



Plan-A.show Episode 3: The war in Ukraine and getting back to a Plan A

Preamble

[00:00:00] **Niels:** Hello and welcome to [Plan-A.show](https://plan-a.show). The podcast that explores questions of sustainability, resilience, and multi-generational thinking in our businesses, societies and personal lives.

[00:00:12] The composition of topics in today's episode is the result of what is currently on everyone's mind and what has dominated our thinking and emotions for the last weeks: the war in, or rather on, Ukraine.

[00:00:24] The needless suffering that this invasion is bringing about is heartbreaking. We consider this war to have been started entirely unprovoked. We are shocked and outraged at the cruelty and scale of the violence and the wanton destruction, both physical and psychological, which is as indiscriminate as it is unprovoked.

[00:00:46] Naturally *our* comments and the emotions *we* express about the war and suffering do in no way match the experience of those actually living through it in and around Ukraine and Russia. *Those* voices and perspectives are far more important than ours. And we should listen to them more than we talk about them.

[00:01:04] Instead, we will, in this podcast, consider subjects that have been brought to the forefront by this war. But we will not comment much on the war itself, nor on the reality on the ground, which is the immense human suffering currently being experienced by tens of millions of Europeans and much of which will remain for decades or generations.

[00:01:25] We are thusly focused solely because of what Plan-A.show is about. We wouldn't add any value commenting on other subjects. In no way, though, is that focus a moral assessment, or a prioritization of high-faluting thought experiments over acute suffering, or anything of the sort.

[00:01:43] If you find yourself particularly affected by this war and you wish to remain focused on the situation on the ground right now, or on providing immediate help to those in need, you might want to consider skipping this episode, as you may experience it as an unnecessary distraction.

[00:02:01] With that being said, we will continue...

Introduction

[00:02:11] **Niels:** A war in Europe is a shocking experience. Wars and violence are always horrible irrespective of their scale and irrespective of where they occur. But I must admit that no war in the world has thus far shaken me to my core as much as this war breaking out, almost right on our doorstep.

[00:02:29] Both I and myself have grown up in Germany, a post World Wars Germany, and practically a post Cold War Germany as well. I have no conscious memory of the Berlin Wall or the Iron Curtain.

[00:02:42] The reintegration of Germany into the world community and the creation and continued expansion of the European Union have been nothing short of a miracle. Mere three generations ago, Germans killed Frenchmen, and Frenchmen killed Germans. Germany invaded Poland, and Yugoslavia, and the Netherlands, and Norway, and so on. And Germany invaded the UkSSR, which today is Ukraine, leading to millions of deaths just in that country alone.



[00:03:16] And yet, while survivors of that war are still alive in those very countries, we now call each other friends and family members. We study in each other's cities. And on a daily basis, millions of us effortlessly cross borders, which have long turned invisible.

[00:03:33] Over the decades, there have been many complaints about the mechanics of the European Union. But there has not been another aggression launched from any member state against any other member state, not a single one. And for that very reason, the European Union was awarded the Nobel Peace Prize in 2012.

[00:03:53] Having grown up in such a utopia of peace, friendship and prosperity, and in a country with a military that was purposefully, almost comically, geared towards purely defensive tasks, wars were something that merely happened elsewhere, and to other people,

[00:04:09] Admittedly, there have been cracks in that vision in the past. The Kosovo War was particularly gruesome. Though I do not recall it having impacted me much at the time. Maybe it happened too early in my life to really leave an emotional mark. There is no doubt, however, that it brought immense suffering and that its impacts are still felt today throughout all of Europe.

[00:04:29] Still, that war happened more than 20 years ago and many of us could remain blissfully unimpacted. It also happened in an area that very much hadn't yet stabilized after the breakup of Yugoslavia.

[00:04:42] Now, today, a country is being attacked that wishes to join our little oasis. A country that has made many sacrifices to embark on that journey. A country in which lives have been lost in bloody fights for even just the opportunity to, maybe, one day, join this Union.

[00:05:01] And who is the aggressor? A member of the Council of Europe, now suspended. A country that has made itself subject to the rulings of the European Court of Human Rights. Ukraine is also a member. They have been for almost 30 years. And in 2014, after the Euromaidan protests, that cost more than a hundred lives of civilians, gunned down in their own capital, by their own security forces, the European Union has finally signed an association agreement with Ukraine. Ukrainians also enjoy visa-free travel to the entire Schengen Area, and vice versa.

[00:05:40] You can fly from Berlin to Kyiv more quickly than from Berlin to Madrid. You can fly from Berlin to Moscow more quickly than from Berlin to Madrid.

[00:05:49] One would think that we were well underway on a bonafide Plan A. So how could it all go so wrong?

[00:05:59] We are continuing to wrestle with that question. It prompts us to scrutinize many of our assumptions, put the topics we're interested in in an even broader context, and to consider the potential for great destruction and distraction by the few over the many even more carefully.

[00:06:15] For today, we are limiting ourselves to an exploration of three areas.

[00:06:19] First, why has Germany in particular seemingly made itself so dependent on Russian fossil fuel exports? How bad is the situation really? And how will it be addressed?

[00:06:31] Second, what do the sudden interruptions in international trade tell us about our supply chains and the resilience of our companies?

[00:06:40] Third, if integration, interconnectedness and trade apparently are not guarantors of peace and stability, may they just bring about unnecessary fragility?

[00:06:50] Finally, we will connect these three subjects to the wider concept of having a Plan A, and changing our decisions and actions to take into account their impact beyond just ourselves and the here and the now.



The Situation right now in Warsaw, Poland

[00:07:07] **Niels:** Before we get started on the episode proper, Scott, do you wanna introduce briefly what you experienced last week, I think it was?

[00:07:16] **Scott:** Yeah, okay. So maybe just to put it into some context on my side, I'm taking on a new challenge in the company that I work for and I'm going to be building up the Poland operations for the company that I work with. And for that purpose, I was actually in Warsaw last week.

[00:07:34] You can consider it some sort of a ground zero for refugee intake into Europe. There's nowhere that you can be where you're not faced with the fact that there are millions of refugees coming into Poland.

[00:07:45] The first thing that I have to say is the Polish people, they're really doing this in a way that's just absolutely unencumbered. Doors are open, people are really welcoming. The whole atmosphere is just a helpful one. So that was the first thing that I saw at ground zero.

[00:08:01] And then, friends of mine that live there, have taken in refugees themselves. And I was thinking maybe towards the end of the episode, we can talk about what I've heard from them, because there's some really inspiring stories in all of this chaos that's happening.

[00:08:14] There's one particular story that I'd like to tell about the children who came and where they've been placed. They've had an opportunity to go to a special type of school. And the mothers of these Ukrainian refugee children were very emotional, telling me how important it's been for them. So I'd like to introduce that initiative and maybe the people that are doing it and just talk about that out the back end.

[00:08:35] **Eirik:** Just to put that into a little numerical context. It's reported or estimated that it's now at around about 2 million that have entered Poland, which, just to put that into scale in terms of Polish population, I think that's just under 40 million.

[00:08:50] So it really does take a significant effort from society to be able to cushion that kind of influx of people. And as you say, therefore, I think it's really interesting to see what is happening and how they are reacting.

[00:09:03] **Scott:** Yeah. The attitude that I could take from it was "okay, we're doing this now, we'll figure it out later". Instead of trying to figure everything out from the beginning, it's just so, okay, open the borders. In the beginning, there were people with their private cars sitting at the borders, just grabbing people and taking them wherever, you know?

[00:09:18] And so, it really is, let's get this figured out later, but right now we have a problem that we're all dealing with. So yeah, at least it's not problematic on that level, you know. I would hate to see that be a problem, but it's not at all. Everybody's welcome.

[00:09:32] **Niels:** It's very good, every now and then, to remind ourselves that, actually, once a human is confronted with another human needing help, there isn't much of a political discussion, you just help.

The EU's / Germany's fossil fuel dependency on Russia

[00:09:48] **Niels:** To start off on the less inspiring political side, in our little bubble, there has been a lot of talk about the EU overall, but Germany in particular was perceived to be a little bit slow as far as excitement about sanctions is concerned.



[00:10:01] And as far as military assistance is concerned. Now, the military assistance part has a couple of factors to it. So Germany isn't a nation that you would normally want to participate militarily in the word. So I think we shouldn't talk about that all too much.

[00:10:16] However, on the sanctions side, even though the EU has now responded as a whole, firstly, amazingly quickly with sanctions, and then secondly, with very broad sanctions, Germany still kind of has its foot on the brake as far as fossil fuels is concerned.

[00:10:34] And there's a perception that this is particular to Germany. And we kind of wanted to get into firstly, is that true? Secondly, why would that be the case? And thirdly, will we just be in that position forever?

[00:10:44] So to start off with, we're primarily talking about natural gas, that has been the main conversation. About 25%, about a fourth, of Germany's primary energy consumption, so that's all the energy consumption for the entire country, this includes electricity and everything, is natural gas.

[00:11:02] Of all the natural gas consumed in Germany, about half is imported from Russia. So 12.5% of the entire energy need of Germany comes from Russian natural gas. Interestingly oil and coal also very much come from Russia. So 50% of German coal comes from Russia.

[00:11:24] Now, anyone who knows anything about especially the Western part of Germany might be surprised by that because the entire region here, the Ruhr region is famous for coal extraction. So how could it be that we import that much coal? Well, it turns out that there is different grades of coal. And the brown coal that we get here is pretty much the worst thing you can do for the climate, if you burn it. The Russian coal is ever so slightly better, so we have transitioned to Russian coal, not away from Russian coal.

[00:11:55] And natural gas is a similar story. Why do we use so much natural gas? Well, we consider it to be a bridge technology from fossil fuel based electricity production to renewables. Burning natural gas emits much less than burning coal or oil and the huge advantage of natural gas fired power plants is you can spin them up and down extremely quickly. So it's perfect if you have any spikes in demand, that renewables can't react to immediately, because you can't turn the wind up, that's what we use natural gas for, primarily, at least as far as electricity production is concerned.

[00:12:29] And coal-fired, power plants, I don't know if people are aware, these things, once they are running, they are running. You cannot turn off a coal-fired power plant. Well, you can, but then it's off for two years. So these reactors, it's not like you would do at home, you stick coal in your grill, and light it on fire. The coal is dried, then it's pulverized, then there's a oxygen to coal ratio and it gets blown into the incinerator. It's like a whole procedure and you can't turn these off and on on a whim. Same for nuclear, obviously.

[00:12:59] This is not purely a German problem, this is a EU-wide problem. The EU imports 30% of all of its oil from Russia. And the EU is Russia's biggest market as well. So we are co-dependent on each other.

[00:13:13] Our national academy of sciences in Germany, as well as the EU commission, have come out and said very clearly that even if Russia stopped exporting any natural gas today, we would be fine for the winter.

[00:13:26] So this whole discussion is somewhat theoretical. There's mostly a concern about next winter. Natural gas in particular, a lot of it is used in heating of private homes. So there's a fear that if it was to be turned off, we'd all freeze. However, there's also natural gas storage, and there's lots of it.

[00:13:45] And the calculations are such that we would be fine in the short term. And there is a concern, if you think about it politically, that if we now took a stand and said, no more natural gas from Russia, we might be in a position in half a year or nine months, that we have to backtrack on that, go back to Russia and say, could we please have some more gas?



[00:14:08] And I can't assess the political calculus there, but the feeling is that this would put Russia into a stronger position than they would have been in, if we had never stopped importing natural gas in the first place.

[00:14:22] **Scott:** Can I ask a question that's in between? So right now we have the dilemma, stop now, run the risk of having to beg later and weaken the position, or continue on with a populace who is unpleased with the government making that decision, because they probably don't understand the ramifications of stopping, in general, right? So that's the dilemma that you just put on the table, right?

[00:14:47] **Niels:** In principle, yes. At least that's how it is presented. There's some additional factors to it. One of the questions is, well, why are we doing that much trade with Russia in the first place? It's not new that Russia is an aggressor on the military playing field. They have obviously annexed Crimea in 2014. Previously there was the Georgian war. There was the Chechen war. All of which, if you think about it purely on an international law standpoint, where illegal wars of aggression. As far as domestic politics are concerned, I don't think I need to tell anyone that Russia isn't a democratic state in any way, shape or form, even though they do have elections.

[00:15:28] So why would we, basically, prop up that regime? Russia is a kleptocracy. So any money that you give them props up that system, that regime, not just in terms of the political leader, but the entire structure of the ruling class. So why would we do that?

[00:15:47] One of the main aspects, at least as far as it was publicly communicated, was that the West felt that precisely by doing a lot of trade with Russia, you would sort of continuously integrate them into an international system. And once they're part of an international system of trade, which comes with certain norms and laws, maybe they will, over time, become part of the other international norms as well. We've also tried that with China and I think we can all see how that is going.

[00:16:20] So this idea of being able to trade your way into democracy, I think that idea is fairly dead by now. But it used to be extremely popular. I mean, after the Cold War, after the breakup of the Soviet Union, there was a, now infamous, book "The End of History and the Last Man". There was a feeling that, okay, communism is done for, democracy is the be all and end all, all of human endeavor naturally leads, inevitably leads, to democracy and free markets. Now, oddly enough, in the West, we no longer have free markets as well, in many regards.

[00:16:55] But yeah, that was certainly what Germany had always said, that we need to continue talking, we need to continue trading. And the idea was sort of born out of the European Union. The idea was the more you're integrated, the more you're trading, the more you are visiting each other's countries, the more you're studying in each other's countries, and so on and so forth, the more you would, if not align politically and culturally and economically, at the very least, you wouldn't do something as silly as invade each other's countries.

[00:17:23] Apparently there was, from what you can read, there was a miscalculation within the Kremlin as to the severity of the sanctions. Had they anticipated it, maybe they would have acted differently. I sort of doubt it, but that's a long, very long winded answer to the question why we have seemingly made ourselves so dependent on Russian gas.

[00:17:42] Now, if you read through the position papers by the European Commission, you find that we're not, strictly speaking, dependent on Russian gas. We are dependent on Russian gas to the degree that we want to burn Russian gas or use it in any other way. So certain structures have been set up. Certain companies exist, certain heating systems exist, and they, to some degree, depend on Russian gas, but there's always the option of just using less.

[00:18:09] The worst case scenario that our national academy of sciences has come up with is that if imports stopped entirely and if various initiatives to find alternatives didn't work out fully, then we might



end up in a situation where we notice nothing during summer. So we use natural gas during summer, of course,, but much less of it than in winter.

[00:18:31] And then in winter, certain industry would have to stop producing or produce less for a period of several months. Industry uses natural gas in several ways. They use it for process heat. They use it to heat their buildings and offices, or to produce electricity.

[00:18:50] And importantly, the chemical industry uses natural gas as a raw material. That cannot be replaced. There's some concern what impact that has on supply chains. But even the worst case scenarios say that German GDP would be effected, at most, up to 3% per year, for one year. So the feeling is that by the end of 2023, problem will be solved anyway.

How is the EU reacting?

[00:19:14] **Niels:** So the EU is all over this, by now. They very strongly feel like we can manage without Russian fossil fuels altogether. So that's natural gas, oil and coal. Basically their main approach is, they just want to accelerate the Green New Deal, the European Green Deal. Our plan was to transition off of fossil fuels anyway, by 2030 by 2035.

[00:19:46] One of the approaches they are suggesting is that the Member States individually consider temporary tax measures on windfall profits. So, interestingly, BP, Shell, Chevron and Exxon collectively had made \$12 trillion in profits between 1990 and 2020.

[00:20:04] **Scott:** What?

[00:20:04] **Niels:** \$2 trillion in profits. That's not revenue.

[00:20:07] **Scott:** Okay.

[00:20:08] **Niels:** And if you were to tax that, you know...

[00:20:12] And one of the things they are urging is that planning, construction, operation of plants for the production of renewable energy gets accelerated.

[00:20:25] One of the issues in Germany is we have a lot of wind power in the North, in the North Sea and a lot of power usage in the South of Germany. So what do you need? Well, you need a big old transmission line. And for the last two decades, they are planning this huge transmission line and they just run into NIMBYism after NIMBYism. So it's people living somewhere saying, well, I'm all in favor of it, of course, but please not in my backyard.

[00:20:49] There's one great quote from a EU Commission position paper where they literally say "immediate actions are warranted".

[00:20:55] We have all known that this dependence on fossil fuel is bad for a variety of reasons, for at least 20 years. We have had plans to get out of it for at least 20 years. So it's a matter of urgency. It's neither that we can't do it, nor that we don't want to do it. It's just, we don't want to do it right now. We don't want to do it quite as quickly.

[00:21:20] And I thought, as I was reading through all of these proposals, and kind of the wordings, like, the EU literally says "developments in energy markets in recent months, and especially the dramatic change in our security situation in recent weeks, require to drastically accelerate", not come up with new plans, accelerate "the clean energy transition and thereby increase Europe's energy independency". End of quote.



[00:21:44] And I thought, that's exactly like the US in the oil crisis in 19 73. You need a crisis to kick off these changes. I think it's a sad state of affairs. We know better. We should act better. But apparently until there's literally guns getting pulled out in our neighborhood until there's a physical and immediate threat, there doesn't seem to be a sense of urgency commensurate with the urgency of the problem.

[00:22:13] **Scott:** I'll add proximity to your lists. So the immediacy of it, plus the proximity of it. And it's funny, when I had my conversation with Anders Indset, one of the things that he said in the interview that I had is we only learn from crisis.

[00:22:26] So what does that mean? We need more crisis. And this seems to be like an answer to, to that rhetorical question that he that he brought to the table.

[00:22:34] **Niels:** Yeah, I've in my notes a few quotes and I have my own conclusion, which is proving once more, that it has first to get worse before it gets better.

Could additional sanctions result in a violent response?

[00:22:42] **Scott:** Is there a, a, an unspoken threat of nuclear assault, if we don't continue buying Russian energy? If you just cut them off at the legs, it seems like a you leave a skiddish person with only a few options left. And I don't know if that's a fear that people are talking about or if it's something that maybe the politicians know is a threat, but it's not being talked about. Do you do assess that as an actual threat?

[00:23:10] **Niels:** I mean, how high should we jump, if someone says "jump!"? At some point it no longer makes sense. We can't rationally approach this, I think. Because the other side doesn't approach it rationally either, or at least not with the same rationality. So this feeling of we have to appease, to use that dirty word, I don't think will work.

[00:23:30] **Eirik:** Interestingly, I think you're right, that there is an implied threat of that, Scott. But the implied threat comes through sort of the utterances that have come from the Kremlin or Putin. And they're quite historic. I mean, they go back for quite a while, talking about this idea of, well, if Russia would be threatened in its existence, in its future existence, then there's no point in having a world anymore, or something. I'm paraphrasing, but that is what he has been quoted to have said at various points. And I think repeated to Macron as well in one of the recent chats they've been having.

[00:24:08] When you connect that to the export and purchasing of fossil fuels that's going on, and if you were to cut that off completely, there is a potential argument that in the long-term that really could be an existential threat to the Russian state and therefore, by implication, result in sort of nuclear action or the enaction of a nuclear threat of some kind.

[00:24:34] **Niels:** That kind of goes back to the idea of, oh, we need to keep talking, we need to keep trading, we need to keep engaging on all levels, in order for these threats to not materialize, in order for the relationship to improve, and so on and so forth.

[00:24:46] There are very interesting implications. So if we don't yet utilize all the sanction options, do we then retain a bargaining chip? If things got even worse in Ukraine, if the weapons being used got even more outrageous, would we then still hold something we could trade?

[00:25:05] And the suspension of Russia from the Council of Europe, which I briefly mentioned in the introduction, one of the implications of that is that they could now reintroduce the death penalty. They weren't allowed as a member state of the Council of Europe, they now could.

[00:25:20] So there's a question to be asked about, if suspending them is purely symbolic, or mostly symbolic, is it actually counter productive to kick them out of these international organizations?



[00:25:31] If we ban Russian flights, do we not just create bubbles? Will this not just reinforce them doing their own thing and being isolated? And you can make very good arguments, I think, for and against. And that's tricky.

To be continued; Poland's open door; and the power of Hip Hop

[00:25:49] **Niels:** So if I can ask a somewhat provocative question, maybe, Eirik, are we optimizing our way into...

[00:25:55] **Eirik:** Before I answer that question, can we just take a pause? We're really long and we've run out of time. I just realized this. There's still a handful of things that we wanted to touch on, that we promised we'd touch on which we haven't done. And we just simply don't have the time.

[00:26:11] **Scott:** Can you say something like, we still have topics we want to talk about, we're going to continue this in the next episode. And then we just meet as soon as possible and finish the recording?

[00:26:21] We could just stick with Niels' part. I could give the quick report on Warsaw and then we've got two episodes to work with and not one.

[00:26:29] **Eirik:** I'm happy with that. Let's pick this up again. I think it would be good to get your story down as soon as possible, Scott, because of course you've just been, it is immediate, to get those recollections out.

[00:26:40] **Scott:** All right. So like I mentioned, at the beginning of this episode I was in Warsaw and I saw some really inspiring things.

[00:26:47] I have to say one thing that I'm just going to jump in here. I got into an Uber and it was of course a Ukrainian driver. And the guy was somber in his demeanor. And I asked him, can I connect my phone to your car so we can listen to some music? I got in, we connected it. I asked the guy, if he liked Hip Hop, he literally said "it's okay". Like those, those are the words that came out of his mouth. And so I was behind him and I turned on some Hip Hop music and I could just see his head start bobbing.

[00:27:14] We got through the first song, his head was really bobbing. And then we got into the second song and he's just, you could see him like dancing upfront in his seat. And then I started dancing in the back and he would see me in the mirror. And by the time we got to the hotel, like 20 minutes later, we were both just like at a Hip Hop concert, just banging our arms in the car.

[00:27:30] And he looked back, he was like, "you are best client", is what what he screamed back to me. So it gave me a good feeling to give this guy, who actually has no reason to be happy about anything right now, and it's probably just his mind is on all kinds of stuff, a 20 minute, you know, break in reality and just enjoyed our time together.

[00:27:46] But to get to what I was going to say, I had dinner with some refugee families who were staying with friends of mine and their kids. The night that they came, actually, the daughter had her birthday, the day that they showed up at this house. So they're fleeing their country and my friends put a birthday party, like an ad hoc birthday party together for them.

[00:28:03] And through friends of friends, these kids started going to this forest school. It's called Pines Forest school in Warsaw. It's a British guy, the guy's name is Saul Simpson. He's a founder and forest school leader from Manchester, England. Saul has worked across Northwest of England, specializing in outdoor learning and sport.

[00:28:23] So this Saul guy started this forest school a few years ago. It's accredited, the kids that go there, they finish their elementary school and then they go on to the whatever the education system is in Poland. And this person just started opening up his school to all of the Ukrainian kids that can find him.



[00:28:41] And I was talking to the mothers whose children have been going there for about 10 days, at the time when I met them, and they were super emotional about the fact that these kids, they go to school in the forest all day, and then they come back, they're tired, they're sleeping, they're happy.

[00:28:55] They're not thinking about anything other than where they were during that day. And that the mother actually told me she has a really guilty conscience calling the father in the evening and saying, yeah, your kid is doing really well here.

[00:29:06] But it's actually something that the fathers are taking with them in Ukraine. So they dropped their kids off and their, their wives off, and went back to fight. And now they're hearing this positive feedback from their kids. It's a hugely positive thing. And these guys, they're taking in as many kids as they can, they're starting to hire Ukrainian teachers, and they really need help.

[00:29:25] And so I'm looking at financially helping them from the company that I work for and I can encourage anybody to look them up. And just see if this is something you really want to proactively work towards or help out. It goes directly to refugee children and helping them out.

[00:29:40] And I'll be meeting with them next week and talking a little bit more and figuring out more about the school, so I can bring more information to different episodes, but this is something I've got my eyes on and I'm really, really interested in because I think it's a beautiful thing,

[00:29:53] **Eirik:** Remind us of the name, Scott, what are they called?

[00:29:55] **Scott:** Pines Forest school.

[00:29:57] It's a beautiful effort that these guys are making and I think it's going to be very big before it's over. And he's just in the beginning of it. So whatever you can do to help or whatever you feel like helping, this is actually a really, really good cause

[00:30:09] **Eirik:** Excellent. Thank you very much. I think that's very worthwhile bringing to our attention and everyone else's, hopefully.

[00:30:14] My only question, unrelated to that, what Hip Hop track did you play that you know, really sunk the hook into that Uber driver.

[00:30:23] **Scott:** Ah, you know what, we'll add the link, because it was a very specific a song. And I can't remember, I can't tell you the name of it, but it was a buildup over three songs and we were actually banging on the third song. So what we'll do is put all three songs in, so I'll take you on the ride from the outskirts of Warsaw to the inner city, to my hotel. That's going to be those three or four songs that were in there.

[00:30:43] **Eirik:** Excellent. What a great way to bridge between this and our next episode on this subject

[00:30:50] **Scott:** The whole reason that I did that, I was thinking during the day, like there's a song that I like called Joyride, and it's just like everybody forgets how nice a joyride is. Whatever is moving, you go from place to place and listen to good music.

[00:31:03] And I just wanted to joy ride through Warsaw. That it ended up being what it was, was just kind of an amazing thing. I'll send the picture that I took with the dude, you can see on his face, he was happy, that's for sure.

Epilogue

[00:31:19] **Niels:** With too much to talk about, this was just the first of our episodes exploring the impact of the war in Ukraine on sustainability and resilience. Next, we will focus on physical exports of the re-



gion, and what those disruptions might mean further down in the supply chain, as well as trade in services.

[00:31:37] While, given the velocity of change, these episodes will inevitably be outdated as soon as they are released, we recorded this one on Friday, March 25th, 2022, we still find them useful as explorations of how we can better structure our societies and economies going forward.

[00:31:53] In this first depressing episode, we learned a lot about in today's interconnected world, there can no longer be such a thing as a "regional conflict" or a "small-scale war".

[00:32:03] With topics that could very much have focused us solely on economic thought experiments, I would like to thank Scott for grounding our conversation about all of these abstract issues with his first-hand experiences about the human impact on the ground in Poland.

[00:32:17] We can talk all day about how change in the supply chain over here will impact the GDP of another nation over there. And we can consider how and where to optimize supply chains, how to diversify our imports to increase resilience, and so on.

[00:32:31] In a sense, however, this just brings us back to the original sin that got us into this situation in the first place. A situation, in which we feel like we must, at least to some degree, respect the whims of an inhumane warmonger: a focus on the economy that is so strong that we forget about why we have an economy in the first place and what it has meant to do for us—increase the health and happiness of humans.

[00:32:57] The German newspaper Süddeutsche Zeitung quotes Moritz Schularick, an economist of the university of Bonn, who I think put it best: "in 30 years, no one will remember whether inflation was 4.8% or 5.9%—but rather whether or not we have peace in Europe".

[00:33:18] And this is largely what we take away from researching these episodes. On the one hand, we want to continue considering how we can best structure our societies and economies to be more resilient in an ever-changing world with plenty of more crises on the horizon.

[00:33:32] But on the other hand, we also want to start exploring what metrics, other than traditional economic ones such as GDP, we can start to focus on, that provide a more holistic picture of the happiness, resilience, prosperity, and sustainability of our societies. After all, you can only manage that what you are measuring. Or in starker terms: garbage in, garbage out.

[00:33:56] Germany and the EU might not have found themselves in a situation where they seemingly have to choose "between pest and cholera", if their Plan A had taken a more holistic view, and if they had pursued it with a greater sense of urgency and transboundary thinking.

[00:34:11] Let us heed this wake up call, a more dramatic one is hardly mentioned about and even less desirable, and work towards such a holistic Plan A, for a more prosperous, happier and resilient society, and for the safety and health of all of us.

Credits

[00:34:28] **Niels:** This was [Plan-A.show/3](https://plan-a.show/3). Go there to download or share this episode or to read its transcript.

[00:34:43] To donate to the Pines forest school mentioned in this episode, go to www.pines-forestschool.pl/donate. To donate to the UN Refugee Agency, go to donate.unhcr.org, that's the letters UNHCR.org.

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[00:35:07] If you have any comments or questions, please email us at feedback@plan-a.show. If you work in any of the areas discussed on this podcast, we would love to record an episode with you. Please get in touch.

[00:35:20] [Plan-A.show](#) was created by Eirik Bar, Niels Ganser and Scott Denton. This episode was edited by Niels. This episode's music is by Nikolay Skvortsov.

[00:35:30] Thank you for listening.