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THE NOTE

A WHILE AGO, I was listening to a podcast about outer space policy. I remember neither the name of the podcast nor the person speaking, but I remember that sustainability was referred to simply as "long-term rationality". While clearly a reductionist account, the fact that we now hear experts on outer space speak about sustainability matters.

NOT ONLY is sustainable development applied to an expanding geography and to ever-increasing issue areas, it is also done in increasingly diverse ways, using a very broad range of approaches across the natural sciences, social sciences, humanities and the arts. And so, when Lund University decided to make a substantial invest-

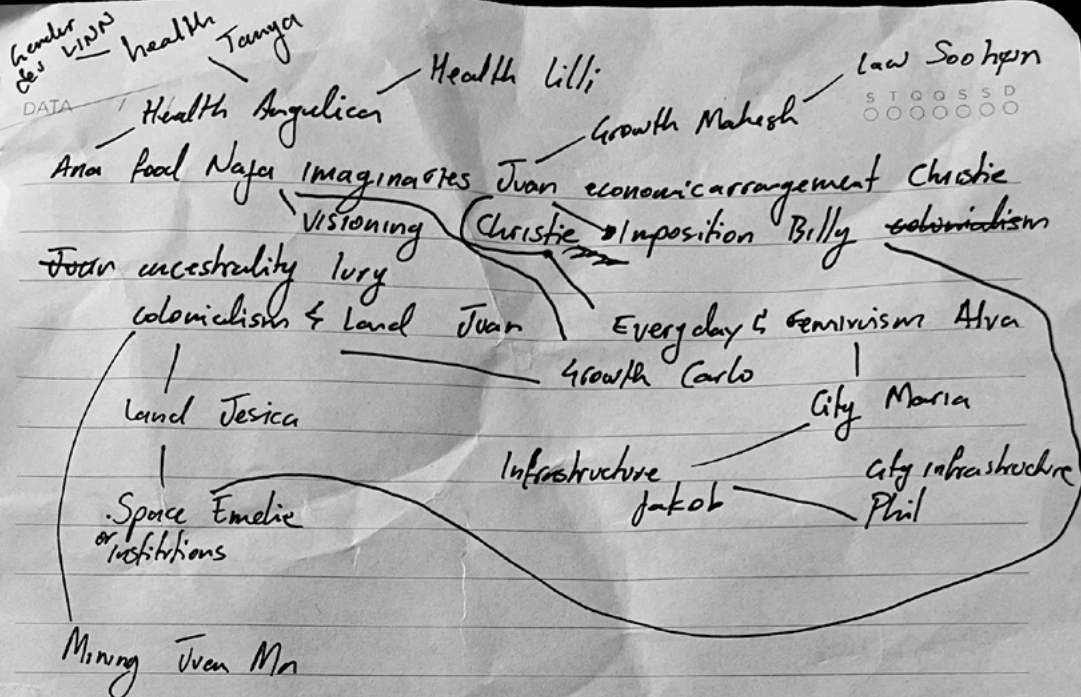
ment in sustainability scholarship by employing and educating doctoral students across the university – thereby setting up the Agenda 2030 Graduate School – a very strong community was created, characterised by both associations and disassociations.

THIS BOOK was conceived in the context of a workshop at the Lund University Malmö Theatre Academy, where those associations and disassociations were put on display. We used our bodies to create patterns based on prompts such as if the work we do imagines sustainability more in terms of harmony or more in terms of conflict, or how we orient ourselves on a continuum of past,

[present] and future. The result was a constantly shifting constellation, one moment of which was captured in this hand-written note by one of the doctoral students that I found much later in a drawer.

IMPORTANT TO note is that the patterns were ever-changing, not primarily because the work that the doctoral students do relates to many different parts of the world, societal systems or areas of life, but because of the approaches to sustainability that they take: whether they are leaning more towards problem-solving or more towards critique or how they imagine the relationship between the local and the global, to mention the two other prompts that we refer to in this book.

The note.



LOOKED AT from some elevated place in the room, the result may have been kaleidoscopic. For each turn of the cylinder, we would see something new. From that standpoint we can say that our outer space policy pod-caster clearly was wrong about one thing: by referring to sustainability as ‘long-term rationality’ in the singular.

THIS BOOK is a celebration of the community that is the Agenda 2030 Graduate School, but also a testament to the complexity and diversity of scholarship on sustainable development. Some time ago, Formas – the Swedish Research Council for Sustainable Development – described the many tasks for science on sustainable

development: to characterise and diagnose problems, to provide solutions and create dialogue, to coordinate and create learning opportunities for the whole of society. They also identified the need for critical analysis of sustainable development and the efforts to achieve it, on the assumption that how we currently think and act on sustainable development may not be able to achieve it, may take us in the wrong direction.

THE LUND UNIVERSITY graduate school represents all of this, and more. Having the responsibility to nurture this community of scholars and ideas is an enormous privilege. It should be recognised that the university

could have chosen a different form for its investment, such as allocating it to an already established research environment or very established scholar in the name of research excellence. The result of that, however, would clearly have been different. And if we are to think about sustainability in its full breadth and complexity and, above all, if we think that the world needs new problem formulations, ideas and solutions, the chosen model was at the same time bold and wise. The result was research excellence from below.

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