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Title: From Homer Simpson to British Columbia's Wildfires: How Doughnut Economics Offers a Sustainable Solution.

Homer Simpson and wildfires share little beyond a connection to doughnuts. However, a new kind of doughnut is making waves in British Columbia (BC) and around the world, and it is not the sweet treat Homer craves. With the increase of climate crisis and shortfalls of traditional economic models, Doughnut Economics has emerged as a framework worth looking into that balances human social needs with environmental planetary limits, but there is a need to provide a snapshot for the limitations of Gross Domestic Production (GDP) as a sole measure of national welfare. By taking a closing look to examine the principles of Doughnut Economics and its relevance to addressing the roots of climate change, developed by Kate Raworth— which is a holistic framework that reimagines systems thinking by balancing social needs with environmental limits to address climate issues (Raworth, 2017) and perhaps, find a way forward towards middle ground.

This innovative economic model could not have arrived at a more important time as consumer behaviour, overconsumption and unsustainable resource use is high due to human needs while avoiding concerns of resource use and capitalism's drive for more as noted by Schokkaert (2019). Schokkaert continues to highlight that capitalism often overlooks environmental harm, treating it as an external issue. An example close to home, BC has experienced its five most severe wildfire seasons in the past eight years. Notably, the 2023 wildfire season has become the largest recorded in the province's history, burning over 534,000 hectares (BC Wildfire Service, 2023). In response, the BC Wildfire Service enhanced its preparedness by integrating Night Vision Imaging Systems (NVIS) into its operations ahead of the 2024 season, improving nighttime reconnaissance and mapping capabilities, plus, a more

robust communications platform which communities can access (BC Wildfire Service, 2025). As communities in Canada and the United States expand further into the wildland-urban interface—where human development meets forests—these intense fires, fueled by climate change and certain forest management practices, have created ideal conditions for devastating blazes (Owen, 2023). So, how is environmental harm an external issue and something to overlook with the 2025 summer season is just around the corner?

The increased frequency and severity of wildfires in BC highlights the real consequences of neglecting climate and environmental impacts in our current economic assessments. This oversight is further enhanced by our reliance on GDP as the primary dominant measure of economic health in the 20th century. However, an interesting thing is that GDP fails to account for environmental degradation and social wellbeing as one of its key architects recognized its limitations when Simon Kuznets warned Congress in 1934, "the welfare of a nation can... scarcely be inferred from a measurement of national income" (Schnurr, 2021). This highlights a significant flaw in how we assess economic success—mistakenly equating a country's total production of goods and services with the well-being of its people. Relying solely on GDP simplifies and overlooks national welfare and development like income distribution, environmental health, and quality of life (Schokkaert, 2017).

Doughnut Economics offers a new path to balance social needs with environmental sustainability. Rather than prescribing specific policies, it promotes a mindset focused on regenerative and distributive dynamics. Visualized as a doughnut-shaped model, and this model outlines humanity's "safe and just" zone for prosperity. The inner ring or boundary represents the social foundation—minimum standards for human well-being, including food security, clean water, healthcare, and housing. The outer ring or boundary signifies the ecological ceiling—

planetary boundaries that should not be exceeded, such as climate change and pollution. Between these rings in the middle lies the space where economic activity should operate, ensuring human welfare within environmental limits (Raworth, 2017).

Communities worldwide are adopting this model. In 2020, Amsterdam embraced Doughnut Economics to guide its urban planning and sustainability efforts, which the city "...has set forth the goal of becoming a circular city, aiming to reduce its dependency on primary raw materials by 50% by 2030 and achieve full circularity by 2050. Simultaneously, the city is committed to the objectives of the Paris Agreement, striving for a 55% reduction in CO2 emissions by 2030 and a 95% reduction by 2050 compared to 1990 levels. The aspiration is to be natural gas-free by 2040, aligning with the spirit of innovation and adaptation embodied in Amsterdam's motto, "learning by doing" (Benhrouz, 2024). In Canada, cities like Nanaimo and Victoria, in BC, where 81% of the economy revolves around service companies, the potential for transformation becomes clear. These businesses, particularly vulnerable to climate disruption and social instability, find in the doughnut model a practical pathway to resilience (Schnurr, 2021). By redefining success beyond mere economic growth, it offers a roadmap for thriving within our planet's means.

So, how did we arrive at this crisis point of unfortunate events? Traditional capitalism and its narrow focus on GDP and profit margins worked well for its time and purpose of rebuilding and expansion following the post-war era. However, just as the assembly line eventually gave way to new manufacturing methods, our economic models need to evolve. The warning signs have been flashing for some time, and the catalyst of shorter intervals between wildfire seasons is evident.

Cities are already proving it works. Now, the financial sector, traditionally the protectors of capitalism, is taking notice, as Simon Philp, FCPA and market vice-president of commercial banking for CIBC, notes, even small and medium-sized enterprises are implementing green initiatives, driven by a mix of conscience and pragmatism (Maki et al., 2022). Well, the numbers tell the story: companies that engage in these principles access lower interest rates on loans and report stronger shareholder value. When seven out of ten executives consider environmental and social factors in their strategic decisions, we are witnessing more than a trend, we are seeing the future of capitalism taking shape (Maki et al., 2022).

So, there will always be those that argue that this model might limit growth, but come on, you must admit the doughnut model is presenting a different story, inspiring creative solutions to business and climate challenges. From supply chain resilience to employee engagement, companies operating within the doughnut's boundaries “safe and just” zone are discovering that sustainability and success go hand in hand. So, we may not have many choices in the future if these wildfires continue, so we are better off to adapt to this new mindset and way of thinking. Doughnut Economics offers a practical framework while still honoring the innovative spirit of capitalism. Is it not about time we finally focused on the realities of the environmental planetary boundaries and social responsibilities?

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