, 2006: 26). While these strategies provide a good springboard for the progression of civic republicanism, this dissertation acknowledges that they are just beginning of civic republican development. If civic republicanism is to be successfully implemented and progress the model, these participatory strategies must be tested on more high-stakes redistributive issues of the kind implicated by the DEM.

As such, the concluding chapter explores future research opportunities that test how participatory strategies can be used for more conflictual issues, to understand how civic republicanism can best support the implementation of the DEM.

Chapter 1: The Doughnut Economic Model as the Post-Growth Solution

This chapter introduces Raworth's Doughnut Economic Model (DEM) as the post growth solution to the climate crisis. Green growth is not a suitable ecopolitical system, relying too heavily on resource intensive economic growth and mass consumption which the planet cannot support (Meadows et al, 2005; Hickel and Kallis, 2020; Kallis et al, 2025). As the most complete postgrowth economic model, the DEM is proposed as the most suitable replacement to capitalism. A discussion of the model is followed by an analysis of DEM challenges acknowledging potential implementation issues.

Green Growth

The Current Focus

Economic growth is the economy's "capacity to supply increasingly diverse economic goods to its population" (Kuznets, 1973: 247). Since growth has become synonymous with economic health (Jackson, 2017: 3), entrepreneurs are continually pushed to maximise profit and capital in a competitive "grow or perish" dynamic, to ensure continued business expansion (Kallis, 2017: 9). Compelled to continue expanding production, increased resource consumption is inevitable, simply to remain competitive (York and McGee, 2016: 78). However, natural resources are finite, and even with long term resource re-generation, the planet cannot support the rate at which natural resources are consumed especially if economic growth is sustained (Georgescu-Roegen, 1999; Hickel and Kallis, 2020; Kallis et al, 2025). Continuation on this growth trajectory will cause "collapse'- "an uncontrolled decline in both population and human welfare" by 2100, caused by increased health issues, conflict over resources, mass inequalities, and environmental disasters" (Meadows et al, 2005: xi; Kallis et al, 2025: 63).

Green growth arose in the 1980s as a counter to *The Limits of Growth* (Meadows et al, 1972) claiming that economic growth and environmental goals can be reconciled (Mol and Spaargaren, 2000: 19), through green investment- public and private investments that cut emissions, boost efficiency, and protects ecosystems (UNEP, 2011: 2). This derives from the Environmental Kuznets Curve- shaped as an inverted 'U', it claims that environmental degradation will increase in the early stages of economic growth, but as economic growth continues and investment and technologies become cleaner,

degradation will peak and fall. Thus, environmental quality improves with higher economic growth (Cole, 2003; Dinda, 2004; Costantini and Monni, 2008). Scholarship claims that planetary degradation is a result of market failures rather than economic growth itself, the fall in degradation will occur when the market failures are addressed with government green stimulus packages in technological innovations, and environmental industries (Bowen and Fankhauser, 2011; Jacobs, 2013; Polewsky et al, 2024).

Its offer of a continued 'good' life led to the depoliticisation of the growth argument, justified by economic rationality and deemed a matter of common sense (Machin, 2019: 209). This has led to its political hegemony over the last four decades and the sidelining of post-growth alternatives, especially in western governments (Machin, 2019; Buch-Hansen and Carstensen, 2021). Current green growth plans include: the UK's Net Zero Growth Plan (2023); the EU's Green Deal Industrial Plan; and the US' Inflation Reduction Act (Department for Energy Security and Net Zero: 2023). Governments are investing large sums into infrastructure and technology to develop low carbon industries like wind turbines; electrified transport; clean heat; and sustainable materials (Department for Energy Security and Net Zero: 2023). Between 2021 and 2022, it was estimated that the UK invested £50 billion into growing low-carbon sectors, including a £160 million initial investment into the 'Our Floating Offshore Wind Investment Scheme' (Department for Energy Security and Net Zero: 2023). Green Growth is not limited to western governments, with global organisations like The Global Green Growth Institute (GGGI) promoting green growth policy in developing countries. The aim is to continue working to promote their economic development but doing so in a way that encourages green growth (GGGI Country Programs, 2025). The UNEP and OECD have also published reports promoting green growth, providing guidance to countries on policy making for a green growth economy (UNEP, 2011; OECD, 2011).

Moving away from Green Growth

A strategy that maintains economic growth by shifting to sustainable investment, preserves the core aim of growth and investment, leading to continued reliance on unsustainable resource consumption, albeit in different sectors (Meadows et al, 2005: 147). Green growth scholars will rebut this, claiming that the re-orientation toward investments in green technology ensures more efficient resource use so reduced resource quantity per unit of production (Alcott, 2005; York & McGee, 2016).

However, as Jevon's Paradox illustrates while micro analysis will indicate a correlation between increased efficiency and reduced resources use, aggregate analysis of production highlights that improvement in efficiency will lead to increased resource use in the long run (York and McGee, 2016: 77). Efficiency resource reduction leads to cheaper production costs, allowing producers to reduce consumer prices to increase

demand and consumption which in turn increases profit and further investment (Alcott, 2005: 9). This cyclical structure of demand growth and investment indicates that long term, improved efficiency from green investment would only support increased resource use and mass consumption (Gunderson and Yun, 2017: 242-243). A study researching the Jevon's paradox rebound, indicated that since the implementation of green growth, "there has been no evidence of dematerialisation, and economy-wide energy rebounds of 78%-101%" in the USA, UK and some other European countries (Brockway et al, 2021 *as cited in* Kallis et al, 2025: 65).

Green growth would require absolute decoupling- "GDP grows while material use, and emissions decline enough to keep the economy within planetary boundaries"- to successfully tackle the climate crisis (Kallis et al, 2025: 65). Research indicates this has not happened and is unlikely to occur (Wiedmann et al, 2015; Hickel and Kallis, 2020; Kallis et al, 2025). GDP is still coupled to resource use- fossil fuels, biomass, minerals and metals- across multiple nations and material categories- which is why the Jevon's rebound is occurring and why degradation is not relenting with economic growth (Wiedmann et al, 2015; Kallis et al, 2025). While there has been some relative decoupling for some materials (fossil fuels in Europe), there is not the sustained absolute decoupling needed to reduce pressure on the planet (Wiedmann et al, 2015; Haberl et al, 2020). Even with the promise of future green technologies, global projections predict that the absolute decoupling for effective green growth is unlikely (Hickel and Kallis, 2020: 483).

Thus, green growth cannot maintain unsustainable lifestyles while solving the climate crisis. Unable to decouple from resource use, green growth will continue to "deplete resources [and] emit waste", placing stresses on the planet that if not managed will cause irreversible ecological damage and social deprivation (Meadows et al, 2005: 147). It is with this conclusion that post growth alternatives must be considered.

Post-Growth Alternatives to Green Growth

Post-Growth is an umbrella term for research that explores non-growth economic structures (Kallis et al, 2025: 62). It encompasses; the steady-state economy, degrowth, and the wellbeing economy (Fioramonti, 2024: 867). While these economies slight vary in their priorities, they are united in the goal of ending economic growth and moving away from GDP and thus overlap in many ways.

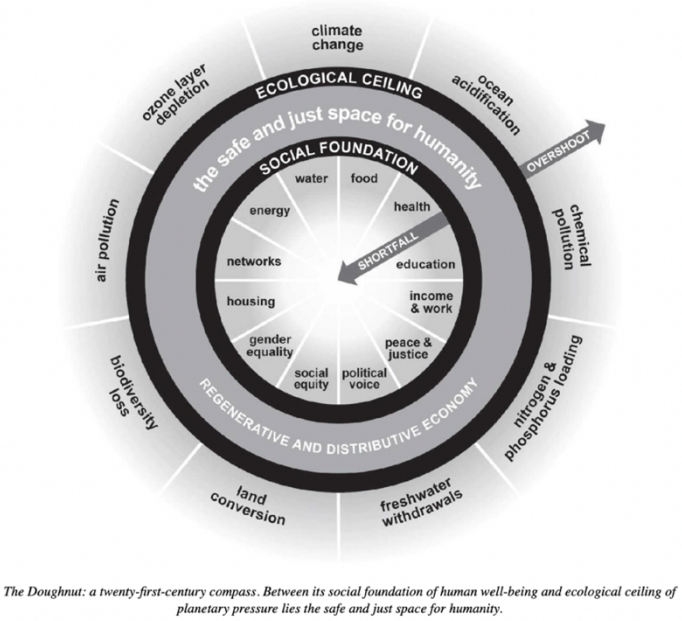
The steady- state economy (Daly, 1992; Booth, 1998; Lewis and Conaty, 2012; Czech; 2013), envisions a stable economy where population, capital, and resources are constant, continual long-term growth has stopped (Czech and Daly, 2004: 598-599). Degrowth also aims to reach a sustainable balance (Kallis et al, 2012: 173), but it additionally emphasises the need to first reduce economic throughput to remain within planetary boundaries (Kallis et al, 2012: 173). Degrowth is a planned economic

reorganisation away from growing economies to steady systems that have reduced resource use (Martinez-Alier, 2009; Kallis et al, 2012; Kallis et al, 2018; Hickel, 2021). While degrowth emphasises a transformation of the economic system the other two position themselves within the existing capitalist system (Kallis et al, 2025: 62). Steady state envisions stability in the existing system rather than transformation (Kerschner, 2010; Kallis et al, 2012). The well-being economy proposes shifting the focus of economic activity from GDP growth to indicators such as ecosystem health, social trust, and collective well-being but maintains capitalism (Fioramonti, 2024, 2017; Trebeck and Williams, 2019). By transitioning to the well-being focus, mass production and economies of scale that promote individual profiteering would be replaced with "shorter value chains and local empowerment", to give local entrepreneurs economic opportunities while also reducing resource waste and overproduction (Fioramonti, 2024: 871). Degrowth also places emphasis on welfare including redistributing wealth, re-directing investment to clean industries, reducing working hours; and promoting relational goods over material goods (van den Bergh and Kallis, 2012: 913; Kallis et al, 2018: 309).

The consensus among post-growth economies, is developing an economic system that drastically limits economic activity and instead aligns with ecological limits and human flourishing (Fioramonti, 2024; Kallis et al, 2025). As all the economies offer useful post-growth solutions, this dissertation does not prioritise one over another but instead promotes an economic model that incorporates all these economies, by including wellbeing measures, economic reorganisation away from growth, and a steady state within planetary boundaries- The DEM.

Raworth's Doughnut Economic Model: The Post-Growth Answer

Besides establishing the principal objective of maintaining social welfare while also protecting the environment, post growth scholarship has struggled to develop "concrete tools and implementation methodologies" (Tran, 2023: Abstract). Research has largely focused on small scale working examples (Nelson and Schneider, 2019; Lange, 2018; Jackson, 2017; van den Bergh, 2017; Alexander and Yacoumis 2018; Borowy, 2013; Infante Amate and González de Molina, 2013, Johanisova et al, 2013; Bilancini and D'Alessandro, 2012). These are usually limited to individual industries or community developments rather than system altering economic models. The all-encompassing nature of Raworth's model compared to other post growth proposals; is why this dissertation wishes to promote it as the future of post growth thought. Raworth's Doughnut Economic Model (DEM) provides a fully articulated economic model, that limits economic activity through ecological limits and human flourishing, as the post growth economies promote. In line with post-growth scholarship, Raworth aims to "change the goal" (2017: 23) moving away from economic growth to an economic system that will benefit "humanity's long-term goals" (Raworth, 2017: 13). Her theory supports the human welfare and ecological protection basis of post growth balance by developing an economic goal that meets "the human rights of every person within the means of our living-giving planet" (Raworth, 2017: 23). It is from this ideological basis that she creates the Doughnut Economic Model. Figure 1 shows the DEM; replicating a doughnut, the aim for humanity is to live within the ring which is "both an ecologically safe and socially just space for humanity" (Raworth, 2017: 37). To protect humanity no one is to live below the social foundation, and to protect the environment no one is to live beyond the ecological ceiling.



The Doughnut: a twenty-first-century compass. Between its social foundation of human well-being and ecological ceiling of planetary pressure lies the safe and just space for humanity.

Figure 1: Doughnut Economic Model (Raworth, 2017: 24)

The social foundation provides everyone access to life's basic necessities- removing the stark inequalities seen in the current competitive capitalist system. Raworth defines the "basics of life" by the United Nation's Sustainable Development Goals: "sufficient food; clean water and decent sanitation; access to energy and clean cooking facilities; access to education and to healthcare; decent housing; a minimum income and decent work;

and access to networks of information and to networks of social support" (Raworth, 2017: 37). Alongside the aim of reaching economic equality, Raworth calls for "gender equality, social equity, political voice, and peace and justice" within the social foundation (Raworth, 2017: 37).

The outer ring is the ecological ceiling. Living beyond the ecological ceiling long term, would lead to "an overshoot of pressure on Earth's life-giving systems", causing the planetary and humanitarian "collapse" that Meadows et al discuss (2005: x). Raworth marks the boundaries ceiling through planetary boundaries theory (2017: 39). Planetary boundaries theory defines key Earth System processes as quantifiable limits, beyond which lies the risk of unacceptable environmental change (Rockström et al, 2009; Steffen et al: 2015; O'Neill et al, 2018; Richardson et al, 2023). Since exact tipping points are uncertain, crossing a boundary signals entry into a danger zone that could lead to irreversible damage (Rockström et al, 2009: 3). The nine boundaries- shown in figure 1 on the outer ring- encompass biogeochemical cycles, physical systems, and anthropogenic impacts, offering a comprehensive measure of Earth's critical systems (Richardson et al, 2023: 1). This framework clarifies the scientific basis of climate risks supporting more informed decision-making around economic activity and environmental responsibility (Steffen et al, 2015: 736).

By setting an ecological ceiling and social foundation, the DEM requires redistribution to ensure everyone is getting their "basics of life" (Raworth, 2017: 37) and no groups are over consuming (Raworth, 2017: 95). For Raworth redistribution should not only focus on income but also resources that create wealth, be it "land, money creation, enterprise, technology or knowledge" (Raworth, 2017: 95). Redistribution requires working through challenging zero-sum decisions- whereby gains for "one person or group must come at the expense of the others" (Chinoy et al, 2024: 53). While the zero-sum win-lose mindset is narrow, as eventually everyone will 'win' by stabilising the planetary system and solving the climate crisis, evidence shows that zero-sum thinking does shape public attitudes towards wealth redistribution (Davidai, 2016: 1). The narrow-minded fear of losing out thus becomes an implementation barrier.

Exploring Challenges

Practicality and implementation of the model has been the focus of criticism. Critics strongly back the theoretical ideology, acknowledging "the absurdities that characterise our present economic systems" (Schokkaert, 2017: 126) and the impacts it is having on the planet (Dragicevic, 2024; and Stewart, 2023; Ribiero and Picanco Rodrigues, 2023; Doyle, 2022; Hodgson, 2018; Schokkaert, 2017; Krauss, 2017). However, scepticism arises around implementation, questioning whether given the redistribution challenges, it is truly feasible to replace economic growth and capitalism with the DEM (Dragicevic, 2024; Campbell and Stewart, 2023; Ribiero and Picanco Rodrigues, 2023; Zamora

Bonilla, 2022; Milanovic, 2018; Schokkaert, 2017; Krauss, 2017). Or whether gulf between the change and the political reality is just too big for governmental leaders to willingly adopt the DEM (Campbell, 2023: 24:30). Since the model was published, aspects of the DEM *have* been implemented into society, with Amsterdam, Sydney, Berlin, Melbourne, and Brussels all mobilising the Doughnut city (Goodwin, 2021). But this has not been dramatic system change only minor localised policy adaptions (Schokkaert, 2017).

With the theoretical structure, answers to questions of feasibility and redistribution are not explored, meaning the book cannot provide a rebuttal to the implementation arguments. However, the comprehensible writing style used, implies the book is "aimed at interested lay person" (Krauss, 2017: 456). Indicating that Raworth does not see change coming from institutions and government leaders, but citizen led redistribution and system overhaul. Additional comments by Raworth highlighting the importance of "citizens assemblies" (Stewart and Campbell, 2023, 15:45-16:40**),** and the community-based work of the Doughnut Economics action lab (2025), strongly indicate this bottom-up emphasis.

The citizen-led approach faces similar feasibility criticisms, with Raworth being accused of "we-ism"- an assumption that everyone on Earth shares the same objectives (Milanovic, 2018: 1). Deeming it laughable that Raworth thinks the "we" she so often refers to could "somehow be magically transformed from acquisitive and money-grabbing beings (…) to people (…) who do not really care about wealth and income" (Milanovic, 2018: 1). Looking at citizens zero-sum attitude to redistribution (Davidai, 2016: 1), it is hard to rebut this Milanovic's claim. It is argued that Raworth is too idealistic (Schokkaert, 2017: 130), with many not convinced by the hope Raworth holds for a mass change amongst national communities (Milanovic, 2018; Krauss, 2017). These criticisms are exacerbated by Raworth being unable to provide "practical socio-environmental examples to guide supporters in creating a safe and just space for humanity" (Krauss, 2017: 457), implying that while there is hope there is no practical answers.

The critics are right to acknowledge the challenge that the DEM faces in implementing what would be some very difficult redistributive policies and decisions. Certainly, in the neoliberal political system where people are "money-grabbing beings", redistribution feels utopian (Milanovic, 2018: 1). However, rather than dismissing the DEM, this dissertation brings into focus the role shifting political systems could play in helping implement the DEM. Arguing that embracing civic republicanism over neoliberalism could cultivate the civic virtue and duty needed to invoke bottom-up DEM implementation.

Chapter 2: The Move to Civic Republicanism

Having established the utility of Raworth's Doughnut Economic Model (DEM) for developing the post growth economy this chapter argues that the limited implementation of the DEM is not a flaw of the model but a constraint of the political system within which it is trying to grow. Neoliberalism fosters self-interested citizens through its approach to competition and individualism (McMahon, 2015; Cahill and Konings, 2017; Steger and Roy, 2021) making it unsuitable for the bottom-up promotion of the DEM. A move to civic republicanism for its focus on deliberative democracy, and freedom as non-domination, common good, and civic virtue (Pettit, 1997; Honohan, 2002; Maynor, 2003) can advance the active citizenship needed to implement the DEM

Defining Neoliberalism

Economic Neoliberalism

Since its emergence in the late 20th century, neoliberalism has shaped not only contemporary economic thought but western political and social structures (Brown, 2015: 17). Although this section examines neoliberalism as a political system, its economic foundations are essential for understanding its broader influence.

Neoliberalism arose in response to Keynesian economics, rejecting state intervention in favour of self-regulating markets (Venugopal, 2015: 173). Key figures such as Friedrich Hayek, Milton Friedman, Ludwig von Mises shared a commitment to individual liberty and the role of the free market (Cahill and Konings, 2017: 26). Thus, the neoliberal argument broadly asserts that for true liberty to exist, the global economy must be rooted in the principles of free-market capitalism (Steger and Roy, 2021: 6), rather than state intervention. The principle of voluntary transactions assumes that rational economic agents act in their own self-interest, fostering economic efficiency and individual freedom (Cahill and Konings, 2017: 26). Liberty derives from the individuals' ability to make voluntary transactions within the free-market and freely pursue their own interest (McMahon, 2015: 141). With economic activity dictated by the rational economic agent, the economic role of the government is limited (Madra and Adaman, 2013: 696).

In *Capitalism and Freedom,* Friedman outlined the government's economic role as three functions: to establish legal rules for market conduct, to address negative externalities, and to intervene on paternalistic grounds (only when individuals cannot make rational economic choices) (2002: 27-34). Beyond this Friedman's neoliberalism promotes the D-L-P approach to government economic action. Deregulation, liberalisation, and privatisation- which reduces tax to stimulate investment, cuts social services and the welfare state, relies on monetary policy rather than government intervention to manage

inflation (even at the cost of employment), weakens labour unions, and removes trade barriers to encourage free markets (Steger and Roy, 2021: 24).

The extent to which neoliberalism reshapes the role of government demonstrates its transition from an economic framework to a broader political structure (Cahill and Konings, 2017: 26-27). However, as the next section explores, its impact extends even further, fundamentally altering concepts of democracy, community, and citizenship through the economisation of human life.

Neoliberalism as a political system

Neoliberalism's concept of *homo economicus*- the self-interested, rational economic actor- has economised social and political life (McMahon, 2015: 141). Having made assumptions about human action, neoliberalism has gone beyond economic theory, embedding assumptions of man as connected to wealth and capital into wider human understanding (Ng and Tseng, 2008: 267). Neoliberalism transforms people into "little capitals", constantly competing to enhance their value and marketability in every aspect of life (Brown, 2015: 36). Individuals must continually self-invest- through education, work, or personal growth- to increase their value and appeal to investors (Brown, 2015: 36). The value of progressing in higher education, for instance, is increasingly determined by its economic return and career prospects rather than its role in personal or societal development (Pyyry and Sirviö, 2024: 505).

Neoliberalism's economisation erodes the concept of community and the common good (Brown, 2015: 36-37). The framing of actions in terms of their maximisation of self-interest, weakens collective structures that once provided social support and maintained community (Peters, 2012: 135-136). Public goods, previously upheld by the state are increasingly defunded and privatised, leaving individuals to seek alternatives through personal wealth (Broom, 2011: 142-143). This shift creates a vicious cycle in which people act in their own self-interests because collective institutions can no longer support them, yet by doing so, they further undermine the structures necessary for communal well-being (Macleavy, 2016: 252).

As the state prioritises free-market logic over social cohesion, citizenship itself is redefined. Instead of representing a shared identity and common responsibility, citizenship becomes a monetised legal status that states offer based on economic benefit (Shachar and Hirschl, 2014; Mavelli, 2018). As Milanovic states, neoliberal individuals are "money-grabbing beings", shaped by competition and self-advancement rather than a sense of collective duty (Milanovic, 2018: 1). The more the state submits to neoliberal rationality, the more individuals are conditioned to prioritise their own economic value over the welfare of broader society (Peters, 2012: 136).

Neoliberalism's incompatibility with the DEM

In addition to neoliberalism's prioritisation of economic growth, its conception of social welfare (Steger and Roy, 2021; Cahill and Konings, 2017); equality (Kotz, 2018) and community (Brown, 2015) is incompatible with the DEM.

Given neoliberalism's assumption that there is limited need for state intervention and public goods, because of the free market (Jackson, 2017: 3), there is no role for social welfare (Venugopal, 2015: 173). By contrast, the DEM relies heavily on state intervention (not necessarily in its current form), to provide the social protection needed to ensure that individuals are not falling below the social foundation and are able to access life's necessities (Raworth, 2017: 37). Focus on collective social services that can support society rather than a free market that focuses on individuals is necessary for the DEM's promotion of a sustainable balanced future (Raworth, 2017: 132). Neoliberalism cannot provide this (Steger and Roy, 2021: 24).

Another major contradiction is attitude toward equality and redistribution. Raworth advances redistribution and the creation of the social foundation so that everyone can have access to the "basics of life" and "social equity, (...) peace and justice" (Raworth, 2017: 24). In a political system that creates and indeed depends on inequalities to drive competition and individual endeavours (Navarro, 2007: 56), redistribution is seen as counter-productive because it deters entrepreneurship and thus threatens economic efficiency and growth (Somers, 2022: 665). For example, America's top 1% makes 139 times as much income as the bottom 20% as of 2021 (Congressional Budget Office, 2024). Letting inequalities grow by cutting back on the welfare state and giving power to the free market, causes competition and innovation to thrive as citizens work hard to grow their individual wealth in fear of poverty (Kotz, 2018: 437). This outlook on redistribution and equality is not compatible with the DEM.

The erosion of community under neoliberalism further illustrates its incompatibility with DEM. Neoliberalism fosters a hyper-individualised society, where people are encouraged to maximise their own market value rather than work toward the common good (Brown, 2015: 36-37). DEM, by contrast, requires a strong sense of communal responsibility and willingness to collectively change consumption lifestyles (Krauss, 2017: 456). Individual capital accumulation systematically undermines the cooperative ethos required for the DEM (Raworth, 2017: 78-80).

For DEM to succeed, society must reject the neoliberal political model that promotes *homo economicus* and economisation and move toward a political system rooted in collective well-being (Raworth, 2017: 95). Without such a transformation, the hyper-individualistic, market-driven nature of neoliberalism (Cahill and Konings, 2017: 26-27) will continue to undermine efforts to build a just and sustainable economy.

A Role for Civic Republicanism

Several scholars have highlighted elements of civic republicanism that can address some of the DEM's implementation challenges (Barry 2012; Cannavò, 2016; McGeown, 2025). Civic republicanism's focus on freedom as non-domination (Pettit, 1997; Costa, 2009); the common good (Honohan, 2002; Barry, 2019b) and civic virtue (Honohan, 2002) will illustrate this.

Civic republicanism is concerned with "enabling interdependent citizens to deliberate on, and realise, the common goods of an historically evolving political community" (Honohan, 2002: 1). Opposing neoliberalism's self-interest and freedom from government interference, civic republicanism emphasises community and interdependence to promote civic virtue. Additionally in promoting freedom as non-domination, civic republicanism calls for the removal of hierarchical governments and the promotion of deliberative self-governance (Pettit, 1997; Honohan, 2002; Maynor, 2003; Barry 2012; Cannavò, 2016).

Civic republicanism and its emphasis on public political engagement stems from early Wester Republicanism. Cicero, in the Roman period, advocated active citizenship, warning that private self-interest would erode political *virtus* and lead to despotism (Maass, 2012: 84). Consistent political involvement was seen as essential for balancing power and preventing tyranny (Maass, 2012: 84). These ideas echo earlier and later thinkers like Aristotle and Rousseau. Aristotle introduced the concept of Political Association, arguing that pursuing private interests undermines long-term collective good, and that individuals should unite in pursuit of the "good society" (Sulek, 2010: 382-383). Similarly, Rousseau's *The Social Contract* emphasises 'the general will'- the idea that citizens must actively participate in shaping collective laws to maintain freedom and prevent domination (Rousseau, 2016). These foundational principles of civic republicanism went on to influence major historical movements, notably shaping the political structures of the American and French revolutions (Sellers, 2003).

There is however an important difference between civic republicanism and classic republicanism. Classic republicanism now often referred to as civic humanist republicanism (Ardent, 1958; Pocock, 1975; and Rahe, 1992), promotes a perfectionist political philosophy. Arguing that there is a specific conception of 'the good life' that active citizenship should work toward, and anything that is not in line with those values is corrupt and should be combatted (Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy, 2022d). This is elitist, raising questions as to who gets to decide what 'the good life' looks like and what role this leaves for the rest of the common good. Civic republicanism's freedom through non-domination directly juxtaposes perfectionist philosophy, actively calling against elitist hierarchies instead promoting citizen contestation and equal self-governance to ensure non-domination (Pettit 1997: 138-43). It could be claimed that promoting civic republicanism for the establishment of the DEM is a form of perfectionist political

philosophy. However, while enforcing the DEM does place boundaries on what 'the good life' can be, Raworth never specifies how the DEM society will look and function (2017). If anything, Raworth is clear to promote an active role for citizenry- over government institution- in the creation of DEM society (Stewart and Campbell, 2023, 15:45-16:40). Civic education (Honohan, 2002: 174) is also fundamental in building support and understanding of the DEM to ensure it is collectively reached rather than forced on society.

The domination of liberalism and neoliberalism throughout the 20th and 21st century has left little room for the progression of civic republicanism. Some claim there is little sense in its promotion, as the citizenry of the modern multicultural nation-state is too large and diverse to function as an active deliberative body (Bielskis, 2008; and Lang, 2018). It is true that the contemporary neo-liberal nation-state does not reflect the traditional concept of the state discussed in Cicero, Aristotle, or Rousseau's works- where the state was small enough for everyone to be physically present for political decision (Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy, 2022 a, b, and c). However, while the physicality may not be replicable, the civic republican ideas of deliberation and civic participation can be replicated in alternative forms- these will be explored in chapter three.

Core Principles of Civic Republicanism

Freedom as non-domination

Civic republicanism offers a distinct concept of freedom- freedom as non-domination (Pettit, 1997, 138). Unlike liberal ideas of freedom as non-interference, non-domination focuses on protecting individuals from *arbitrary* interference (Pettit, 1997: 138-43). Arbitrary interference refers to interference that "intentionally worsens an individual's choice situation" (Costa, 2009: 404). For example, if the state interferes without mechanisms- like citizen deliberation- to ensure it serves the common good, that interference is arbitrary (Costa, 2009: 404). Thus, civic republican freedom requires not the absence of people as with neoliberalism, but rather ensures that in the presence of people, there is no unnecessary interference that could limit equal power (Pettit 1997: 138-43).

Pettit does not specify what freedom as non-domination institutions look like but is clear that "the accumulation of power in a few hands by means of mechanisms of checks and balances" must be avoided (Costa, 2009: 405). Other scholars stress the importance of self-governance for non-domination as it facilitate deliberation and contestation amongst all citizens (Cannavò, 2016; Williamson, 2010; Honohan, 2002; Curry, 2000). For domination to be avoided, citizens must have "some ability to control the conditions of their collective life" (Honohan, 2002: 188), which is why citizen deliberation is so fundamental. Williamson takes this further arguing that "the most fundamental claim of contemporary civic republican thought is that freedom (…) [is] the ability to influence

through participation in collective action" (2010: 188-9). To maximise freedom as non-domination, collective deliberative self-governance must be extended to the "economy, civil society, and even the family" (Cannavò, 2016: 72) to ensure equality is maximised in all community aspects.

Civic republicanism's promotion of deliberation and contestation not only fulfils the DEM's bottom-up implementation strategy but also guarantees long-term success as citizens will only implement a DEM society that satisfies collective contestation and deliberation. Additionally, the society wide self-governance for equality, helps fulfil "the basic needs" and the call for "gender equality, social equity, [and] political voice" (Raworth, 2017: 24)

Common Good

It has been established that civic republicanism teaches the importance of community and concern for the common good. But a conception of common good should be established. Common good can take many forms- as illustrated by Honohan (2002: 151-153)- but it is important to establish one that avoids collectivism or oppression (Honohan, 2002: 151). It is also essential that the definition recognises the natural environment as part of the common good, to help promote the ecological ceiling (Barry, 2008: 5).

This dissertation asserts the common good as working to "keep positive possibilities open and minimising common risks" (Honohan, 2002: 152). While this definition is broad, it is useful for its sustainability framing, with Honohan weighting risk on concern for the survival of future generations or those yet to be identified (Honohan, 2002: 152). It also recognises that risk is not just societal but environmental- providing examples like "environmental goods of clean air, water, and sustainable growth" (Honohan, 2002: 152), which supports the DEM's ecological ceiling. Also, a broad definition of the common good creates capacity for deliberation and contestation and avoids the risk of creating a perfectionist oppressive prescription of common good.

While the broad definition is provided for framing purposes, it should not be forgotten that the ultimate common good is the promotion and implementation of the Doughnut Economic Model. Through equal contestation and deliberation, civic republican society must collectively establish a just and sustainable way to preserve the DEM, making sure everyone can stay within the ecological ceiling while also maintaining the social foundation.

Civic Virtue

Building a successful civic republic requires developing an adequate civic virtue- "an extensive responsibility to the larger political community" (Honohan, 2002: 147). The

argument for civic virtue is that the "freedom of interdependent citizens ultimately depends on their active commitment to the collective goods they share" (Honohan, 2002: 149). Specifically, virtue promotes a willingness to put the common good ahead of self-interest; engage in political power structures for the purpose of community; cooperate with other citizens; and appreciate interdependence (Cannavò, 2016: 75).

Unlike classic republicanism, where there is one conception of 'good', that society should aim to collectively reach (Lovett, 2015: 7). Civic republicanism defines civic virtue by its instrumental rather than intrinsic purpose, the cultivation of virtue is necessary for ensuring everyone can benefit from a well-ordered yet self-governed republic (Lovett, 2015: 9).

Considering *homo economicus*, the challenge is less the content of civic virtue, but the creation of virtuous citizens in those that it does not come naturally to. And cultivating in a way that is not domination. Civic education is fundamental for the cultivation of civic virtues (Maynor, 2003) providing a way to "unite citizens and to train them in the capacities needed for public service" (Honohan, 2002: 174)

Civic education provides two teachings. The "awareness of interdependence and capacity for deliberation" (Honohan, 2002: 174). Awareness of interdependence provides teachings of the conditions of other citizens, as well as an understanding of the complexity of civic history and the concerns that confront society now (Honohan 2002: 173). This avoids education that solely appreciates difference but rather learns to live within it (Honohan, 2002: 174). Second the capacity for deliberation. Students should be taught how to engage in "public disagreement" and how deliberation and contestation can be effective for self-governance (Peterson, 2011 as cited in Sears, 2012: 104). Effective deliberation requires the ability to form personal judgements while also considering other opinions, so that collective decision-making occurs without desire to dominate (Honohan, 2002: 174-5). Civic education teaches people to not view themselves as individuals but as a member of society that work together in pursuit of the common good (Peterson, 2011: 129).

For the implementation of the DEM, including environmental education in civic education is vital for collective bottom-up action (Schild, 2016: 25). Firstly, in cultivating a citizenry that respects the environment and puts the community ahead of self-interest (Honohan, 2002: 151) it should be easier to implement a redistributive resource minimal economic structure because there is a collective understanding of its benefit (Bell, 2004: 42). Implementing DEM specifically, is more challenging, as to satisfy self-governance the DEM cannot be forced upon citizens, it must be collectively realised (Williamson, 2010: 188-9). While the state could promote it non-arbitrarily as it is in the interest of the common good (Costa, 2009: 404), it is important for citizens to understand why the DEM is in their common interest, if it is to have long-term success. Promoting a "responsible attitude towards the sustainable development of Planet Earth, an appreciation of its

beauty and an assumption of an environmental ethic" (Bell, 2004: 37) through environmental education, illustrates to citizens what they would lose without the pursuit of post-growth DEM.

By no means will the move from neoliberalism to civic republicanism be easy, given how embedded neoliberalism is (Cerny, 2008: 2). Additionally, since civic republicanism is yet to be tested fully in large-scale contemporary society, there is no guarantee that it will be able to support the promotion of the DEM, especially when it comes to deliberating on some of the more system altering issues like redistributive zero-sum questions.

However, what is clear from this chapter is neoliberalism's focus on individualism and economisation is incompatible with the DEM (Raworth, 2017: 78-80). For society to implement the post growth DEM, there must be active citizenship and a collective understanding and willingness to pursuit the common good (Schild, 2016: 30-31). Civic republicanism's focus on- self-governance, deliberation and contestation, the common good and civic virtue- makes the promotion of civic duty and active citizenship for environmental protection and the pursuit of the bottom-up DEM strategy possible (Barry, 2008: 5). The final chapter will explore civic participation initiatives that have had success thus far in neoliberal society and show promise for the development of civic republican society. While the chapter offers ways the initiatives can progress societies move into civic republican frames of thinking, it also acknowledges that these initiatives have not yet been tested on the contentious redistributive issues contested by the DEM

Chapter 3: Transitioning to Civic Republicanism

There has yet to be an attempt to transition from neoliberalism to a civic republican political model, so there is no evidence as how to best implement civic republicanism nationally. However, elements of the transition can be seen in current initiatives that build local participation in community politics. These initiatives are citizens' assemblies (Warren and Pearse, 2008; Bächtiger et al, 2018; Dryzek, 2012; Dryzek et al, 2019; Niessen and Reuchamps, 2019) devolution (Keating and Cairney, 2012; Berkes, 2010; Armitage, Berkes, and Doubleday 2010; Jeffery, 2009; Larson and Soto, 2008), and civic sustainability service (Barry, 2012). While these initiatives cannot guarantee the implementation of civic republicanism, many scholars consider them to be useful springboards for the exploration of more transformative participatory strategies (Honohan, 2001; Berkes, 2010; Barry, 2012; Grant; 2013; Crick, 2016; White, 2020).

Citizens' Assemblies

Civic republicanism faces the challenge of implementing deliberation within today's large, pluralistic democracies (Costa, 2009: 402). While the mass physical assemblies of ancient city-states (Aristotle, 2007; Rousseau, 2016), are no longer feasible, opportunities for contestation and deliberation can take other forms. Such as citizens' assemblies. A citizens' assembly is a form of deliberative mini-public- "a diverse body of citizens is selected randomly to reason together about an issue of public concern" (Smith and Setälä, 2018: 300). There are many forms of mini-publics -as illustrated below- the difference being size and time (Smith and Setälä, 2018: 30). Citizens' assemblies being the longest and largest mini publics with deliberative characteristics, makes them the most valuable for civic republicanism (Smith and Setälä, 2018: 301). Assemblies congregate physically, to enable group deliberation. Subject experts are present to provide education and evidence, ensuring that participants understand the information enough to engage in detailed discussion (Elstub et al, 2021: 1). While some view the presence of experts as a weakness due to potential selection or expert bias (Fournier et al, 2011; Elstub and Khoban, 2023), this risk can be mitigated with careful selection. Given experts' crucial role in enabling informed deliberation and contestation, this risk is worthwhile. Unable to

Types and characteristics of mini-publics

	Number of participants	Time	Output	Example
Citizens' jury / reference panels	12–36	2–5 days	Recommendation in a citizens' report	Oregon Citizens' Initiative Review, US MASS-LBP, Canada NewDemocracy, Australia
Planning cell	25 in each cell, but run in parallel or series to include 100s	2–7 days	Citizen report collates findings from different cells	University of Wuppertal, Germany
Consensus conference	10–24	3 days (plus preparatory weekends)	Recommendation in a citizens' report	Danish Board of Technology
Citizens' assembly	99–150	Series of weekends	Recommendation	British Columbia/ Ontario, Canada, Ireland
Deliberative poll	200+	Weekend	Post-deliberation survey	Center for Deliberative Democracy, US
G1000	1000	1 day	Series of votes on proposals	Belgium

Figure 2: Types and Characteristics of Mini-Publics (Smith and Setälä, 2018: 301)

facilitate deliberation with the whole population, the random and stratified sampling method provides a representative and diverse sample of the population (Elstub et al, 2021: 1). This ensures that all demographics are represented, and opinions are diverse enough for contestation and deliberation (Elstub et al, 2021: 1).

Citizens' assemblies are becoming popular for single issue policy recommendations (Elstub et al: 2021: 1). First gaining traction in 2004, a citizen assembly was used in British Columbia for electoral reform (Warren and Pearse, 2008: 1). Citizens were charged with deliberating and creating a new electoral system, and the assembly recommendations were then taken to national referendum (Warren and Pearse, 2008: 1). While the assembly recommendations did not get referendum support, the citizen assembly structure was deemed successful, popularising it as a policy tool in other countries (Warren and Pearse, 2008: 1). Ireland has also pioneered citizens' assemblies, running the Convention on the Constitution (2013); Gender Equality Citizens' Assembly (2020); Biodiversity Loss (2022); and the Drug Use Citizens' Assembly (2023) (The Citizens' Assembly, 2025). Other countries have begun to adopt Citizens' Assemblies for national issues: France (2020), UK (2020) (Cherry et al, 2021: 46), Netherlands (KNOCA, 2025), Spain (KNOCA, 2021). Their growing popularity indicates societies willingness to progress deliberative structures, with evidence showing that citizens are keen to work together, and when well designed and resourced, assemblies do provide well informed public opinion on major policy issues (Renwick, 2017: 24).

While citizens' assemblies have been moderately incorporated into neoliberal society, realising the ideals of civic republicanism requires a more radical approach- one that ensures their permanence and grants them genuine policy-making authority. A permanent assembly structure with policy-making power, will help embed active citizen participation into society. Incorporating a permanent assembly- still with citizen rotation- into parliament has been completed on a small scale in Ostbelgien- a German speaking municipality in Belgium (Niessen and Reuchamps, 2019: 3). The Ostbelgien structure is the same as other assemblies, but with the addition of a citizen council- an overseeing body that sets assembly agendas, allocates resources, and monitors parliamentary implementation of recommendations (Niessen and Reuchamps, 2019: 11-13). A citizen council decentralises institutional power, facilitating more citizen participation and policy influence within deliberative structures (Niessen and Reuchamps, 2019: 13). Only adopted in 2019, the Ostbelgien Model is still nascent (Niessen and Reuchamps, 2019: 3). Before it can be replicated elsewhere, more research is required. Firstly, scaling up a model for 77,000 people (Niessen and Reuchamps, 2019: 4) onto a nation of millions of people. Devolution- discussed in the following section- could provide a solution. Additionally, whether it can deal with contentious system-altering issues. The Ostbelgien model only has decree over community competences like cultural matters, health, and education, and therefore has not been tested on zero-sum issues like redistribution, so this must be trailed (Velghe et al, 2025). Mass implementation of the permanent model

will be challenging and likely contested by neoliberal economists, but Ostbelgien should be a signal of hope that society is closer to civic republicanism than initially theorised.

Devolution

Devolution is defined as "devolving powers to the local level through decentralisation and community-based programmes, (...), and increasing user participation and shared management responsibilities" (Berkes, 2010). Scholars argue devolution is the answer to civic republicanism's active civic society (Honohan, 2001; Parlow, 2008; Crick, 2016). Devolution often occurs when there is political disconnect between citizens and government performance- by bringing government closer, citizens have more power over the decisions that affect their livelihoods (Berkes, 2010). Currently, devolution is used as a last resort appeasement tool for independence tensions (Mackinnon, 2015: 47). But in this case, devolution would be embraced nationwide to advance civic republican values in large states.

The plurality of contemporary states makes it difficult to efficiently appease individual issues, meaning groups often get ignored (Bishin, Dow and Adams, 2006: 212). Giving power to local governments limits the size of the governed polity, making it easier to listen to citizens and involve them in policy making (Local Government Association, 2025). For citizens, the link between political involvement and community change becomes clear, increasing willingness to be politically engaged (Local Government Association, 2025). Devolution also helps develop community (Shackleton et al, 2002). Central governments can no longer be blamed for local problems, so citizens must work collectively alongside local governments to cultivate the society they desire (Shackelton et al, 2002: 2).

Devolution can enhance both deliberation and freedom as non-domination. For deliberation, devolution helps manage population size by reducing the government to polity ratio, making deliberative structures more accessible and proportional (Ribot, 2007: 43). Deliberative structures still will not reach everyone, but they are more representative and viable at the local level (Ribot, 2007: 43). Creating a suitable environment for deliberative structures; devolution could improve permanent citizens' assembly prospects, as the smaller devolved governments are a closer size to Ostbelgien (Niessen and Reuchamps, 2019: 4). Furthermore, while freedom as non-domination requires the full adoption of civic republicanism, devolution can help to weaken domination. As Pettit (1997: 138-43) argues, domination occurs when interference fails to align with citizens' shared interests. At the national level alignment is difficult, as there are conflicting interests across diverse populations (Bishin, Dow and Adams, 2006: 212). In contrast, devolved communities often share more cohesive values (Jeffery, 2009: 79), making alignment easier and policy interventions less dominating.

Currently, devolution implementation falls short of civic republican goals as it does not foster the participatory democratic renewal needed for social engagement (Tomaney, 2016: 551). English devolution for example, has prioritised its economic agenda over democratic revitalisation (Richards and Smith, 2015: 397). A focus on devolution for regional economic growth has sidelined the promotion of localisation for well-being and democratic trust (Warner et al, 2024: 739). The result is a top-down "metropolitan-led agglomeration growth model"- benefitting urban growth over community development- this reinforces local power asymmetries and undermines the social cohesion essential to civic republicanism (Warner et al, 2024: 754). To move toward civic republicanism, devolution must be reorientated back to revitalising active democracy, especially since the purpose of civic republican society is to promote a degrowth economy.

Civic Sustainability Service

Barry introduces the concept of civic sustainability service- a form of "compulsory service (enforced by the state) for sustainable (including but not limited to strictly ecological or environmental) goals" (Barry, 2012: 260). Its community and sustainability emphasis would help promote the Doughnut Economic Model (DEM), by beginning to elevate pressure on the planetary boundaries, and civic republicanism by promoting community (Barry, 2012: 261). It requires citizens give up time to engage in sustainability activities like beach clean-ups, working on community-based recycling schemes or becoming development workers overseas (Barry, 2012: 260). The service could be a blocked year post-education or a couple of hours a week over a longer period (Barry, 2012: 260). There would also be exceptions to the compulsion, but this would be considered on a case-by-case basis.

Its ecological and citizenship benefits make it worth pursuing in current liberal society and civic republican society, but to do so potential criticisms must be addressed. Right libertarian academics will argue that a liberal society cannot adopt compulsory civic service, as obliging citizens to do something against their will is inherently oppressive and thus implementation of a sustainability service would be the act of an authoritarian state (Nozick, 1974; Rothbard and Hoppe, 2015; Block, 2021). This is an extreme reaction to liberty and one that does not stand in current neoliberal society. Consider the continued use of jury and military service, and imposition of taxation in neoliberal society (Barry, 2012: 260), to reject sustainability service on the grounds of infringement on liberty would require the state to reject these other forms of state intervention, which they have not. There can be abusive forms of state power, but there is nothing oppressive about citizens doing services for the public good (Barry, 2012: 259).

Sustainability service requires a connection with the community both naturally and socially, that helps disconnect individuals from self-interest and builds civic virtue and common good (Barry, 2012: 267). Civic virtue can develop through an individual's service,

as the required community involvement increases awareness of the direct social and environmental benefits of community work, encouraging continued engagement (Barry, 2012: 267). Aligned with this dissertation's definition of common good as "keep[ing] positive possibilities open and minimising common risks" (Honohan, 2002: 152), Barry acknowledges a multitude of negative externalities that are reduced with sustainability service- "underlying structural causes of ecological degradation, socio-economic inequality, (...) and other non-ecological components of unsustainability" (2012: 265). While promotion of common good and civic virtue is obvious, the compatibility of civic republicanism and freedom as non-domination requires more justification. Since freedom as non-domination rejects arbitrary state interference (Pettit 1997: 138-43), compulsory sustainability service could be deemed a form of domination. However, Pettit acknowledges that interference that benefits the common interest of citizens is not domination but necessary for the maintenance of society (Pettit 1997: 138-43). So, as Dagger states, "If one can produce good reasons to believe that compulsory civic service will do significant good, for those who serve as well as those who are served, then the compulsion may be justified" (2002: 26). Sustainability service does good for the community and the individual. It supports essential ecological goals and helps sustain resources for collective and individual needs (Barry, 2012: 261), but also it benefits participants- empowering them, fostering leadership skills, and cultivating an "enlarged perspective" that enhances quality of life (Dagger, 2006: 26; Barry, 2012: 267). While future research is needed to consider the logistical implementation of the civic sustainability service, its civic and environmental benefits make its adoption necessary for the promotion of civic republicanism.

These initiatives help progress civic participation and deepen deliberative engagement within neoliberal society, helping develop the virtuous citizen needed for the implementation of DEM (Barry, 2012: 267). However, these initiatives only skim the surface of trailing civic republican decision-making and are yet to be adapted to address high-stakes redistributive issues of the kind implicated by the DEM- "land, money creation, enterprise, technology or knowledge" (Raworth, 2017: 95). As the conclusion will address, future research must continue to test civic republicanism's national viability to ensure it can successful support the DEM.

Conclusion

Capitalist society has adopted green growth to reconcile economic growth and environmental goals (Mol and Spaargaren, 2000: 19). However, mounting scepticism as to the viability of green growth (York and McGee, 2016; Hickel and Kallis, 2020), has renewed academic interest in post growth economies- steady state, degrowth, and wellbeing- as the solution to the climate crisis (Fioramonti, 2024; Kallis et al, 2025). Post growth economies challenge dominant green growth assumptions, arguing that absolute decoupling of economic growth from environmental degradation is not possible (Wiedmann et al, 2015), and reduction in overall consumption and energy throughput is required (Meadows et al, 2005).

Raworth's Doughnut Economic Model (DEM) provides the first comprehensive post growth model, including the post growth economy elements of limiting economic activity and promoting human wellbeing (Kallis et al, 2025: 62). The DEM is a circular framework where the doughnut's ring represents a "safe and just space for humanity" (Raworth, 2017: 24). To thrive, humanity must stay within the ecological ceiling to avoid environmental overshoot and above the social foundation to prevent inequality and deprivation (Raworth, 2017: 28, 37-39).

Key to the success of the DEM is the redistribution of "land, money creation, enterprise, technology and knowledge" (Raworth, 207: 95). However, this requires challenging zero-sum decisions (Davidai, 2016: 1), which scholar raise as a serious implementation challenge (Schokkaert, 2017; Milanovic, 2018), arguing that "money-grabbing beings", are too self-interested to embrace the redistributive changes (Milanovic, 2018: 1).

Rather than dismissing the DEM as unfeasible, this dissertation has brought into focus the role shifting political systems can play in helping implement the DEM. Arguing that neoliberalism's individualisation and economisation of mankind (Brown, 2015: 36-37) makes it ill-suited for the implementation of a bottom-up redistributive model. A commitment to the common good and a sense of civic duty must be instilled into individuals if they are to overcome self-interested zero-sum decisions and implement the DEM. It is in this context that the dissertation argued for a shift from neoliberalism to civic republicanism for the implementation of the model.

Civic republicanism focuses on interdependence pursuing the common good through participatory governance and civic virtue (Pettit, 1997; Honohan, 2002). In contrast to neoliberalism's emphasis on self-interest, it promotes freedom as non-domination, protection of the common good; and civic virtue (Cannavò, 2016). Freedom as non-domination demands dismantling hierarchical power in favour of self-governance and

collective deliberation (Pettit, 1997; Costa, 2004). This aligns with the DEM's emphasis on collective responsibility, by allowing citizens to be in control of their collective lives (Honohan, 2002: 188). Additionally, through teaching the importance of the common good and cultivating civic virtue through civic education (Honohan, 2002; Cannavò, 2016), civic republicanism builds the sense of civic responsibility necessary to overcome self-interested zero-sum DEM challenges. While criticism has highlighted the perfectionist and potentially elitist leanings of civic republicanism (Lovett, 2015: 6-7), these are mitigated by the broad definition of common good and the DEM's open-ended societal structure (beyond the ceiling and foundation), which allows citizens to define the 'good life' through deliberation and contestation.

Elements of the civic republican tradition have been implemented or proposed within neoliberal society, with growing success. These include citizens' assemblies which have been implemented for single issue policy advising in many western countries and has even had success as a permanent structure (Smith and Setälä, 2018; Niessen and Reuchamps, 2019). Devolution, which currently involves devolving power to areas to appease independence tensions and boost economic growth, shows promise as a way to localise decision-making to promote active citizenship (Berkes, 2010; Crick, 2016). Finally, civic sustainability service, while yet to be implemented, follows a similar structure to jury service or military service which are common in western societies (Barry, 2012). Acting as a form of compulsory service where citizens work on progressing sustainability goals (Barry, 2012), it would not only provide ecological benefits but citizenship benefits by disconnecting individuals from their self-interest and building a sense of civic virtue and responsibility (Dagger, 2006; Barry, 2012).

However, these strategies are still very small scale, and it remains an open question whether they can be effectively scaled up, to promote civic republican values at the national level (Papadopoulos and Warin, 2007; 457-460). In the case of participatory mechanisms- citizens' assemblies and devolution for example- serious questions remain as to whether they can be adapted to deal with the high-stakes redistributive issues of the kind implicated by the DEM. When deliberative bodies are faced with material losses rather than just ethical disagreements, participatory mechanisms must be able to navigate the intense contestation, if it is to successfully implement the DEM.

As neoliberalism continues to demonstrate its incapacity to confront the demands of ecological sustainability (Raworth, 2017: 78), there is serious need for alternative political systems if the DEM or other post growth solutions are to address the climate crisis. Civic republicanism, while not perfect, offers a promising solution. Its aim of to foster a sense of civic duty helps citizens understand the importance of reducing pressure on the planet and enabling implementation of the DEM.

To be sure that civic republicanism can work, further research is needed to assess whether self-governance and civic responsibility can be scaled up for large-scale

contemporary societies, and whether participatory strategies can be adapted to deal with contentious wealth redistribution issues. But given the urgency of the climate crisis, and the evident failings of neoliberal economies to address the issue, this research is not only desirable but necessary. In the absence of support for the promotion of post-growth under neoliberalism, encouraging civic responsibility and commitment to the common good among citizens- through civic republicanism, represents our best hope for beginning the post-growth transition and implementing the DEM.

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