

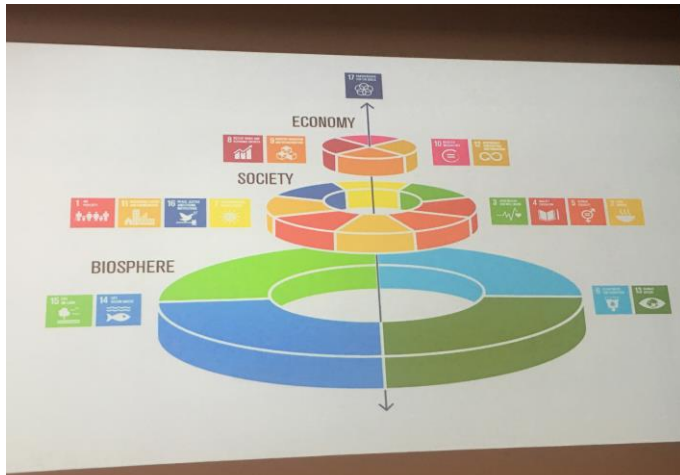
Sustainable Development Goals and Planetary Boundaries,

April 22nd Wellington

Written for Alliance-Respons by Betsan Martin

The visit to NZ of Johan Rockström from the Stockholm Resilience Centre preceded the Sustainable Development Goals Conference (SDG's) by a week or so. In many ways

Rockström redefines the approach to the 17 Goals, representing them as a 'Wedding Cake.' The base layer of the cake is made from oceans, water, forests, climate, land and soils, and the SDG's depend on our responsibility for keeping earth's physical ecosystems intact.



Johan Rockström's SDG Wedding Cake

The 17 Goals are intended as an integrated whole, but are often presented as a choice of priorities.

The SDG Conference made explicit the connection between the social, environmental, economic responsibilities in the Goals across

business, political and cultural interests. The MC weighed in on the need for political action on the SDG's in New Zealand, she persisted with whether we should have a Minister for Sustainable Development, or a Commission for implementation, to emulate the Dutch partnership model and National Review presented by Hugo von Meijenfeldt from the Dutch Ministry for Foreign affairs.

Andrea Carmen, Chair of the Indian Treaty Council represented Native American indigenous interests and engaged the audience in a most compelling account of indigenous leadership for sustainability –usually expressed as aligned with the renewable capacity of earth's ecosystems. Carmen said 80% of earth's biodiversity is on indigenous lands. Māori presentations brought Māori political, cultural and business interests to the table –Rachel Tauleili CEO of Kono, which sells 'products of the land and sea' spoke of their business values of kindness for land and people as consistent with the SDG's.

Business speakers from Sanford, Vector and AirNZ shared an approach of looking at the investment side of the SDG's with assessments of risks, strengths and opportunities and used the idea of disruptive sustainability – a way of thinking about transitions and change. Sanford, for example is working on sustainable fishing, and admitted to engage in the more the challenge of moving away from plastic packaging for fish products. She failed to mention fundamental challenge of the environmentally destructive bottom line trawling still used in their fishing methods. The message given by her and others, in particular the Social Enterprise sector – that Goal 12 'Sustainable Production and Consumption' is a trump card for economic sustainability. The question to ask is about transition plans.

Children's Commissioner Andrew Becroft won the prize for compelling engagement with the audience – tackling Child Poverty, Goal 1 is also priority number 1 for Aotearoa New Zealand, with its shocking 23% children living in poverty, and 13% in abject poverty.

Along with the business edge, the political impetus was good humoredly focused on Minister James Shaw, and his enthusiasm to put the SDGs on the political agenda – along with the Zero Carbon Act, the Child Poverty Reduction bill, the Review of Welfare, Tax Reform... and the need to keep coalition partners in mind! He likened the SDG's to the government agenda of Wellbeing, the need for data based on measures of wellbeing, and introducing the new Living Standards Framework as a framework for budget allocations from 2019.

Let me return to Rockström's Nine Planetary boundaries. They are like the life support systems of earth, with circles showing the thresholds for the safe use of nature's resources.

Human wellbeing ultimately depends on staying within the 'safe operating space' of each of the systems. This also requires an ecocentric worldview, which understands humans as part of the whole community of life on our Common Home. The social cost of carbon incurs an environmental debt that gets deferred because of the resilience of the planet. It is only 150 years after the intensive pollution of the atmosphere which was accompanied by economic growth and growth in food production, longevity, and wellbeing for a portion of the world's population that we are beginning to act on our responsibility for the planet. From 1990, we have gone beyond the sustainable boundaries on eutrophication of water in the US, ice melting in the Arctic, forestry, climate, biodiversity etc.

Earth Systems science gives us a long view of planetary evolution - over millions of epochs. The stable climate of the past 10,000 years, known as the Holocene, provided the conditions for humankind to evolve, expand, and create civilizations and diversity of cultures, and human consciousness to be expressed. We could think of this time as a 'Garden of Eden' period because it marks the era of a stable climate with only a 2 degree temperature range of plus to minus 1 degree. This means a 2 – 4 rise is very significant and spells out destabilization.

Rockström interprets the SDG's in terms of Planetary boundaries - and views them as a 'wedding cake' - where the biological systems of the planet - oceans, freshwater, forests, the diversity of animals and plants - are the base level on which human society and what we produce and exchange depend. A more complex question about the planetary boundaries and the SDG's is how they interact... how are their interdependencies accounted for?

We are in a renaissance of new morality and reconnection to the biosphere – we are the generation to take us into solutions. What is the pathway to follow? The Carbon Law is enacting responsibility for halving carbon emissions by every means-personal, corporate, and regulatory to bend the curve of emissions. Transformative pathways require knowing the risks, scaling up of renewable energy, and fossil free world economy by 2045. The new definition of sustainable development is prosperity with social inclusion within the boundaries of a stable earth system The value transition is to become planetary stewards.

Link to Rockström talk: https://www.pscp.tv/IEMA_NZ/1DXxyXyyrOeJM