

Meet the Economy



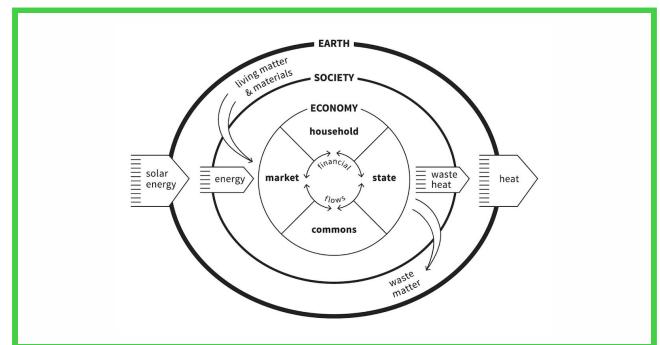
LESSON PLAN | WORKSHOP

A lesson series exploring the four core spheres of activity at the heart of the economy: the market, state, household and commons

By the DEAL Team. See acknowledgments for all contributors.

Overview

This series of lessons introduces the four core spheres of economic activity: the market, the state, the household and the commons. It explores how these can provision for our needs and looks and what it might mean to create a healthy balance between them for a thriving economy. The first lesson starts with the student's experience of the economy and introduces the Embedded Economy. Lessons 2 and 3 introduce each of the four spheres of activity and explore their very different qualities and caveats. And the final lesson draws them together to explore the tensions, power and synergies between them.



Lesson Outcomes

- Learn about the market, state, household and commons and explore their qualities and caveats
- Think critically about what a healthy balance across these four spheres of activity might look like
- View the four spheres of activity through one's own lived experience



Educators | Students aged 16+ | Communities



4 x 90 minute lessons
One day-long workshop (6 hours)



10 - 40



Screen or projector, 3 large sheets of paper or boards to write on, materials for the creative expression (see lesson four, part 3)

Timetable



Lesson 1. The Embedded Economy

90 min

Part 1	Your economy	30 min
Part 2	Meet the Embedded Economy	30 min
Part 3	Mapping your economy	20 min
Part 4	Reflections and close	10 min

Lesson 2. The Household and Commons

90 min

Part 1	Introduction	10 min
Part 2	The Household	30 min
Part 3	The Commons	30 min
Part 4	Qualities and caveats	20 min

Lesson 3. The Market and State

90 min

Part 1	Introduction	10 min
Part 2	The Market	30 min
Part 3	The State	30 min
Part 4	Qualities and caveats	20 min

Lesson 4. Bringing it all together

90 min

Part 1	Introduction	10 min
Part 2	Dynamic interrelations	30 min
Part 3	Creative expression	40 min
Part 4	Reflections and close	10 min

Background

For an overview of the material covered in these lessons, read Doughnut Economics, Chapter 2. Specific references from chapter 2 are made in the relevant parts of the lesson plan.

For additional background information, watch / read the following.

The Household:

- [Video blog from UN Women](#)
- [TV news interview on unpaid caring work](#)

The Commons:

- [The 8 core design principles identified by Elinor Ostrom](#)
- [Key principles of the Commons by David Bollier](#)

Preparation

In preparation for the first class, draw the two (blank) tables - the Table of Needs and the Table of Qualities - on big sheets of paper that can be displayed to the whole group.

Prepare to take a few notes during the key learning moments that occur through discussions over the four lessons to help with the recap at the end of lesson four.

Pre-class assignment

This pre-class assignment is designed to get the students seeing the economy through their own eyes and their own lives. It will act as a springboard for introducing the Embedded Economy diagram/concept in Lesson 1 and will be continually revisited throughout the series of lessons.

Here is the brief for the assignment:

Your assignment to complete before our first session is to record all the instances where people or things help you meet your needs and wants over the course of a 24 hour period [or a time of your choosing]. The instances may be big or small. Things that take hours (like a train journey) or things that are over in a fleeting moment (like sending a text message). For each one, record what the want or need is and who or what is enabling you to meet that need. Back in class, we will use this as the foundation for exploring the economy as we see and experience it in our lives.

NOTE:

This can be changed to whatever time period you like. A week gives enough time for a variety of examples to arise, but 24 hours might be better to focus the assignment.

Lesson 1. The Embedded Economy

Part 1: Your economy

 **30**

- 1** Start by welcoming everyone and giving an overview of the lessons and how it fits in the context of the class' learning journey.
- 2** Then facilitate a discussion on how the students got on with their pre-class assignment:
 - Invite some examples... (quick round of 5-10 shoutouts - no analysis)
 - How did you find the process?
 - Did anything surprise you by doing it?
 - Was there anything you hadn't thought about before?
 - Anything too small to record?
 - Any examples of things that seemed too small? (however silly)

NOTE:

Welcome silly examples and humour as a great catalyst for learning.

- 3** Then invite students to get into pairs and discuss the needs and wants they each had and how they were met.
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Part 2:

The Embedded Economy

 30

1 Watch the Embedded Economy video (6 minutes)

NOTE:

This is likely to introduce a lot of new ideas to students so you might want to show the video a second time.

2 Now bring up the Embedded Economy diagram

Get students into pairs or groups of four and invite them to discuss the video and the Embedded Economy diagram, prompting them to think about:

- What most strikes you about this view of the economy?
- How does it differ from your view of the economy you had before seeing this?

3 Draw the attention back to the whole class and facilitate a discussion with all students on these questions, including the additional questions:

- Is there anything else you would add?
 - What is left invisible?
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Part 3:

Mapping your economy

 20

1 Invite all students to draw the Embedded Economy diagram for themselves and map onto it how their set of wants and needs were met.

Whilst they are doing this, invite them to note down any questions they may have about any of the four spheres of economic activity.

2 Once they're finished, invite them to look at the distribution of their examples across the four spheres of economic activity (e.g. Are they mostly in the market? Almost none in the commons?) and whether there are any that are strongly or weakly represented. Is there a pattern or difference between the needs and the wants?

3 Invite feedback and questions for students and make a record of key questions to cover in the next three lessons by writing them visibly for everyone to see.

Part 4:

Reflections and close



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- 1 Reflect on some of the key observations students have made.
Invite students to keep their map of their economy and, if they want to, add additional things to it as they notice these spheres of activity appearing in their lives.
 - 2 Then give an overview of the next three lessons that will explore:
 1. how these four spheres of economic activity show up in our lives;
 2. their qualities and caveats and;
 3. what a healthy balance might look like in a thriving economy
 4. Noting that it is the interaction between these four spheres of activity that is most fascinating, rather than the study of them in isolation
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Lesson 2. The Household and Commons

Part 1:

Introduction



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- 1 Start the lesson by watching the Embedded Economy video again (6 minutes)

Introduce that in this class we're going to be exploring the Household and the Commons.
- 2 Share with the class:

These two spheres of activity are not visible financially because they aren't recorded as financial transactions. Instead they are interactions within economic spheres based on a different set of principles, grounded in care, reciprocity and trust.

The household and the commons are sometimes referred to as the 'core economy' because they are the spheres of activity upon which the market and the state rely. In other words, without these, the market and state spheres of activity could not exist. In addition, work carried out within the household and the commons is often heavily gendered, i.e. predominantly carried out by women.

Part 2:

The Household



More detail can be found on the Household in Doughnut Economics, chapter 2, p. 78-81.

- 1** Start by asking students how they would define the household's role within the economy. Invite a few suggestions.
- 2** Now go to **Table of Needs** and invite students to give examples for how the household provisions for the needs and wants listed in the table. Who is the person meeting the need? Welcome multiple examples (both the serious and the silly). And if it is a 'thing' meeting the need then ask how that thing was acquired (food in the fridge? ...from the garden or from the shop?)

NOTE:

The illustrative examples are only to act as prompts and don't need to be used

- 3** Invite students to offer additional needs and wants from their pre-class assignment to add to the table, along with how they were met by the household or in the commons.
- 4** Finally invite students to think about the role that technology plays in determining how and where wants and needs can be met.. In other words, how has technology made some of these forms of provisioning possible and how would it have been before these technologies existed?

Part 3:

The Commons



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More detail can be found on the Household in Doughnut Economics, chapter 2, p. 82-84.

- 1 Start by asking whether anyone is familiar with the commons and its role in the economy, - invite any examples they can give and how they might describe what makes something part of 'the commons'.

Then show this [short introduction to the commons](#) (4 minutes)

Share with the class:

The commons represent a way of people self-organising to manage shared resources outside the governing of the market or state.

Some examples of commoning are:

- An after-school club
- Wikipedia
- A community garden

All of these work because they have self-organising individuals following an agreed set of rules, which enable them to co-create and steward products and services that they individually and collectively value.

- 2 Now go to **Table of Needs** and invite students to give examples for how the commons provisions for the needs and wants listed in the table. Who is the person meeting the need? Welcome multiple examples (both the serious and the silly). And if it is a 'thing' meeting the need then ask how that thing was acquired (food in the fridge? ...from the garden or from the shop?)

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- 3 Invite students to offer additional needs and wants from their pre-class assignment to add to the table, along with how they were met by the household or in the commons.
- 4 And as before, invite students to think about the impact of technology. A good example for the commons is how the internet has enabled a resurgence in the commons-based networks via online platforms where people can create, connect, organise and share for almost zero marginal cost (once you have paid for the laptop / phone, the cost of each message is almost zero).

Part 4:

Qualities and Caveats

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Go to **Table of Qualities and Caveats** and invite students to think about the qualities and limits of the household and commons

- What are the qualities of each sphere of activity: What does it do well, and what makes it work?
 - What are the limits of the sphere of activity: where does it fall down and not work so well?
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Lesson 2. The Market and State

Part 1:

Introduction

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Introduce that in this class we're going to be exploring the Market and the State.

Share with the class:

In the previous lesson we saw that the household and the commons were not visible financially because the products and services they produce are not bought and sold. In this lesson, we are looking at the two spheres of economic activity that are visible financially. These are where monetary transactions are recorded and become part of what's included in an economy's domestic output, known as Gross Domestic Product, or GDP.

Part 2:

The Market



More detail can be found on the Household in Doughnut Economics, chapter 2, p. 81-82.

- 1** Start by asking students how they would define the role of the market in the economy - Invite a few suggestions.
- 2** Now go to **Table of Needs** and invite students to give examples for how the market provisions for the needs and wants listed in the table. Who is the person meeting the need? Welcome multiple examples (both the serious and the silly). And if it is a 'thing' meeting the need then ask how that thing was acquired (food in the fridge? ...from the garden or from the shop?)

NOTE:

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- 3** Invite students to offer additional needs and wants from their pre-class assignment to add to the table, along with how they were met by the household or in the commons.
- 4** Finally invite students to think about the role that technology plays in determining how and where wants and needs can be met. In other words, how has technology made some of these forms of provisioning possible and how would it have been before these technologies existed?

Part 3:

The State



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More detail can be found on the Household in Doughnut Economics, chapter 2, p. 84-86.

- 1 Start by asking how they would define the role of the state in the economy. Invite a few suggestions.

Share with the class:

Of all the four spheres of economic activity, the state's role is unique in that it has a dual role. One role as provisioner (e.g. public goods and services) and one role as rule-setter, setting rules that demark and create boundaries between the market, household and commons. (For example the length and terms of a mother's legal right to paid maternity leave varies hugely from country to country - creating very different boundary relationships between the market and the household). Therefore the dynamics of these other spheres of activity depend upon the space that is created and protected for them by the state - such as preventing the market from encroaching on the commons by privatising commonly created and shared resources.

- 2 Now go to **Table of Needs** and invite students to give examples for how the state provisions for the needs and wants listed in the table and who is the person meeting the need. Welcome multiple examples (both the serious and the silly).

NOTE:

The illustrative examples are only to act as prompts and don't need to be used

- 3 Invite students to offer additional needs and wants from their pre-class assignment to add to the table, along with how they were met by the household or in the commons.
- 4 And as before, invite students to think about how technology plays in determining how and where wants and needs can be met. In other words, how has technology made some of these forms of provisioning possible, and how would it have been before these technologies existed?

Part 4:

Qualities and Caveats



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Go to **Table of Qualities and Caveats** and invite students to think about the qualities and limits of the household and commons

- What are the qualities of each sphere of activity: What does it do well, and what makes it work?
 - What are the limits of the sphere of activity: where does it fall down and not work so well?
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Lesson 4. Bringing it all together

Part 1:

Introduction



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Introduce the lesson by sharing that now that you have covered all four core spheres of economic activity, and with the tables completed, it's time to explore what a healthy balance might look like in a thriving economy.

Start by recapping some of the key insights from the lessons so far, calling out the qualities and caveats of each sphere of activity along with any examples you've covered on how technology has changed the role that that sphere can play.

The key thing to draw out here is that every sphere of activity has its qualities and its caveats. The question is how they can best work together to complement each other towards the goal of getting into the Doughnut. That is, meeting the needs of all people within the means of the planet.

Part 2:

Dynamic interrelations



- 1 Get students into pairs or groups of four and invite them to explore one of the needs from the Table of Needs that has been covered in the last two lessons and how the means of provisioning for that need, across as four economic spheres of activity, has shifted over time.

In their exploration, ask them to consider

- what factors might be causing these shifts, such as culture, technology, regulation, finance, media etc.?
 - how these factors are impacting the relationship between the four spheres of economic activity
 - possible impacts these shifts are having on society and the planet
 - how the means of provisioning differ around the world
- 2 Invite groups/pairs to feedback the key points of their exploration and facilitate a discussion on areas of balance or imbalance between the spheres of activity and the impact of this.

Examples might include:

- Energy being produced and shared locally due to improved solar technology and micro grids (a shift from market and state to household and commons)
 - Information freely available in the online commons and the market enabling people to create more things from home (a shift from market and commons to the household)
 - Household tasks being picked up by the market via gig economy platforms/workers (a shift from household to market)
 - Women having entered the workforce over the past two generations have created roles for paid workers in the home - house cleaning, childcare (a shift from household to the market)
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Part 3:

Creative expression



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Now it's time to get creative.

Invite students, in groups, to create a way of presenting and communicating: the qualities of each of the four spheres of economic activity

- the dynamic between the four spheres
- what it might mean to go from imbalance to balance between them

Below are some examples of possible ways of expressing and presenting these ideas.

Create a poster: Expand upon the Embedded Economy diagram using what you've learnt and any insights that struck you to express some aspects of the qualities of or relationships between the four spheres of activity.

Model it out: Create a model in lego, clay or anything else to show the qualities of and dynamic between the four spheres of activity, and what it might mean to go from imbalance to balance between them.

Human sculpture: Get into a group of four and create a human sculpture of the relationships between the four spheres of activity, with one person enacting each sphere of activity. Try to embody the qualities of that sphere and move between states of imbalance and balance.

Act out a sketch: Get into a group of four and imagine you're a group of friends having a conversation about what you want to do as a group this coming weekend. Pretend each of your friends behaves like one of the spheres of activity (one is the market, another the household etc.) then come up with the sort of things that they would say and do. What might they suggest? How might they suggest it? How might they react to other suggestions? Then have two conversations:

- In the first conversation try to ensure that your sphere of activity dominates, emphasising only your sphere's own strengths (a conversation of imbalance)
- In the second conversation try to act from the best interests of the group, for the best weekend possible, recognise every economic sphere's strengths and weaknesses (a conversation of balance and interdependence)

- 2 Invite the students to share back what they have created with the class.

Part 4:

Reflections and close



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Recap what you've explored over the four lessons and any key insights you've uncovered in the process.

A good way of doing this is to invite students to close their eyes as you talk through each of the lessons highlighting what was covered as well as memorable shared moments.

Where to take it next

After this lesson try ***Economic Man vs Humanity: A Puppet Rap Battle***, a playful introduction to the limitations of the model of humanity at the heart of mainstream economics.

Acknowledgements

Original content by Kate Raworth. Lesson plan written by Rob Shorter and Kate Raworth. Additional contributions from Carlota Sanz, Andrew Fanning and Stephanie Leite.

Table of Wants and Needs

NOTE:

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Wants and Needs	Spheres of economic activity			
	The Market	The State	The Household	The Commons
A meal	<i>Restaurant or home-delivery service</i>	<i>School dinners</i>	<i>A home-made meal</i>	<i>A community picnic</i>
An email or letter	<i>An email from an online shop you recently bought something from with their latest offers</i>	<i>A letter with guidance for an upcoming election</i>	<i>A hand-written letter with personal stories and interest in how you are</i>	<i>A community newsletter with news and stories from the neighbourhood</i>
A music night	<i>A ticketed event of your favourite band</i>	<i>A large free event with has-been bands</i>	<i>Singing round the piano or playing guitar round the fire</i>	<i>An open-mic night at a local venue</i>
A sports game	<i>The Superbowl</i>	<i>The Olympics</i>	<i>A game in your garden</i>	<i>A community-run football game</i>
Financial advice	<i>From a financial advisor</i>	<i>From the Citizens Advice Bureau</i>	<i>From another family member</i>	<i>From a wiki platform</i>
Childcare	<i>Professional childminder</i>	<i>Public nurseries</i>	<i>Parenting</i>	<i>Baby-sitting circle</i>
Household maintenance	<i>Task rabbit (gig economy)</i>	<i>Public subsidy for some household work (e.g. insulation)</i>	<i>DIY (with tools bought from the market)</i>	<i>DIY (with tools borrowed from a community workshop)</i>

Table of Qualities and Caveats

Wants and Needs	Spheres of economic activity			
	The Market	The State	The Household	The Commons
Qualities	<i>Prices powerfully coordinate private value creation and capture</i>	<i>Public investment provides goods and services to meet the needs of all</i>	<i>Unpaid care provides essential wellbeing and generates intangible value</i>	<i>Principles generate shared value when designed and collectively managed well</i>
Caveats	<i>Only serve those who can pay</i> <i>Only value what's priced</i>	<i>Challenge of efficiency</i> <i>Challenge of accountability</i>	<i>Unrecognised supports to the paid economy</i> <i>Gendered distribution of household work</i>	<i>Challenge of scale and coordination</i> <i>Challenge of recognition by others</i>