

MASTER THESIS REVIEW

Author: Oscar Antonio Rodríguez Valdiviezo
Thesis: Analysis of the social foundation of the safe and just space framework: dimensions, indicators, and thresholds
Reviewer: Miroslav Syrovátka

Content

Ten years ago, Kate Raworth published a paper on “safe and just space” framework. The “doughnut” idea has attracted attention, but despite its popularity, the social dimension of the doughnut (“just space”) has not been adequately reviewed. This is where the thesis fits in: Oscar conducted an analysis and assessment of the social dimension. This covers mainly the questions of dimensions, indicators, and their thresholds. However, the historical background of the doughnut – which to various degrees followed the UN national reports, the MDGs, and the SDGs – is also interesting. Additionally, Oscar suggested complementary and substitute indicators respecting the original criteria. To show that his ideas are feasible in reality, he adjusted the original doughnut (“reinforced socially just space”) and compared the results.

Overall, I find the analysis rich and balanced (perhaps a bit strict with criticism of some indicators) and the suggestions mostly justified. Mistakes are only minor, e.g., the SDGs target for under-five mortality is 25 deaths (not 25%) per 1000 live births (p. 13).

Literature and references

The thesis is based on an adequate number of relevant sources that are correctly used and consistently cited. The author uses a relatively non-standard type of referencing (“According to (Raworth, 2012) ...”), but the style is consistent.

Formal requirements

The thesis format is standard, and the graphic layout is consistent. The thesis includes six tables and seven figures. Table 4, Table 6, and Figure 7 are essential and provide a clear overview of the suggestions and results.

The language looks correct, though the language style could be slightly easier to follow.

Topics for discussion

- Is the reference to MPI (i.e., World Bank, 2020) correct? (p. 16) What is the stance of the World Bank on MPI, given that the organization uses its own poverty indicator?
- In the health dimension, Oscar proposes substituting life expectancy for the coverage of essential health services (p. 14). In the social equity dimension, he suggests complementing the Palma ratio with Inequality-adjusted HDI (p. 24), which includes life expectancy. We can discuss two issues. (1) Whether the coverage of essential health services is superior to life expectancy. (2) Whether, instead of IHDI, the equity dimension would not be better served by some indicator averaging the inequality across several dimensions (e.g., inequality component of IHDI).

- When comparing the two socially just spaces, the dimensions proposed by Oscar have, on average, higher global deprivations. As the deprivations are the product of the indicators and thresholds, what can one say about this difference? Is it just a coincidence, or does Oscar apply stricter criteria than Raworth? There are some indications that the latter is at least partly true. In several cases (life expectancy, poverty line), Oscar suggests/uses higher thresholds.

Overall evaluation and proposed grade

The thesis provides an analysis, assessment, and re-design of the social dimension of “safe and just space” developed by Raworth. The analysis is well done and the shortcomings are relatively minor, so the thesis can still be awarded an A grade.

I do recommend the thesis for defense with grade A.

Date: 13th June 2022

Signature:

