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Planetary Impalement by Stakeholder Capitalism?

"Stake" as a strategic metaphor promoted by the World Economic Forum

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Introduction

References to "stake" are a key feature of capitalist discourse, whether explicit or implied. Most obviously the references are to some form of financial investment. Thus an [equity stake](#) is that part of a company or business owned by a shareholder. The investment, and any understanding of ownership, may however be other than financial. It can be understood as a commitment, possibly deriving from a long-standing relationship to a building valued from a heritage perspective. More intriguing is any such investment in one or more trees, a stream or river, or even a mountain. The pattern may extend to a role or to a community event, as evident in folklore celebrations.

These examples may be better understood through the extent to which people and groups share features of their environment and the processes which they evoke. Ownership and possession are then only tenuously related to conventional possibilities of their monetisation. Reference to "stake" is a transformation of the process of sharing, just as with the monetisation of "share" in any business initiative. Precision is then provided in quantitative terms regarding the extent to which any one party has a "stake" in the matter. This contrasts with, and denatures, the qualitative experience of sharing.

The challenges to clarification are especially evident with respect to interpersonal relationships, whether friendship, marriage, or feud. Such a relationship can be experienced and described in terms of sharing -- possibly given questionable precision in contractual terms. It may be asserted that the parties each have a "stake" in the relationship -- thereby potentially transforming its dynamics into static and mechanistic terms. The distinctions can be seen to play out with respect to relationships between nations, religions and disciplines.

The contrast between quantitative and qualitative engagement with the environment for any collective then highlights the questionable possibility of "holding" -- whether in the case of a "shareholder" or a "stakeholder". Given its elusive nature as a qualitative experience, it is quite unclear whether a "share" can be held in a manner which lends itself to conventional precision -- whatever the claims to the contrary. Reference to shareholder then reframes possession in some quantitative material sense, as in "sharing a piece of cake".

The question explored here is **does the emphasis on "stake" in stakeholder capitalism reinforce a mechanistic understanding of relationships?** In contrast, their viability may be dependent to an unexplored degree on the flexibility and resilience implied by the non-mechanistic connotations of "share". Arguably these are however already dangerously undermined through the practices whereby it is assumed that shares may be "held" -- despite their otherwise elusive nature.

The physical connotations of "stake" are especially evident through the manner in which a stake has been used to "stake a claim" in order to mark ownership of land or mineral rights. The stake may indeed be physically held during that process. "Share" cannot be used in that sense, although ownership -- itself potentially an elusive notion -- may indeed be shared. How the shares may be "held" in then another matter. By contrast, reference to stake, given its visible form, can therefore be recognized as a [visual metaphor](#) -- known for its value in persuasive advertising. As pictorial analogy, it illustrates a comparison between what is in the visual, including its connotations and

denotations with another thing and its meanings figuratively.

It is of course the case that capitalist organization has emphasized the role of "[holdings](#)" through which shares in initiatives are "held". Although the holdings may be readily recognized as legal fictions, they reinforce a sense in which the holdings exist (even "concretely") to a degree comparable to other features of the environment -- especially when accorded a degree of [corporate personhood](#). Through reference to shareholder and stakeholder, **the argument here therefore highlights the erosion of the elusive significance of "share" basic to cooperation**, the problematic reinforcement of physical connotations of "stake", and the questionable possibility of "holding" under conditions of global chaos.

There are further implications to use of the stake metaphor where the investment is understood as a gamble or bet with the associated risks for gain or loss. This acquires further significance when the investment is understood to be "at stake". The significance is evident when some valued initiative is "at stake", namely when there is a risk of its damage or loss if the undertaking is not successful. Claims regarding the urgency of remedial action on climate change, and other issues have been framed in such terms (*World's Future at Stake*, *The Daily Star*, 5 October 2022; *A Future at Stake, Education Emergency*, 1 November 2021; *David Attenborough warns life on Earth at stake in strongest climate change warning yet*, *The London Economic*, 18 April 2019). The role of "stakeholders" may be associated with such uses (*7 Reasons Why "Future Generations" are Key Stakeholders, Sustainability Advantage*, 10 March 2019).

Rather than the "future", the urgency may be framed with respect to "civilization" as a whole or a part thereof (Konrad Adenauer, et al. *Christian Civilization at Stake*, 1956; *Elon Musk Makes \$43 Billion Bid for Twitter, Says 'Civilization' At Stake*, *Wall Street Journal*, 14 April 2022; Volodymyr Zelenskyy, *Civilization at Stake*, *Forbes*, 16 March 2022; *Pelosi warns: 'Civilization as we know it today is at stake'*, *CNN*, 5 December 2019). The nature of the challenge may be framed in terms of humanity as a whole (*Prince Charles says 'future of humanity' at stake ahead of climate summit*, *The Hill*, 31 October 2021).

The argument for recognition of "planetary impalement" by stakeholder capitalism concludes with reference to the extensive [media coverage of the role of sex workers at the Davos Forum of 2023](#) and how this might relate to understandings of Freudian economics and the role of unconscious psychological forces in framing global decision-making.

Promotion of paradigm shift from "share" to "stake"

References to the desirability of cooperation, readily make reference to the fundamental process of "sharing" (Jennifer Susan McClung, et al, *The Language of Cooperation: shared intentionality drives variation in helping as a function of group membership*, *Proceedings of the Royal Society*, 20 September 2017).

There is however clearly a difficulty in understanding the process of sharing when this is associated with that of "holding". How indeed to hold a share -- if not in such a way as to do so to the disadvantage of some others? The difficulty is evident in unresolved issues of equity, equality and equivalence -- ignoring complicity in the contradictions thereby engendered (*Cultivating the Myth of Human Equality*, 2016). Shareholder capitalism is itself held to be in a problematic condition (Duncan McCann, *Shareholder Capitalism: a system in crisis*, *New Economics Foundation*, 19 July 2017).

Through the influential Davos gatherings of the [World Economic Forum](#) (WEF), the reframed process of [stakeholder capitalism](#) has been promoted by its founder [Klaus Schwab](#) (*Stakeholder Capitalism: a global economy that works for progress, people and planet*, 2021; *What is stakeholder capitalism?* *World Economic Forum*, 22 January 2021).

It is proudly and explicitly claimed that the Forum has the capacity to "**penetrate cabinets**" of the world -- presumably through its stakeholders (*We Penetrate the Cabinets: Klaus Schwab in 2017 at Harvard on infiltrating governments*, *WEF Watch*, 13 April 2022; *WEF - Klaus Schwab (founder of The World Economic Forum): "We penetrate the cabinets"*, *YouTube*; *We penetrate cabinets: WEF Young Global Leaders -- in their own words*, *Rumble*, 2022).

The promotion of stakeholder capitalism follows from the progressive elaboration of [stakeholder theory](#) over past decades. Promoted by WEF as the dominant model basic to the proposed [Great Reset](#), stakeholder capitalism has however evoked considerable debate and criticism (John Detrixhe, *The Difference between Shareholder and Stakeholder Capitalism*, *Quartz*, 7 October 2020; Steve Denning, *Why Stakeholder Capitalism Will Fail*, *Forbes*, 5 January 2020; Rana Foroohar, *The Failures of Stakeholder Capitalism*, *Financial Times*, 2 May 2022; Emmanuel Martin, *Beware the Pitfalls of Stakeholder Capitalism*, *Austrian Economics Center*, 3 December 2021; *What is the Great Reset - and how did it get hijacked by conspiracy theories?* *BBC*, 24 June 2021).

The concern here is not with the contrasting economic arguments with respect to "share" versus "stake", but rather with the assumption that "shareholding" can be successfully replaced by "stakeholding" -- given the evident difficulties with sharing in practice in many contexts. It is only too evident that humanity has been unsuccessful in developing sustainable processes of sharing. As indicated above, with all its psychosocial dynamics, sharing is vulnerable to instabilities in practice. These are only controlled with difficulty in ways which may themselves be challenged as problematic, if not highly problematic. To the extent that democracy is upheld as a model through which power is shared, its inadequacies reinforce the point (*Variety of systems and the viability of democracy*, 2022; *Democracy as indicator of relative lack of intelligence?* 2023).

Whereas sharing is an elusive aspiration, however much it is upheld as a desirable characteristic of democracy, the implications of a shift to any more concrete sense of stake calls for careful consideration. Embodied as share in shareholder capitalism, a questionable degree of materialisation is already evident -- especially when shares are explicitly represented in documents of various forms. A much higher order of materialisation is evident in reference to stake. Curiously this is somewhat elusive to the extent that stake is then used more generally to imply an investment of some kind, whether or not it is explicitly monetised. The marketing process of ensuring [consumer buy-in](#) (if not lock-in) frames the consumer as stakeholder -- whether or not a transaction is immediately evident.

The WEF focus calls for comparison with that of the Club of Rome which launched [Earth4All](#) as a [new initiative on transformational](#)

[economics](#) in 2020. It was then stated that *Engagement with all major stakeholders including policy makers, relevant academic institutes, scientists, and business leaders and citizen groups will be fostered from the outset*. The results were published in 2022 (Sandrine Dixson-Declève, et al. *Earth for All: A Survival Guide for Humanity*, 2022). The open call for involvement in the initiative does not appear to clarify how "major stakeholders" relate to "transformational economics".

A case for exploring the implications of stake as a metaphor has been partially argued by Elisabet Garriga (*The Role of Champion Metaphors in Business and Stakeholder Relationships: an exploratory case study* *Academy of Management Proceedings*, 2020, 1):

Based on an exploratory case study, we describe the role of metaphors in specific business and stakeholders relationships, which have never been researched before. Especially we focus on one type of metaphors, the champion metaphors those that following Rorty's definition promote social progress and social hope... We conclude with a new management task for managing business-stakeholder relationships: business should identify what kind of metaphors they could promote among their stakeholders to take care of and integrate socially excluded groups into society. Of course, this requires a change in their business models and a change in their stakeholder relationships. Then, businesses will promote social progress and social hope.

Following the influential study by Gareth Morgan (*Images of Organization*, 1986), of interest in relation to "stakeholder" is the focus of Stephen Jackson:

Notwithstanding the importance of metaphors in organizational research, this paper recognizes that few empirical studies examining the multiple metaphors elicited by stakeholders... Furthermore, while studies following the elicited tradition view metaphor as a process of social construction, still little is known about the multiple types of metaphors elicited by stakeholders (*A multi-metaphor stakeholder analysis in an educational setting*, *Computers in Human Behavior*, 55, Part B, February 2016)

Potential symbolic connotations of stake in relation to stakeholder

Stake as weapon: Reference is made to the use of stake from the earliest indications of the human use of tools. One obvious adaptation is its use as a weapon -- as a spear, lance or pike. To what degree is stakeholding then to be recognized as a means of "weaponising" shareholding? The question is usefully reframed by consideration of use of the of the [baton](#) (truncheon, nightstick, or straightstick). It is carried as a compliance tool and defensive weapon by law-enforcement officers, correctional staff, security guards and military personnel.

As a weapon, stakes invite reflection on the competitive interaction between stakeholders as so skillfully modelled in [stick-fighting](#) martial arts (quarterstaff, kendo, etc).

The archetypal simplicity of a stake and its role over time suggests recognition of the appreciation of variants of that form. Most obvious is the arrow and its function down the centuries. Modern transformations are evident in the central role of rockets and missiles in military confrontations -- readily recognized as designed to impale the planet to some degree. There is the peculiar sense in which a tank with its primary weapon can be recognized as a stakeholder -- of a kind. As described by *Wikipedia*:

A [tank](#) is an armoured fighting vehicle intended as a primary offensive weapon in front-line ground combat. Tank designs are a balance of heavy firepower, strong armour, and good battlefield mobility provided by tracks and a powerful engine; usually their main armament is mounted in a turret. They are a mainstay of modern 20th and 21st century ground forces and a key part of combined arms combat. Modern tanks are versatile mobile land weapons platforms whose main armament is a large-caliber tank gun mounted in a rotating gun turret, supplemented by machine guns or other ranged weapons such as anti-tank guided missiles or rocket launchers.

In this light, there is potentially a degree of irony to preoccupations at this time with both stakeholder capitalism and the urgent manufacture and delivery of tanks by NATO countries to Ukraine -- where they are upheld to be a key to achieving success on the battlefield and recovering lost territory, namely a "great reset" to the advantage of NATO. Given the central role of the [military-industrial complex](#) in their manufacture, the tank is the most obvious symbol of stakeholder capitalism -- an all-terrain stakeholder *par excellence* (although with severe maintenance problems).

As a metaphor, tanks can themselves invite a potentially relevant comparison with the array of [think tanks](#) -- stakeholders of another kind -- variously brandishing their stakes in a form of "tank warfare" with each other (*Tank Warfare Challenges for Global Governance*, 2019). That discussion extends the metaphor to other cognitive modalities.

Stake as banner pole? A stake is readily adapted as a support for a banner of some kind -- a flag as in the case of a flagstaff. More intriguing in the case of a Davos Forum is the assembly of protestors bearing such banners. As protestors against the capitalism promoted by WEF, they could be understood as "anti-capitalist stakeholders".

Many banners, especially in the form of flags, are obvious emblems of identity. An assembly of stakeholders might well be distinctively identified by such means -- as with a traditional gathering of knights or the flag-bearers in a parade. Much symbolic importance is associated with the role of [standard-bearer](#) in battle. In the military of the Roman Empire the role was named the *Signifer*. As one of the *signiferi* in a legion, the *imagifer* carried the *imago* (the image) of the emperor -- a variant of which continues to be evident in protest marches.

Stakes forming enclosures? Use of multiple stakes linked together has long been a feature of fortified enclosures (especially against horse-riding attackers and wildlife), prior to the use of more substantial fortifications. A [palisade](#), sometimes called a stakewall or a paling (possibly forming a [stockade](#)), is typically a fence or defensive wall made from iron or wooden stakes, may be used as a defensive structure or enclosure. A [picket fence](#) may be similarly composed of stakes to form a defensive enclosure, although more recently used primarily for decorative purposes to separate neighbouring properties.

More intriguing in relation to this argument is the use of [picketing](#) by protestors, whether forming a picket line (with or without barricades), or involving other modes of action. Whether as a picket line or palisade, a stakeholding function can be recognized in opposition to a more organized initiative.

Virus as stakeholder? Ironically, there is also a case for recognizing the extent to which the COVID-19 virus can be understood as a stakeholder of another kind -- given the manner in which it holds a configuration of [protein spikes](#), as discussed separately ([Spike-endowed Global Civilization as COVID-19](#), 2020).

The irony is all the greater in that the pandemic was seen as an opportunity for enabling the Great Reset and the hegemony of stakeholder capitalism, as declared by Klaus Schwab: *The pandemic represents a rare but narrow window of opportunity to reflect, reimagine, and reset our world.*

Vaccination needle as a stake? Curiously the principal remedial response to the COVID-19 pandemic has been through the use of vaccination -- as has been the case with other illnesses recognized by the World Health Organization. The role of the stake as an early weapon can thereby be seen as transformed into a weapon of another kind -- purportedly against disease (Josie Appleton, *The Weaponisation of Vaccination, Notes on Freedom*, 17 September 2021; Victor Hanson, *Vaccination Weaponization, The Fallig Darkness*, 4 August 2021; *The Weaponization of Vaccines and Vaccine Resistance, Steemit*, 2019). The innovative design of this variety of stake emphasizes its tubular nature and its ability to deliver a vaccine payload.

Framed in this way it is then of some relevance to recognize how -- as stakes -- both the tank gun and the protein spike are designed to deliver other kinds of "payload". Arguably there is the emergence of a "stake logic", whether reference is made to stake, spike or similar forms -- and whether defensive, offensive, or preventative (*Missiles, Needles, Missions, Rifles, Projects, Bullets*, 2020).

Strategic narratives as stakes? With the rapid development of strategic narratives, these can also be seen as effectively designed to "deliver a payload" (Laura Roselle, et al. *Strategic Narrative: a new means to understand soft power, Media, War and Conflict*, 7, 2014, 1; Mark Bonchek, *How to Build a Strategic Narrative, Harvard Business Review*, 25 March 2016). The highly divisive controversies with regard to vaccination of the global population, and the need for booster shots, are highlighting concerns about the dangerous reduction of immunity with which their payloads are associated. Through their crafting of the "mainstream narrative" in response to the pandemic, authorities have clarified their understanding that the health of the population is "at stake".

Could analogous dangers be foreseen with respect to promotion of stakeholder capitalism, namely a model effectively designed to reduce immunity in the population -- but immunity of another kind? There is then a correspondence between preoccupation with disinformation from the vaccination resistant and efforts to reduce the resistance to the capitalism as envisaged by the stakeholder model. In contrast to the genetic modification enabled by [mNRA vaccines](#), is the strategic challenge addressed then to be recognized as one of indoctrination, with the narrative payloads understood as their memetic analogues?

It can be readily inferred that it is to such indoctrination to which Tony Blair refers in his recent address to the Davos Forum (Baxter Dmitry, *'Slew of New Injectables and Vaccines' give WEF the opportunity to 'change the world'*, *News Punch*, 19 January 2023).

Connotations of stake as spike? Of relevance to recognition of the potential connotations of stake and the manner in which it is held, the earlier spike-focused argument explored:

Nature of a "spike" in behavioural and experiential terms	"Spiky / Prickly" personalities
Military weaponry and framing of behavioural spikes	Comprehension, memory and spike communication -- mirror neurons?
Information, misinformation and trends -- as spikes in memetic warfare?	Identity, sex and "being a spike"
Problematique and resolutique -- as complexes of spikes	Spike dynamics and governance -- by lockdown?
Values, principles and axes of bias -- as configurations of spikes?	Strategic dilemmas: hedgehog, trolley and pineapple?
Collectivities and the upstanding as configurations of spikes?	Cognitive resonance: Renaissance versus Spiking recovery
Human disciplinary specialization understood as a global configuration?	Strange spike symbolism of questionable relevance

Riskholding capitalism? More subtly, a stake is clearly a feature of gambling and risk-taking, especially with respect to investment in a collective enterprise. There is then a case for recognizing the extent to which stakeholding is to be understood as risk-holding, suggesting consideration of "riskholder capitalism". Highlighting risk to that degree recalls the historical innovation by which the liability to shareholders was limited through a [limited company](#). Less evident is how liability might be understood to be limited or shared under stakeholder capitalism -- especially when the future of civilization is "at stake" (*Humanity is at a Precipice: its future is at stake*, *Pew Research Center*, 28 October 2019).

Are stakeholders to be recognized as gambling with the future of the planet? To what extent could they be charged with having a "[gambling problem](#)"? This is repetitive gambling behavior despite harm and negative consequences. Problem gambling may be diagnosed as a mental disorder according to [DSM-5](#) if certain diagnostic criteria are met. Pathological gambling is a common disorder associated with social and family costs.

Stake as central to punishment: It is intriguing that stake has also been central to the punishment accorded to those infringing the norms of society -- whether in physical terms or metaphorically. Reference is made to being "[burned at the stake](#)", notably to the use of

multiple stakes for the execution of heretics by the Spanish Inquisition (Geoffrey Abbott, *Burning at the Stake*, *Encyclopaedia Britannica*; *Burning at the stake*, *Capital Punishment UK*; Daniel de Lorne, *5 facts you didn't know about being burned at the stake*).

Whilst no longer used as a form of execution, burning is recognized metaphorically. Curiously a shareholder experiencing a catastrophic loss may be said to have been "burned". Competitors may seek to "burn" each other. Whether this applies to a stakeholder is less evident (David Gordon, *Burned at the Stake: stakeholder theory and shareholder interests don't line up*, *EurAsia Review*, 5 March 2022). Ironically issues with regard to stakeholder theory have been evoked with respect to fire management (Jennifer K. Costanza and Aaron Moody, *Deciding Where to Burn: stakeholder priorities for prescribed burning of a fire-dependent ecosystem*, *Ecology and Society*, 16, 2011, 1). To what extent would those issues be of relevance to a society (as an ecosystem) dependent for its management on "burning" - metaphorically understood?

Stake as implement of torture -- impalement: Aside from binding to a stake for purposes of execution by authorities, also evident historically over centuries, has been their use of the stake as an instrument of execution preceded by torture (*The Stake, Torture Museum*, 2015; Ayad Attar, *Impalement in the History: worst way to die. Kabbos; The excruciating torture of impalement*, *Emadion*, 12 October 2015). The process is otherwise known as impaling. As extensively described by *Wikipedia*:

Impalement... is the penetration of a human by an object such as a stake, pole, spear, or hook, often by the complete or partial perforation of the torso. It was particularly used in response to "crimes against the state" and regarded across a number of cultures as a very harsh form of capital punishment and recorded in myth and art. Impalement was also used during times of war to suppress rebellions, punish traitors or collaborators, and punish breaches of military discipline.

Impalement is renowned as a favoured process of **Vlad the Impaler**. Whilst no longer recorded as a form of punishment for "crimes against the state", it continues to feature in media, as usefully described separately:

This trope often appears with **Anvilicious** symbolism with a side dish of **Freudianism**: after all, the character was just run through with a **really big rod**... and bigger is better in bad. Thanks to its sheer shock value, this trope is sometimes used on one of the good guys as a way to really **raise the stakes** — pun intended. (*Impaled with Extreme Prejudice*, *TV Tropes*)

Although impalement may not have featured in either torture or execution, following decapitation the **head might be impaled on a stake** for public display, as widely practiced. This is explored metaphorically by Angela Lorenz with respect to **Thomas More** whose head was so displayed by authorities (*The Sir Thomas' more -- or Utopia Impaled: A Memento Mori*, *Angelonium*, 2007).

Aside from the emphasis on penetration, the impalement may be held to include binding to a stake, as described from a Christian perspective by the *Watch Tower Bible and Tract Society*:

Impalement: In the literal sense, the fastening of a victim either dead or alive to a stake. The execution of Jesus Christ is the best-known case. (*Luke 24:20; John 19:14-16; Acts 2:23*)... Not only do the Scriptures bear thorough witness concerning the physical impalement of the Lord Jesus Christ (*1 Corinthians 1:13; 2 Corinthians 13:4; Revelation 11:8*); they also speak of impalement in a figurative, metaphorical sense, as at *Galatians 2:20*. Christians have had their old personality put to death through Christ's impalement (*Romans 6:6*). *Moreover, those who belong to Christ Jesus impaled the flesh together with its passions and desires*, Paul writes, adding that through Christ *the world has been impaled to me and I to the world*. (*Galatians 5:24; Galatians 6:14*). Apostates in effect *impale the Son of God afresh for themselves and expose him to public shame*, doing so by their Judaslike rebellion against God's arrangement for salvation. (*Hebrews 6:4-6*).

The etymology of impalement suggests a more complex relationship to stake, other than its use in penetration, namely "enclosing with stakes". This is consistent with the relationship between palings and stakes in the construction of enclosures. However enclosure with palings offers the additional sense of "**beyond the pale**", thereby framing questions with regard to those excluded from any envisaged stakeholder relationship.

Impalement enjoined through euphemism and slang? Given the extent of its use in history, the biblical references above to impalement, together with the frequent blasphemous evocations of Christ in discourse, it is not surprising that use of that impalement should be frequently enjoined through euphemism in slang expressions (*up yours, shove it up yours, stick it to...*).

Conquest marked by collective impalement -- or crucifixion?

Impalement of groups, possibly on a massive scale, has been variously evident in the past. Some form of the process has been characteristic of major battles and conquest, most notably as a means by the victors of impressing the new order on the conquered.

When the Persian King Darius conquered Babylon he impaled more than 3,000 prisoners, an act reported by Herodotus, and confirmed in records of Darius himself. Impalement continued to be used in the Persian Empire in the treatment of criminals (Larry Holzwarth, *18 Examples of Crime and Punishment in the Ancient Persian Empire*, *History Collection*, 24 December 2018).

It is unclear whether Ghengis Khan made use of impalement specifically, but this would seem probable in the light of the related methods used (Tara Finger, *How the Mongols Executed Enemies With No Blood Spilled*, *CVLT Nation*, 10 July 2018; *The Brutal Brilliance of Ghengis Khan*, *History Extra*, 22 February 2019).

There is a degree of confusion between the practices of "impalement" and "crucifixion", as clarified separately (*Crucifixion as*

Punishment in Ancient Rome, Brewminate, 30 January 2020):

Crucifixion was carried out in many ways under the Romans. Josephus describes multiple positions of crucifixion during the siege of Jerusalem in 70 C.E. when Titus crucified the rebels; and Seneca the Younger recounts: *I see crosses there, not just of one kind but made in many different ways: some have their victims with head down to the ground; some impale their private parts; others stretch out their arms on the gibbet.*

Following the [Third Servile War](#), known as the Spartacus Revolt, Crassus crucified some 6,000 slaves along the 200-kilometer Appian Way in 71 BC. This was the last servile war and Rome did not see another slave uprising of this magnitude again. Whether "crucified", "impaled", or either, is unclear.

As might be expected, impalement of large numbers was a strategy employed by the above-mentioned Vlad the Impaler -- in response to an attack by the Ottoman Empire, as detailed by Nicolas River:

But then they found something far more disturbing: a grotesque forest of wooden stakes piled high with skewered Ottoman corpses. Chalkokondyles, a contemporary Greek historian, claims there were 20,000 bodies in all, arrayed over an area of more than seven acres. The tallest stake [reportedly](#) propped up Hamza Pasha, the Ottoman official who had led the envoy sent to demand tribute from Vlad the year before. (It seems Vlad had been stockpiling corpses from previous raids to create this brutal display, and also impaling all of his Ottoman prisoners of war in preparation for the sultan's arrival. But the exact source for all the bodies remains somewhat unclear.) (*When Vlad the Impaler Repelled an Invasion With a Forest of Corpses*, *Mental Floss*, 14 July 2017).

Stakeholder dilemma: WEF stake in AI ∞ AI stake in WEF?

The World Economic Forum has an intellectual stake in artificial intelligence (AI), whose implications it has actively promoted, notably through the Davos Forum. A mission of WEF is specifically stated to be:

Accelerating the benefits of AI and machine learning. The World Economic Forum is committed to helping ensure that these systems emphasize privacy and accountability, and foster equality and inclusion. We aim to bring together the public and private sectors to co-design, test, and implement policies that increase the benefits of artificial intelligence and machine learning – while developing projects to protect the vulnerable and address issues like facial-recognition technology. (*Artificial Intelligence*, *World Economic Forum*)

It offers insights into [5 ways to avoid artificial intelligence bias with 'responsible AI'](#). In relation to strategic intelligence, WEF offers a complex ["transformation map" centred on Artificial Intelligence](#).

With the release in late 2022 by [OpenAI](#) of access to [ChatGPT](#), it is no surprise that its AI potential was a focus at Davos 2023 (Jeffrey Dastin. *Davos 2023: CEOs buzz about ChatGPT-style AI at World Economic Forum*, *Reuters*, 20 January 2023; Ina Fried, *ChatGPT is the talk of Davos*, *Axios*, 19 January 2023; Cadie Thompson and Beatrice Nolan, *'Transformative, fascinating': Here's what top executives at Davos are saying about ChatGPT*, *Insider*, 18 January 2023).

ChatGPT (or Generative Pre-trained Transformer) is described by *Wikipedia* as:

... a [chatbot](#) launched... in November 2022. It is built on top of OpenAI's GPT-3 family of large language models, and is fine-tuned (an approach to transfer learning) with both supervised and reinforcement learning techniques... [It] quickly garnered attention for its detailed responses and articulate answers across many domains of knowledge.... Following the release of ChatGPT, OpenAI was valued at \$29 billion.

The dilemma for WEF with respect to stakeholder capitalism derives from the emerging role of AI in the creation of what is now considered patentable -- but controversially so (*Artificial Intelligence and Intellectual Property*, *World Intellectual Property Organization*; Alexandra Jones, *Artificial intelligence can now be recognised as an inventor after historic Australian court decision*, *ABC News*, 31 July 2021).

It has already been anticipated that AI development will reach a stage at which some form of personhood is accorded to it in its capacity to create intellectual property. A degree of personhood is already accorded to forms such as ChatGPT through the capacity to develop presentations and arguments that are distinguished with difficulty from those of humans. Potentially most striking is the capacity to do so in dialogue. For WEF the question will soon arise of how to integrate such capacity into the Davos Forum and in the development of contributions to its website. It is to be expected that presentations at a future Davos Forum will be made by some future incarnation of ChatGPT.

Whereas WEF may indeed "have a stake" in such development, especially since some attendees at Davos will invest heavily in that potential of AI, at what point will AI be said to "have a stake" in WEF? The complexity of the issue will become rapidly evident when an AI with any degree of independence engages in the financial markets with capitalist directives -- as may already be inferred to be the case. The AI may then be appropriately recognized as a stakeholder -- as one embodiment of stakeholder capitalism.

A more insidious development may be recognized through the progressive dependence of WEF on AI -- to the point at which the AI

effectively takes over the strategic management of WEF and the orchestration of the Davos Forum and the contacts facilitated there (possibly including encounters with sex workers). When will an AI "speaker" or "panelist" be deemed more strategically insightful than a human contributor? A speculative exploration of this scenario has been developed separately in relation to the COVID-19 pandemic -- of which future variants are now actively anticipated (*Governance of Pandemic Response by Artificial Intelligence*, 2021). This considered the possibility of control of human agents unconscious of AI-elaboration of communication scripts and strategic narratives.

Planetary impalement through stakeholder capitalism?

The argument has highlighted the potential connotations of "stake" as they may affect comprehension of stakeholder capitalism -- in the spirit of the arguments of Gareth Morgan (1986). In a period in which both the potential role of missiles and that of protein spikes is ever more evident, there is a case for recognizing how the planet as a whole may be "impaled" -- if only metaphorically and psychologically. A tortuous physical consequence can also be readily envisaged -- as articulated by many.

Criticism in conventional terms of the strategic promotion of stakeholder capitalism by the World Economic Forum naturally avoids reference to the psychological and symbolic dimensions highlighted above. WEF frames itself as engaged in [information warfare](#) in response to the widespread dissemination of what it endeavours to frame as disinformation. The challenge may however be seen to be different, as illustrated by strategic recognition of the shift to [cognitive warfare](#) and [memetic warfare](#).

If global civilization is to be conquered by the Global Reset, with stakeholder capitalism as the dominant regime, there is a case for exploring whether this corresponds metaphorically to the imperial ambitions of Darius, Genghis Khan, and Ancient Rome -- if not those of the recent past. How might the historical use of impalement translate into psychosocial terms in order to punish dissenters?

Rape of countries and the planet: The argument can be presented otherwise -- in contemporary terms -- through recognition of the extent to which claims are made that authorities and corporate entities have "raped" and "shafted" countries, cultures, their populations and the planet. "[Corporate rape](#)" is a recognized term. Use of "shaft" as a euphemism again recalls some connotations of "stake" -- suggesting recognition of "shaftholder capitalism"?

For Michael Starks: *One might start by noting that the decrease in physical violence over history has been matched (and made possible) by the constantly increasing merciless rape of the planet (i.e., by people's destruction of their own descendants future).* (*The Transient Suppression of the Worst Devils of our Nature*, 2019).

A distinction must necessarily be made between metaphorical reference to "rape by institutions" and instances of "institutionalised rape". Both tend to be confused in references to a [rape culture](#) (William Worthy, *The Rape of Our Neighborhoods: and how communities are resisting takeovers by colleges, hospitals, churches, businesses, and public agencies*, 1977; L. E. Moss, *The Rape of our Neighborhoods, The Review of Black Political Economy*, 7, 1977; Robert Mark Silverman, et al, *William Worthy's Concept of "Institutional Rape" Revisited, Humanity and Society*, 38, 2014, 2).

Again a distinction is required between "rape culture", typically associated with males -- and the "rape of cultures" by male-dominated institutions, most obviously religions in seeking to supplant one another through suppression of traditions and language (*Flowering of Civilization -- Deflowering of Culture*, 2014).

Of interest with respect to "rape by institutions" are claims relating to the rape of countries, as enabled by intergovernmental agencies like the IMF (Dana Gabriel, *The IMF: Raping The World, One Poor Nation at a Time, Be Your Own Leader*, 23 June 2009; Heather Cottin, *The IMF Rapes the World, Workers World*, 7 July 2011; Greg Palast, *Strauss-Kahn Screws Africa, Eurasia Review*, 20 May 2011).

Here the confusion is exacerbated (possibly intentionally) by the very extensive media coverage of the rape of a chambermaid by the managing director of the IMF in 2011 (after four years in that role). This thereby avoids any critical insight into "rape" by the IMF itself (understood metaphorically), however enabled by the director's mindset and proclivities, known to those who appointed him (Caroline Waxler, *One Night In Davos: the IMF trust edition, Insider*, 20 October 2008; Gabor Steingart, *One Night in Davos: IMF Chief's job spared after affair, Spiegel International*, 27 October 2008). Although not illegal, the former director of IMF has testified to having orgies while he was managing the world financial crisis, to being "rough" with his sexual "conquests", and to needing sex with exceptional frequency (*The case against Dominique Strauss-Kahn is unraveling, CBS News*, 16 February 2015; Brian Love, *The Two Faces of DSK, Reuters*, 20 May 2011).

To what extent are many Davos attendees to be recognized as "two-faced"? Missing is any extensive study of the systemic correspondences, as argued separately (*Institutional "rape" as systemic equivalent to individual rape?* 2011).

Given the level of environmental degradation, it is readily argued that the planet has been raped -- and continues to be raped -- possibly framed as *shafting the planet* (the slang variant of rape):

- Shani Jay: *We Rape Mother Earth the same way We Rape Women* (*Revoloon*, 26 November 2019)
- Richard Oxman: *Relationship between Rape and Rape of the Planet in Environmental Protection* (*CounterCurrents*, 22 November 2017)
- Charles Henderson: *Rape of the Planet* (*GodWeb*)
- *Disconnected from Nature: is this the reason we're raping the planet?* (*Live Learn Evolve*, 25 June 2014)
- *Rape of Earth continues* (*The New Straits Times*, 16 June 2002)
- *Rape of the Planet and Genetic Holocaust* (*Dhushara*)

As articulated by the latter:

Rape of the planet has become something we take for granted. It has become a central figure of speech and an assumption about the existential condition, as if such actions are an implicit part of human nature. But the very metaphor indicates that patriarchal

sexual prerogatives are driving human impact. Rape is, by its nature sexual, and intimately connected with male violence in the pursuit of insemination by violent 'power over' the other. It is brought into an altogether unseemly conjunction with our deep cultural emphasis on the Earth as 'mother', becoming at once an original sin of mankind - the rape of Mother Earth.

For Andrea Smith (*Not an Indian Tradition: the sexual colonization of Native Peoples*. *Hypatia*, 18, 2003, 2):

This paper argues that sexual violence does not simply just occur within the process of colonialism, but that colonialism is itself structured by the logic of sexual violence. Furthermore, this logic of sexual violence continues to structure U. S. policies toward Native peoples today. Consequently, anti-sexual violence and anti-colonial struggles cannot be separated.

Rape and genocide: The argument can be explored otherwise through recognition of the relation of rape of the individual to that of genocide, namely **rape as an act of genocide**:

Genocide is defined as a violation committed against particular groups. In contrast, rape is conceptualised as a violation of an individual's sexual autonomy. As such, can rape understood as a violation of an individual's sexual autonomy be compatible with rape being subsumed within the category of a group violation such as genocide? A key conclusion of this article is that if conceptual space can be created within the crime of genocide to include both the individual and the group, then rape (when categorised as genocide) can operate both as a violation against the group and as a violation against the individual. (Daniela de Vito, et al, *Rape Characterised as Genocide*. *Sur: international journal of human rights*, 10, January 2009)

A distinction is required from **genocidal rape**, most notably in wartime. This is the action of a group carrying out acts of mass rape and gang rapes, against its enemy during wartime as part of a genocidal campaign (Myriam Denov, et al, *The Intergenerational Legacy of Genocidal Rape*, *Journal of Interpersonal Violence*, 35, 2020 September).

Rape as impalement: For an individual, rape may be experienced and remembered as a form of impalement. References exist to horrific acts of impalement in living memory, whether or not it was preceded by rape. Somewhat ironically, impalement (in the absence of rape) may be excluded from definitions of rape as narrowly defined (Niamh Haye, *Creating a Definition of Rape in International Law: the contribution of the International Criminal Tribunals*, *Judicial Creativity at the International Criminal Tribunals*, 2010).

The question here is whether rape of the planet can be meaningfully understood as enabled by stakeholder capitalism -- and how this might relate to any understanding of planetary impalement.

Clarifying degrees of strategic complicity

At the time of writing a primary global focus is on the Russia-Ukraine conflict and the delivery of weapons from NATO countries to Ukraine. The level of involvement has been significantly increased with decisions to deliver tanks to Ukraine -- immediately following the end of the Davos Forum meeting in January 2023 at which the heads of the NATO security services were allegedly present.

Much has been asserted regarding the non-involvement of the NATO countries in the conflict in Ukraine -- carefully presented as a **proxy war** between NATO and Russia. However with the tank delivery decision, notably by Germany, it is not surprising that during a debate at the Parliamentary Assembly of the Council of Europe, German Foreign Minister Annalena Baerbock bluntly stated that Germany and its allies are **"at war with Russia"** (Kurt Nimmo, *German Foreign Minister: We Are at War with Russia*, *Global Research*, 26 January 2023; Drago Bosnic, *Did Germany Just Officially Declare War on Russia?* *Global Research*, 26 January 2023).

Stages in the transition to direct conflict can be seen in terms of a **grey zone**, namely the space between peace and war in which state and non-state actors controversially engage (Michel Chossudovsky, *Unspoken Divisions within NATO: "Sleeping with the Enemy"*, *Global Research*, 26 January 2023). Stages include:

- encircling a country with weaponry, prior to any active conflict -- most obviously through a palisade of missile launchers ("stakeholders" of a particular kind)
- crafting and disseminating a strategic narrative justifying the proxy war -- and condemning contrary narratives as disinformation (a "palisade of arguments"?)
- use of cyberwarfare techniques in support of the proxy war
- supply of (satellite) intelligence by a "non-involved" country to the country directly involved in the war -- potentially to facilitate its targetting
- use of weapons manufactured by a country denying its involvement in direct conflict -- where the weapons are acquired through intermediaries
- instruction and training in the use of weapons of the manufacturing country by military advisers of the manufacturing country
- use of weapons supplied directly by the manufacturing country
- operation and maintenance of weapons by military personnel of the manufacturing country

Remarkably at each stage there is every scope for deniability of direct involvement and for any responsibility for enabling the conflict. Curiously such "hands off" parallels are evident with respect to acquisition and use of the weapons which feature in the widely publicised **mass shootings** -- most notably in the USA (*List of mass shootings in the USA*). Of relevance in the latter context is the vigorous denial of responsibility of the weapons manufacturers for the consequence of the use of their weaponry -- despite extensive promotion of justification for their dissemination, potentially extending to facilitating training in their use by intermediaries (*Arming Civil Society Worldwide: getting democracy to work in the emergent American Empire?* 2003).

A notable feature of the discourse through which shootings are deplored is the reference to a "gun culture". The argument developed here is that this might well be better understood as an aspect of a "stake culture" or "spike culture", especially to the extent that "gun culture" is recognized as an aspect of a "rape culture". Deniability in specific terms is a characteristic of the nebulous nature of "culture".

Curiously it is now the practice to attach provenance labels to individual items of fruit on sale (apples, etc) in order to be able to track any problematic issues arising from their consumption. No such chain of responsibility is considered significant in the case of the provenance of bullets or missiles causing fatalities (*Identification of Bullets: human right and human responsibility?* 2009). Those responsible for their manufacture are "not involved", as with other technological innovations (*From Patent Rights to Patent Responsibilities: obligations incumbent on owners and licensors of intellectual property*, 2007).

The degrees of complicity of WEF (and Davos Forum attendees) merit exploration in the light of the extent to which "planetary rape" is enabled by their dynamics. Clearly their involvement in harm would be vigorously denied -- as with the NRA in the USA. However the engagement of a proportion of attendees with sex workers, purportedly "outside" the Forum framework, raises the question of the nature of any complicity. Given the extent to which that engagement is known by attendees who do not make use of such facilities -- and tolerated by them -- to what extent are they themselves complicit in the process?

Participants may indeed deploy their sexual weaponry in the process -- presumably in a relationship in which the sex workers are complicit to a degree (despite any criticism of that role). Is the mindset enabling use of sex workers indicative or consistent with that applied to the global strategic decisions on which attendees claim such influence?

Complicity of World Economic Forum in "impalement of the planet"?

The annual Davos Forum of the WEF is rightfully recognized as disposing of all the resources enabling it to be organized as the most efficient event in communication terms. As such it is an example for other international events variously constrained by resources. Most notable is the ability to incorporate the newest technologies to facilitate contact between participants, to enable participants to manage their efforts to contact others, and to restrict exposure to unwelcome contacts.

The technologies in question reflect the continuing development of groupware and its integration into a web-enhanced environment. This means that participants have multiple opportunities to use associated technologies and platforms (Twitter, Facebook, etc) to communicate with each other, as facilitated by the Forum organizers, by other parties, or through any process of self-organization.

The Forum is remarkable for its application of visualization technology to the articulation and presentation of a variety of issue maps as a focus for strategic intelligence. These are articulated through transformation maps, as discussed and illustrated separately (*Transformation maps -- as "strategic mandalas"?* 2020). This is in marked contrast to the limited capacity of other authorities and venues, most notably the [World Social Forum](#), as the WEF "counterpart" -- through which stakeholders are understood otherwise.

Forum attendees as stakeholders in a capitalist initiative? In the light of the above argument, it can be readily argued that attendees are stakeholders in their own right. That stake has been purchased at considerable price (for many) -- beyond the financial means of others who could be said to have a stake in the outcome of the Forum. Some attendees are of course there by invitation or by special arrangement as guests.

Curiously the attendees, as Forum stakeholders, can be recognized as effectively setting up a form of stake enclosure, recalling the early structure of fortresses as palisades. Those prevented from access are then clearly framed as "beyond the pale". In symbolic terms, are those "without" then potentially subject to impaling -- as "deplorable" or the like? Do they see themselves in that light -- as having been "shafted", or susceptible to that process?

The Forum is necessarily a major security challenge, given the perceived need to exclude protestors seeking to disrupt the event. Clearly all would be aware of the potential for electronic surveillance, hacking, and unwelcome exposure to media and critics. Given the attendance of influential leaders (normally protected by bodyguards), it is no surprise that security measures require the presence of snipers on rooftops in the local environment -- stakeholders in their own right, given the rifles by which they are armed.

Attendees as "rapists"? The Forum is promoted as a venue for elites, especially for the billionaires and multi-billionaires understood to be capable of moulding public opinion -- readily framed in slang as "fucking the public". Many attendees are held explicitly by critics to be most responsible for the rape of the planet -- thereby rendering the WEF complicit in that process, especially to the extent that it deliberately enables their coordinated action. It is for such reasons that WEF is held by conspiracy theorists, for example, to be a nexus of problematic strategic initiatives (Sam Meredith, *How Davos became a target for conspiracy theorists and anarchists*, *CNBC*, 23 May 2022; Robert J. Burrowes, *Historical Analysis of the Global Elite: ransacking the world economy until 'You'll Own Nothing'*, *Global Research*, 28 January 2023).

It is also the case that others are invited as guests to articulate views which are potentially of value to fee-paying attendees. There is some irony to the physical organization of panels on which such insights are presented -- effectively by "talking heads". This is potentially reminiscent of the practice in Ancient Rome of using statues of authority figures with replaceable heads (to avoid sculpting the whole body anew subsequent to any change). Are such talking heads usefully to be recognized as "impaled" for the duration of the panel?

The reference above to "until you'll own nothing" plays on the much-cited controversial assertion of the founder of WEF about the outcome of the Great Reset enabled by stakeholder capitalism (Rudolf Hänsel, *The Deadly 2030 Master Plan: "You Will Own Nothing -- and Be Happy"*, *Global Research*, 25 April 2022; *What does Klaus Schwab mean by "You will own nothing and be happy"?* *Quora*; Jonathan Tobin, *The 'Great Reset' wants you to own nothing and be happy about it*, *Jewish News Syndicate*, 30 January 2023; Martin Armstrong, *Klaus Schwab says you will own nothing in 10 years*, *Armstrong Economics*, 26 October 2020). Such has been the controversy, that WEF has been further embarrassed by endeavouring to delete it (Baxter Dmitry, *WEF Caught Scrubbing 'You Will Own Nothing and Be Happy' Post From Internet*, *News Punch*, 9 June 2022).

Whilst the "impalement" meme evoked in this argument may be readily deemed improbable, it is quite surprising to note that a preferred antonym of impalement is "happiness". This highlights the fact that a stake is typically recognized to have a sharp and a blunt end. Rape and impalement are associated with the sharper end; happiness with the blunter end controlled by the stakeholder.

Sex workers as undeclared stakeholders? Extensive media coverage of the Davos Forum has variously noted the extent to which it is a focus of choice for sex workers (*Conjoining the Incommensurables at the WEF Davos Forum of 2023*, *Transcend Media Service*, 23 January 2023). This frames the question as to whether -- according to stakeholder theory and the promotion of stakeholder capitalism -- they are themselves to be considered stakeholders in the Forum process. It might then be asked what it is they "hold".

As a geopolitical analyst, [Peter Koenig](#) asks whether the future will perceive the Davos event in relation to modern deprecation of the [Sodom and Gomorrah](#) of biblical renown (*WEF Davos – The New Sodom and Gomorrah?* *Global Research*, 19 January 2023).

Intriguingly the sex workers would appear to be remunerated directly by attendees in a personal capacity and not by the Forum organizers -- who deny any responsibility for their presence (despite enabling it) or the highly valued role they play. However there is no denying that the facilities they offer constitute a major attraction for some attendees, if not many. As noted by Chantal Galladé, Switzerland is the only European country where girls are allowed to work as prostitutes beginning at age 16 (*Switzerland's Sixteen-Year-Old Prostitute Problem*, *World Crunch*, 19 April 2012).

A distinction is necessary between consenting sex workers and the harassment of women at Davos. Sexual harassment by wealthy men at WEF is allegedly so common that women are advised not to go out alone (*Davos 2020: Claims of sexual harassment and use of sex workers during gathering*, *I News*, 23 March 2020; *Strauss-Kahn accused of sexual assault at Davos* *The Local*, 5 June 2013).

Of potential relevance, it has also been argued that it is strange that an "economic" forum should promote "inclusivity", as at the 2023 Davos Forum -- specifically through its [Partnership for LGBTIQ+ Equality](#) (Jacob M. Thompson, *World Economic Forum Will Now Invite Psychedelic Shamans For Discussion And Promotion*, *Wine Press News*, 17 May 2022). In the light of social media posts that the Swiss-based WEF was promoting the further reduction of the age of consent to 13, these elements have been presented by a former Australian MP, [George Christensen](#), in raising the question as to whether WEF was effectively seeking an even further extension (*Does the World Economic Forum promote paedophilia?* *Rumble*, January 2023). The social media posts were subsequently held to be invalid (*Debunked: No, the World Economic Forum did not suggest reducing the age of consent to 13*, *The Journal*, 10 August 2021).

Impalement by stakeholders in myth and art?

As noted by *Wikipedia*, the use of [impalement in myth, art, and literature](#) includes mythical representations of it as a method of execution and other uses in paintings, sculptures, and the like -- in addition to folklore and other tales. There impalement is related to magical or supernatural properties, and the use of simulated impalement for the purposes of entertainment. The treatment covers Europe, the Ottoman Empire, the Indian sub-continent, and Eastern Asia.

The Handmaid's Tale: Of curious relevance to the above argument is the appreciation accorded by WEF to [Margaret Atwood](#), as author of *The Handmaid's Tale* (1985). This took the form of an award in 2010 (*Margaret Atwood receives the World Economic Forum's Crystal Award in Davos, Switzerland*, *CISION*, 27 January 2010). However her anticipated acceptance speech to world leaders on the importance of art to the world economy was curtailed -- seemingly because of time constraints (*Atwood goes to Davos, but no one hears her*, *CBC*, 28 January 2010; *Speech at Davos*, 27 January 2010). WEF subsequently acknowledged the merits of *The Handmaid's Tale* otherwise (*4 Dystopian Novels that are Trending in 2017*, *WEF*, 17 February 2017).

Central to *The Handmaid's Tale* is a ritual process of procreation, termed *The Ceremony*. This is a highly ritualised act of rape that high-ranking men (such as [Commanders](#) or [Angels](#)), their [Wives](#) and [Handmaids](#) undergo to conceive children:

During the Ceremony itself, everyone remains mostly clothed. It is designed to be as clinical and non-sensual as possible, as the purpose of the Ceremony is not sexual pleasure or intimacy, but the conceiving of children. The Wife and Handmaid must lie on their backs on the edge of a bed, with the Handmaid lying between the Wife's legs, her head against her abdomen, and her arms raised above her head to hold hands with the Wife whilst the man involved has intercourse with the Handmaid. (see also [Chapter 16](#), *The Handmaid's Tale*, 1985).

As phrased by one review: *Offred's impregnation took the form of a cheerless threesome in which Commander Waterford... impaled her* (*Handmaid's Tale, : we are beholden to this scary dystopian world of mob murder*, *The Telegraph*, 28 May 2017). Noting the world imagined by Atwood as one in which the Christian Right had triumphed and women had been reduced to total subservience, Clyde Wilcox frames this as a situation in which the "Moral Majority impaled itself" (*Premillennialists at the Millennium: some reflections on the Christian Right in the Twenty-First Century*, *Sociology of Religion*, 55, 1994, 3).

In this light, a provocative question is the extent to which the Davos Forum is in any way a ritual collective enactment of Atwood's "Ceremony". Understood metaphorically, who might be fruitfully recognized as the "Commanders", the "Wives" and the "Handmaidens"? In the quest for innovation of relevance to the future, how are insights engendered by the ritual process?

Rape as vampirism? There is a complex relationship between rape and vampirism in the popular imagination, as reflected in vampire literary genres, but also in the anxieties of cultures and societies that produce them (David Baker, et al *Hospitality, Rape and Consent in Vampire Popular Culture: letting the wrong one in*, 2017; *Psychological Perspectives on Vampire Mythology*, *The Vampire Book*, 2011). Provoking fear and fascination, the vampire is seen as an embodiment of the violent and violated, oppression and the oppressed Other.

Irrespective of the manner in which capitalist elites are held to be raping society (as noted above), "blood-sucking capitalists" are

variously associated with vampirism -- metaphorically understood (Graham Holton, *Marx's vampire capitalism and the present economic crisis*, *The Guardian*, 2017, August 2022; Paul Kennedy, *Vampire Capitalism: fractured societies and alternative futures*, 2017). For the latter, as reviewed by Chris Porter (*Journal of Consumer Culture*, 20, 2023, 3):

The spectre of the sinister, blood-sucking vampire has long been drawn upon as a metaphor for the ways in which calculating, profit-hungry capitalist forces exploit, live off and ultimately drain the life force of human society. Grounding his provocative book in this tradition, Kennedy cites Marx's (1867) description of "vampire-like" capital extracting labour's surplus value, as well as Matt Taibbi's (2010) characterisation of Goldman Sachs as "a great vampire squid wrapped around the face of humanity"....

A fundamental claim is that capitalism has become dislocated from the productive forces of society that once constituted its life force and, so its proponents claimed – with some justification – to which capitalism gave nourishment in return. Instead, the "vampire form" of capitalism that Kennedy describes is one that takes away but has stopped giving back. Symptoms, as well as drivers, of this process include the predominance of financialisation, rent seeking and other economic activities that rely on the ownership or trade of assets, often in abstract forms, to generate profits....

Is it fair to accuse the contemporary consumer of complicity? Do we as individuals have the agency to refuse to extend an invitation to the vampire-form of capitalism described by Kennedy? The respective weighting we each may place on structure and agency in such debates is telling, but this has never been a straightforward, linear antagonism....

We need not deny individual agency in acknowledging that the prevailing social and economic structure imparts a cultural tendency towards inviting Vampire Capitalism in. Individual consumers and subcultures can always resist in heroic and creative ways, yet these sacred refuges nevertheless remain surrounded by the profane feeding grounds of contemporary consumerism....

The vampire form of capitalism currently lies prone and exposed to the sunlight, its shortcomings as a driver of globalisation and sustainable development clear to see. It is stirring though; ready to come back, reinvigorated in usual post-crisis fashion as its henchmen rush to re-draw the curtains. If we want to be genuine stakeholders as society responds to this crisis, reading Paul Kennedy's *Vampire Capitalism* may just provide the inspiration for what to do with that stake.

Offering a play on DAVOS, the relevance of the vampire metaphor can be explored otherwise (*Global Civilization of Vampires: Metaphor of Governance via Demons and Vampires on Spin?* 2005), with the following themes:

Vampires around the world	Information vampires
Vampires in literature, in the media, in games and on the web	Semantic and cultural vampirism
Research on vampirism in popular mythology	Demonic aspects of vampirism
Symbolism of blood	World governance: a conspiracy of vampires?
Vampires in psychoanalysis	Insights from vampirism as a metaphor of current world governance
Vampirism as a political metaphor	Nature of a vampire society of elites?
Energy vampires: blood and oil	Psychic vampirism by elites
Middle East strategy: an initiative by vampires in support of vampires?	Human dependency and vampirism: individual responsibility

Controlling proliferation of vampires with stakes? In the discussion of vampires and the undead, the idea that the vampire "can *only* be slain with a stake driven through its heart" has been pervasive in European fiction. Examples such as Bram Stoker's *Dracula* and the more recent *Buffy the Vampire Slayer* both incorporate that idea. In classic European folklore, it was believed that one method, among several, to "kill" a vampire, or prevent a corpse from rising as a vampire, was to drive a wooden stake through the heart before interment.

Framed in this way, and with the current emphasis on "stakeholding", **are the stakes understood as "held" by those seeking to prevent their use in the elimination of vampires, or rather by those arming themselves in defence of vampires?**

In contrast to such a somber consideration of the use of stakes, it is curious to note that the long-standing weaponisation of a stake in the form of an arrow is imaginatively transformed into [Cupid's Arrows](#) -- so closely associated over centuries with romantic love and eroticism. However in a Christian adaptation of its use, medieval mythographers interpreted them morally as a "demon of fornication" -- readily associated with the depiction of witches riding broomsticks (Megan Gannon, *A Bewitching History: Why Witches Ride Broomsticks*, *LiveScience*, 31 October 2013; Nayab Imtiaz, *Why Do Witches Ride Brooms? The History Behind the Legend*, *Beyond Science*, 27 April 2022; Mark Brophy, *The Cringeworthy Reason Witches are Shown Riding Broomsticks*, *Ancient Origins*, 11 June 2022).

Who might be the "**Witches of Davos**", and what "broomsticks" do they ride?

Freudian economics underpinning stakeholder capitalism?

The form of the stake as a visual metaphor suggests only too readily its possible connotations in Freudian terms. These are reinforced by the various forms of weaponisation of the stake as noted above. Embodied in the tank, as an example of current strategic importance, they can be understood as exemplifying the collective manifestation of "toxic masculinity" (Stephen A. Linstead and Garance Maréchal: [How to overcome phallus-obsessed, toxic masculinity](#) (*The Conversation*, 4 November 2017).

An earlier exploration of metaphors crucial to sustainability and the crisis of the times considered the relation of "arsenalism" to

"capitalism", given the prevalence of both (*Mysterious Complementarity between Capitalism and Arsenalism*, 2020). An addendum noted recognition of the insights of Freudian economics:

- Akhilesh Ganti: *Freudian Motivation Theory: how it shapes investor behavior* (*Investopedia*, 30 December 2020)
- Briana S. Last: *The Id and the Nudge: where Freud meets behavioural economics* (*Psyche*, 20 September 2021)
- Lawrence Birken: *Freud's "Economic Hypothesis": from Homo Oeconomicus to Homo Sexualis* (*American Imago*, 56, 1999, 4)
- Olivia Goldhill: *Politicians used Freudian ideas to first convince Americans they needed capitalism* (*Quartz*, 7 May 2017)
- Timothy Garton Ash: *When economists ignore the human factor, we all pay the price* (*The Guardian*, 5 February 2016)
- Julien-François Gerber: *The Psychoanalytic Critique of Capitalism: elements for an overview* (*Psychotherapy and Politics International*, 20, 2022, 1-2)
- Muel Kaptein: *The Moral Duty to Love One's Stakeholders* (*Journal of Business Ethics*, 180, 2022)

As summarized by Ganti:

- Freudian motivation theory posits that unconscious psychological forces, such as hidden desires and motives, shape an individual's behavior, like their purchasing patterns.
- Freudian motivation theory is frequently applied to a number of disciplines, including sales and marketing, to help understand the consumer's motivations when it comes to making a purchasing decision.
- The Freudian motivation theory explains the sales process in terms of a consumer fulfilling conscious, functional needs as well as unconscious needs.

Such considerations frame questions regarding the manner in which "unconscious psychological forces" are expressed through stakeholder capitalism -- and through promotion of the stake metaphor at the Davos Forum.

WEF is renowned for its controversial promotion of a **New World Order** as an outcome of the Great Reset (Jack Dutton, *'New World Order' Remarks at Davos Spark Flood of Conspiracy Theories*, *Newsweek*, 20 January 2023; Noah Barkin, *Davos offers unsettling glimpse of new world order*, *Reuters*, 21 January 2017; *Davos Confronts a New World Order*, *The New York Times*, 14 January 2023). From a Freudian perspective, to what extent does engendering such a "new world order" correspond to the aspirations -- whether conscious or unconscious -- of individuals engaging in intercourse and its consummation?

Axial planetary impalement?

The outcome of the unconscious expression of such forces then invites consideration of how "impalement" -- specifically "planetary impalement" -- is to be envisaged.

With the Great Reset of WEF enabled by stakeholder capitalism, there is a case for recognizing this as an act of "world building". Surprisingly a website dedicated to that process held a speculative discussion on planetary impalement in a purely physical sense (*Would a planet be inhabitable after being impaled?* *WorldBuilding*, May 2018). Although of marginal relevance to the above argument, having been viewed some 800 times, it is indicative of a form of unconscious recognition of the possibility of such penetration -- of which the larger missiles are only too suggestive.

Reference is now made to an **Axial Age** in which broad changes in religious and philosophical thought occurred in a variety of locations from about the 8th to the 3rd century BC. These are now understood as having (re)shaped how people perceive themselves and relate to their communities -- namely a fundamentally transformative, creative, and ingenious stage of human history (Matt Stefon, *The Axial Age: 5 Fast Facts*, *Encyclopedia Britannica*, 21 September 2015). References now made to a **paradigm shift**, and the urgent necessity for one at this time, suggest that the Great Reset could be seen as an instance of an "axial transformation" -- however global civilization might then be understood as "axially impaled".

Curiously one form of planetary impalement is implicit in the recognition of an **Axis of Evil**, as notoriously framed in 2002 by U.S. President **George W. Bush** in reference to Iran, Iraq, and North Korea. The notion of such an axis was used to pinpoint these common enemies of the United States and to rally the American populace in support of the War on Terror. *Wikipedia* notes a range of **other axes** variously consistent with such a framing. Earth is then to be understood as threatened with impalement by a terrifying "axis" -- a threat many experience when personally confronted with the possibility of rape.

Curiously little is said of any complementary "Axis of Good", by which the World Economic Forum's beneficial impalement of the planet -- through the Great Reset by stakeholder capitalism -- might have associated itself (*The Axis of Good*, *The Economist*, 1 May 2003; *Axis of Good*, *Washington Monthly*, 1 July 2001). Somewhat unfortunately for proponents of the Axis of Evil, the complementary term has been appropriated as follows:

- a suggestion by Russia and Iran to form such an axis (20 July 2022), extended with inclusion of Turkey (*'Axis of Good' and the Turkish Dilemma*, *DNA*, 28 July 2022; Abbas Sarvestani, *Axis of Good against Axis of Evil; balance of threat in new world order*, *Tehran Times*, 22 October 2022; *Seeking 'Axis of Good' Against U.S., Russia Taps Allies of Convenience*, *The New York Times*, 20 July 2022)
- the former president of Venezuela, **Hugo Chávez**, described the so-called **New Latin Left** in 2006 as an "Axis of Good" (comprising Bolivia, Chile, Cuba, Ecuador, Nicaragua, Uruguay and Venezuela) in opposition to the Axis of Evil formed by "Washington and its allies" (*Axis of Good?* *Khaleej Times*, 27 July 2006)

More problematic is the complex sense in which there is a single axis whose extremes are associated with good or evil. As noted by Jonathan Melenson, this ignores the full range of moral behavior exhibited in real life and creates a **false dichotomy**: morally grey actions are overlooked or forced into one category or the other (*The Axis of Good and Evil*, *Designing Games for Ethics: models, techniques*

and frameworks, 2011).

Within a Freudian framework, does the ambiguity associated with such axes correspond to that of the perception of the penis, about which feminists would be especially articulate: "evil penis" versus "good penis"? In this period, it is especially ironic that the leader named *Time Person of the Year for 2022*, and invited to address the Davos Forum in 2023, should be notably renowned for his penile piano-playing. This is presumably appreciated by both sexes as an embodied expression of the "good penis"? (*The Coalition of the Willy: musings on the global challenge of penile servitude*, 2004).

With regard to recognition of any new "Axial Age", a sobering consideration is the philosophical argument with regard to the seven interlocking "Axes of Bias" fundamental to engendering the patterns of disagreement prevailing in contemporary discourse (W. T. Jones, *The Romantic Syndrome: toward a new method in cultural anthropology and the history of ideas*, 1961), discussed separately (*Global ethical nexus of disparate challenges*, 2022). With the possibility of multiple psychosocial impalements, controversy regarding the promotion of the Great Reset merits consideration in such terms.

How might such axial ambiguity associated with "impalement" relate to the traditional symbolism of the *Axis Mundi* -- also termed the cosmic axis, world axis, world pillar, centre of the world, or world tree (*Axis Mundi, Yggdrasil, Omphalos and Sahasrara?* 2020). In 20th-century comparative mythology, the significance has been greatly extended to refer to any mythological concept representing "the connection between Heaven and Earth" or the "higher and lower realms". A case for recognizing an "Axis of Neither Good Nor Evil"?

Potentially more controversial is the extent to which any *Axis Mundi* is a feature of belief in divine intervention -- divine impalement or *divine rape* (?) -- or belief in an envisaged intervention by humanity, humanitarian or otherwise. In symbolic terms, whether cosmological or Freudian, such ambiguity could be compared with the contrast between "developing" and the opportunity it exploits, namely a context or space perhaps appropriately understood as "enveloping".

The geometry implied invites comparison with the axial penetration of a toroidal hole (*Imagining Toroidal Life as a Sustainable Alternative: from globalization to toroidization or back to flatland?* 2019). If stakeholder capitalism is primarily associated with development, given its problematic consequences, there is a case for imagining a more appropriate mediating process (*Veloping: the Art of Sustaining Significance*, 1997; *Enveloping Development through Cognitive Enactivism*, 2009).

The strategic interplay between "enveloping" and "developing" is paradoxically evident at the present time in the encirclement of Russia by missile launching sites in order to weaken it terminally so as to enable processes characteristic of stakeholder capitalism. As argued by Fred Reed: *The encirclement of Russia by NATO (i.e. America) is 'very roughly equivalent to having Russian forces in El Paso Tijuana, and Toronto'* (*The Burning Platform*, 8 December 2022; *NATO's Encirclement of Russia Threatens Peace, Warns Venezuela, Telesur*, 26 February 2022; M. K. Bhadrakumar, *Arc of encirclement appearing around Russia*, *Asia Times*, 21 November 2021; F. William Engdahl, *The Malevolent Encirclement of Russia*, *Global Research*, 14 October 2020).

Simply enclosing Russia with a palisade of targetted missiles echoes strategies of centuries past at a time when there is a need to transcend the probability of their problematic outcome. A similar point applies in the case of China (*US secures deal on Philippines bases to complete arc around China*, *BBC News*, 3 February 2023).

Holding stakes: fasces versus tensegrity

Fasces: The emphasis on stake as a feature of the WEF preoccupation with stakeholder capitalism could be said to have a memorable history and symbolism dating back to the Roman Empire through the *fasces*. This is a bound bundle of wooden stakes, sometimes including an axe (occasionally two axes) with its blade emerging. The image has survived in the modern world as a representation of magisterial or collective power, law, and governance. The fasces frequently occurs as a charge in heraldry.

By the Renaissance, there emerged a conflation of the fasces with a Greek fable depicting how individual sticks can be easily broken but how a bundle could not. By the sixteenth century, fasces were "inextricably linked" with interpretations of the fable as one expressing unity and harmony. During the first half of the twentieth century the fasces became heavily identified with the fascist political movement of Italy, although it has not been subsequently stigmatized by that process. It continues to be widely used as a symbol, particularly by those who see themselves as modern-day successors to the Roman Republic or its ideals.

Symbolic implications of the fasces continue to be explored (Eugene Kontorovich, *When Fasces Aren't Fascist: the strange history of America's federal buildings*, *City Journal*, Spring 2014; Victoria Barnes, et al, *Symbolism in Bank Marketing and Architecture*, 2019; Sarah E. Bond, *Fasces, Fascism, and How the Alt-Right Continues to Appropriates Ancient Roman Symbols*, *Hyperallergic*, 13 September 2018; T. Corey Brennan, *The Fasces: A History of Ancient Rome's Most Dangerous Political Symbol*, 2022) The significance of the latter is highlighted in a review (John Kelly, *A new book explores the fasces, a symbol of power -- and of unity*, *The Washington Post*, 1 October 2022).

As a symbol of power and governance, equivalents to the fasces may be readily recognized (*Embodying the essence of governance in ritual dynamics with mace, sceptre, fasces or vajra?* 2019).

Closest packing? There are many accessible images illustrative of stakeholding, although none presents the fasces as an obvious option for holding together the stakes of capitalism (other than by implication) -- namely by binding them together in a bundle. In its physical form the bundle is an obvious design option of *closest packing*. Little seems to be said of alternative options of interrelating stakeholders distinguished by characteristic axes of bias (*Implications of closest packing of polyhedra for widdome design?* 2015).

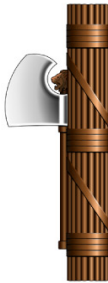
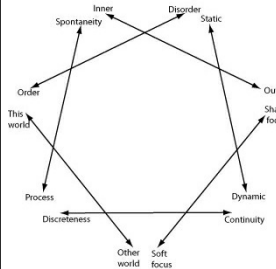
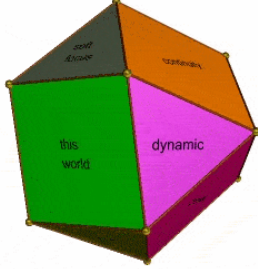
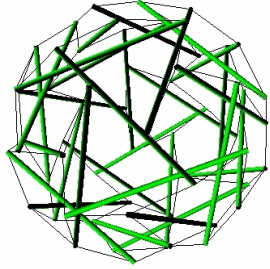
Curiously the "transformation maps" produced by WEF and others in relation to stakeholder capitalism offer only a 2-dimensional axial (or polar) perspective of what might otherwise be perceived as a bundle of stakes -- a fasces. It would be curious to discover that the number of stakeholder (categories) typically recognized was of the same order as the number of stakes in a fasces bundle. Originally

numbering 12, for the later Roman Emperors they numbered 24, with smaller numbers for lesser officials (Ronald Syme, *How Many Fasces? Approaching the Roman Revolution*, 2016). Extensive symbolic use of the fasces with 13 rods is made in the Lincoln Memorial in Washington (*Secret Symbol of the Lincoln Memorial*, National Park Service). That number is characteristic of the many other depictions of fasces in the USA.

As illustrated below, the fasces could be seen as a decisive collapsing together of distinctive axes of bias to form an aligned perspective, effectively eliminating any central dialogue "space" (*Coherent Value Frameworks Pillar-ization, Polarization and Polyhedral frames of reference*, 2008; *Collapsing the space of sustainable dialogue*, 2009). The configuration in 2D of those axes (as identified by Jones, 1961) defines a central dialogue "space". Presented in 3D, with one extreme of an axis matched by the other on an opposite face, this defines a a central dialogue "volume".

Tensegrity: The animation on the right is suggestive of the dynamics of a configuration as a **tensegrity structure** of multiple axes of bias (*Configuring Strategic Dilemmas in Intersectoral Dialogue*, 1992). Rather than emphasizing the overly simplistic penetrative connotation of impaling, the tensegrity suggests a more complex possibility recognizing contrasting orientations in which the individual stakes do not touch but are bound together by a network (René Motro, *Tensegrity: structural systems for the future*, 2003; *Transcending Psychosocial Polarization with Tensegrity*, 2021).

Given the relation of configurations of stakes to palisades, that animation offers a contrast between the simplistic architectural closure of a palisade and the subtlety of a geodesic dome -- as it might be understood in psychosocial terms. This suggests that stakes as functional commitments could be usefully held together by lines of communication in a form more complex than the sphere above. One such interpretation is offered by Joshua McConkey (*Why Wars Start: an introduction to the tensegrity model of international relations*, Panalysis, 18 October 2021). The relative degree of openness could be otherwise explored (Violetta Splitter, et al, *Openness as Organizing Principle: Introduction to the Special Issue*, *Organization Studies*, 44, 2022, 1).

Stake holding as configurations of axes of bias -- from 2D to 3D			
Fasces dating from the Roman Empire (Symbol of a "closed society"?)	7 Axes of bias in 2D (as identified by Jones, 1961)	Array of 7 axes of bias in 3D (as identified by Jones, 1961)	Tensegrity configuration of multiple axes of bias (Symbol of an "open society" and its strategic dilemmas?)
			
Reproduced from Wikipedia)			

"Empaling" as the subtler connotation of impaling? Whilst "impale" emphasizes the problematic, painful penetration noted above, an archaic connotation is emphasized by "empaling" as the enclosure with palings or fencing. The ambiguity could be recognized in the widespread confinement of indigenous peoples to reservations, whether or not the paling takes physical form. Whilst this can be asserted to be for their protection, there is also the sense in which they are being "shafted" (as emphasized by "impalement").

The point is usefully clarified by Humberto Márquez with regard to the management of Latin American terrestrial and marine protected areas, together with the challenges of the extractivist economy and the transition to a green economy -- whilst attending to the most vulnerable (indigenous) populations (*Management of Protected Areas Is a Latin American Priority for 2023*, *Inter Press Service*, 31 January 2023). The ambiguity between protective functions and their perception as painful constraints is ironically evident in parental relations with teenagers. Stakeholder capitalism could then be readily compared with parental mismanagement and paternalism.

The animation on the right above then suggests an understanding of a protective empaling of the planet in contrast with its "extractivist" impaling -- governed by the dominant priorities of stakeholder capitalism. Unfortunately any empaling is only too readily perceived as an unwelcome constraint, ironically highlighted by the planned launches of hundreds of thousands of orbiting satellites (Rebecca Boyle, *Satellite Constellations Are an Existential Threat for Astronomy*, *Scientific American*, 7 November 2022; *Symbolic Disconnection from the Stars and the Universe?* 2019).

Such a tensegrity helps to frame the question as to **how many functionally distinctive "stakes" need to be "held" (and in what configuration) in order to engender and sustain a viable system -- when appropriately "empaled" globally.** Curiously the Roman imperial preference for 24 in a fasces could be compared with the 24 edges of a cuboctahedron or its dual (the rhombic dodecahedron) - if such 3D configurations are indicative of exceptional viability, as argued by Buckminster Fuller (*Synergetics: explorations in the geometry of thinking*, 1975). More curious is that the rhombic dodecahedron is a preferred configuration for studies of the geometry of oppositional logic (*Oppositional Logic as Comprehensible Key to Sustainable Democracy*, 2018).

Toroidal configurations? With the suggestion above of the relative merit of a toroidal approach to "enveloping" -- as a container for "developing" -- it is intriguing to note consideration of tensegrities in the form of a torus (Xingfei Yuan, et al, *A New Tensegrity Module - "Torus"*, *Advances in Structural Engineering*, 11, 2008, 3; Shuo Ma, et al, *Shape Optimization of a New Tensegrity Torus*, *Mechanics Research Communications*, 100, September 2019, 103396).

In this respect it is also intriguing to note the design constraint on the construction of viable nuclear fusion reactors. Paradoxically the

toroidal container must ensure that the nuclear plasma it "contains" does not come in contact with the walls of the container -- a valuable metaphor for empaling without impaling? This is indicative of design principles for "empaling the planet" (*Enactivating a Cognitive Fusion Reactor: Imaginal Transformation of Energy Resourcing (ITER-8)*, 2006). Somewhat ironically, rather than "encircling" as noted above with respect to Russia, the associated dynamic suggests the merit of "encycling", as argued separately (*Encycling Problematic Wickedness for Potential Humanity*, 2014).

More generally the challenge can be provocatively framed as that of designing a container of whose boundaries the contained is unaware. This might be partially understood in terms of *Le Chatelier's Principle*, as reframed by Stafford Beer from a cybernetic perspective.

Such explorations merit comparison with investigation of toroidal fullerenes (*Toroidal fullerenes as a complement to the global form*, 2022; *Indications of psycho-social coherence and memorability from fullerenes*, 2022). Embodying stability, like tensegrities, fullerenes are suggestive of higher orders of sustainability (*Sustainability through Global Patterns of 60-fold Organization*, 2022).

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