



LEENAARDS FOUNDATION'S NEW PROGRAMMES SUSTAINABILITY, DEMOCRACY AND MEDIA

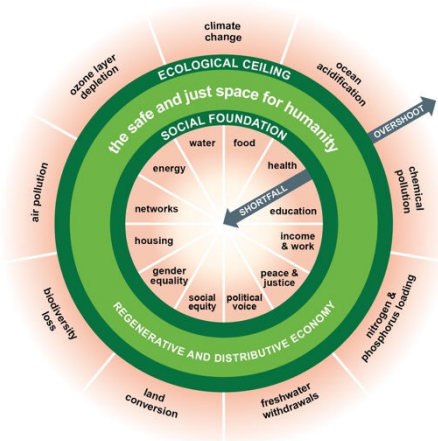
To address the pressing social and climatic issues of our times, the Leenaards Foundation Board has decided to launch two new programs focusing on major themes: democratic participation (support to both citizen participation projects and initiatives promoting reliable, independent information) and sustainability (support to projects aimed at respecting the earth's resources).

These two programs open new perspectives, while also offering the potential for cross-cutting action with the Foundation's three historical fields of action: culture, science and health, and social action. It should be noted that this broadening of support benefits from additional funds added to the regular budget granted by the Foundation.

SUSTAINABILITY PROGRAM: For a just and collaborative ecological transition

Our strategic orientations

Climate change, falling biodiversity, disruption of the nitrogen and phosphorus cycles, changes in land use, chemical pollution and freshwater use: six of the nine global limits have already been exceeded worldwide ([Science magazine Feb. 2015](#)). And the climate crisis is affecting Switzerland as much as the rest of the world, with temperature trends endangering our natural ecosystems and the health of our population. In this context, the IPCC reminds us to think not just in terms of planetary health, but also in terms of human well-being, by emphasizing the need for a **just ecological transition** that combines the efforts to tackle climate change with social inclusion. It's this double challenge that Kate Raworth has sought to represent with the [Doughnut model](#): planetary boundaries not to be exceeded as the "ecological ceiling", essential human needs to be met as the "social floor", and a just and safe space for humanity in between. The implementation of this ecological transition, i.e. the shift back within planetary boundaries, raises a number of social challenges insofar as disadvantaged populations suffer what might be called a "global ecological injustice": in terms of emissions, they are the least responsible for this crisis; in terms of adaptation,



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they are both the most affected by the effects of climate disruption and the least able to respond to it due to a lack of resources.

To respond to these global and local challenges, numerous initiatives on the theme of sustainability have emerged in western Switzerland, thanks to a stimulating context for civil society and a wealth of intellectual resources. This dynamic is potentially beneficial to the mobilization of public opinion and the convergence of all stakeholders in favor of strong sustainability. Many levers (climate plans, the Doughnut model, zero-carbon neighborhoods, circular economy projects) are already available and being used by public institutions and citizen organizations to promote concrete solutions, while other tools for change will have to be created through both societal and technological innovations.

Starting from the premise that respect for living beings is a prerequisite for the habitability of our planet, the Leenaards Foundation wishes to act on these opportunities, not only on a regional scale, but also in alliance with other national and international foundations and players. With its new program “For a just and collaborative ecological transition”, directly under the leadership of the Foundation Board, the Foundation intends to prioritize a long-term strategy of systemic change that considers both the causes of the climate crisis and its social and democratic implications. In this respect, the Leenaards Foundation aims to support citizen-based alternatives, institutional advocacy and new narratives in favor of legal policies and daily lifestyles that respect planetary boundaries and ensure the inclusion and well-being of all.

ALTERNATIVE PRODUCTION AND CONSUMPTION

This thematic axis is based on two pillars: **promoting social change towards a chosen sobriety** (reduction of the *per capita* carbon footprint) and **supporting the systemic ecological transition towards a circular economy** (decarbonization of economic flows).

a) Promote social change towards chosen sobriety:

The challenge is to reconsider our consumption habits and choices and reduce our carbon footprint, thanks to campaigns and associative training, advocacy for better information on product quality and impacts (labels, tags), etc. From the point of view of the “social floor” of the Doughnut model, this goal of **chosen** sobriety implies on the one hand facilitating access to more sustainable consumption (energy, food, mobility, housing) for the most disadvantaged, and on the other hand bringing the consumption practices of the more affluent closer to a baseline of needs deemed ecologically sustainable.

b) Support the systemic ecological transition to a circular economy:

The challenge is to maximize the decarbonization of our economic flows (production and services): recovery-reuse of materials, repair and reconditioning of objects, lending and sharing of tools and objects rather than buying, zero waste rather than recycling. These alternative offers of more sustainable goods and services must be accessible to the most modest in terms of price and territorial outreach.

AGRO-ECOLOGY AND RIGHT TO FOOD

This theme is based on three pillars: **promoting the shift of farms to agro-ecology** (preservation of soil quality and genetic diversity, socio-economic resilience - [more information from the Food and Agriculture Organization/FAO](#)), **establishing sustainable food systems** (equitable sharing of value and participation of all stakeholders), and **implementing the “right to adequate food”** (transformation of food aid and social food insurance - [definition by the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights/OHCHR](#)).

a) **Promote the shift of farming to agro-ecology**

With its thirteen dimensions, six of which are economic, agroecology is a well-established, global model that proposes an alternative, systemic form of agriculture that benefits farmers, society and the environment. Agroecology is in fact a solution for preserving soil quality and genetic diversity, and thus for tackling the current 6th mass extinction of biodiversity, largely due to the intensive use of pesticides by intensive farming.

b) **Set up localized, sustainable food systems**

A food system is made up of all stages, from production to waste management and recovery, via processing, logistics, distribution and consumption. Each stage must consider the social, environmental and economic elements of a given territory, while implementing a collaborative approach involving all stakeholders.

c) **Support implementation of the right to adequate food**

In June 2023, the citizens of Geneva incorporated the right to food as a fundamental right into the Geneva Constitution: *“The right to food is guaranteed. Everyone has the right to adequate food, and to be free from hunger (Art 38A).”* Implementing this right is an opportunity not only to rethink food aid schemes, but also to promote a just transition to sustainable food systems in the canton of Geneva and beyond.

=> The social dimension cuts across all three issues, from working conditions (fair remuneration for farmers) to access to organic and local food (short distribution channels, solidarity grocery stores, social food security).

NEW NARRATIVES AND CLIMATE ADVOCACY

This theme is based on two pillars: **new narratives for a different approach to well-being and the living world** (socio-cultural support, design mediation with non-human living beings, defending the rights of nature) and **climate advocacy** (scientific expertise, platforms for dialogue and public policy assessment, communication campaigns).

a) **New narratives for a different approach to well-being and the living world**

Narratives are essential for transforming our visions of the world and suggesting desirable futures. Our perceptions of environmental crises, our representations of well-being and our relationships with non-human living beings play a decisive role in our ability to change lifestyles and find new existential satisfactions. Inspiring documentaries, socio-cultural accompaniment, original and sensitive training, mediation through design or the

examination of new legal categories such as the rights of nature are all necessary to bring about this ecological redirection of our existence in the world.

b) Climate advocacy

Climate change calls for new public policies at all levels: municipal, cantonal and federal, but also for a new culture of political governance: more open communication between departments and more partnerships with civil society organisations. To achieve this, and avoid polarization, the most rigorous scientific expertise must be brought by the broadest possible coalitions including social actors, to fuel effective and fair political advocacy leading to operational proposals. While occasional thematic campaigns linked to referendum are often useful, long-term platforms are more likely to enable us to build a genuine dialogue with elected representatives, and to guarantee an ongoing, constructive assessment of their actions considering public reaction.

