



Human wellbeing: A narrative shift from sustainable business to regenerative business

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Centre for Social Impact Presentation on 10 September 2024

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Sustainability

- “Meeting the needs of the present without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs”
 (Bruntland commission, WCED 1987)



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What is sustainability in business?

- Sustainability in business refers to a company's strategy and actions to reduce adverse environmental and social impacts resulting from business operations in a particular market.

<https://www.ibm.com/topics/business-sustainability>



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What is sustainability in business?

Topic	Definition	Relevant SDG	Level of achievement
Climate change	Addressing the global climate crisis, reducing greenhouse gas emissions, and transitioning to a low-carbon economy.	SDG 13: Climate Action	Progress: 40%
Renewable energy	Investing in and utilizing clean energy sources like solar, wind, and hydro to reduce reliance on fossil fuels.	SDG 7: Affordable and Clean Energy	Progress: 35%
Waste reduction	Minimizing waste production and maximizing recycling and reuse to conserve resources.	SDG 12: Responsible Consumption and Production	Progress: 25%
Water conservation	Implementing water-saving technologies and practices to ensure sustainable water use.	SDG 6: Clean Water and Sanitation	Progress: 20%
Green building	Designing and constructing energy-efficient buildings that reduce environmental impact.	SDG 11: Sustainable Cities and Communities	Progress: 15%
Employee well-being	Ensuring fair labor practices, safe working conditions, and opportunities for professional growth.	SDG 8: Decent Work and Economic Growth	Progress: 10%
Community engagement	Actively participating in and supporting local and global initiatives for social and environmental improvement.	SDG 17: Partnerships for Goal Achievement	Progress: 5%

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What is sustainability in business?

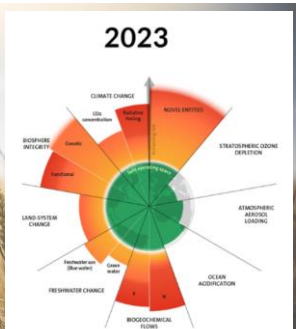
- The overriding narrative runs that sustainability is about curbing the harm caused by business activities (i.e., reference to reduce, minimise).



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Step into the present

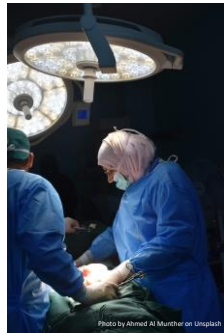
- 9 planetary boundaries denote a 'safe and just operating space for humanity' to sustain life on Earth. Beyond these lie unacceptable environmental degradation and potential tipping points in Earth's systems (Rockström et al 2009)
- A paper published in *Science Advances* by Richardson et al., (2023), reveals that we have exceeded 8 of 9 planetary boundaries.



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Question

- If you had a loved one who is sick, would you be satisfied with simply minimizing and reducing how sick they are, or would you want to see them recover, be restored to full health, and then have them be able maintain positive health themselves without the need for further medical intervention? Would you not do everything you could to achieve the latter?



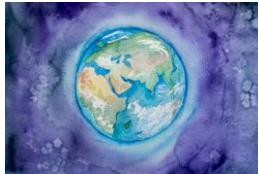
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Step into the present: Degeneration

- ...the economic structures created to support human well-being, **degenerate** life on earth, creating loss, suffering and a heating planet. The financial system is abetting and investing in planetary liquidation – a short-term source of monetary wealth and a near-term cause of biological depletion, poverty and inequality (Hawken 2021).



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Step into the present: **Regeneration**

- Hawken (2021) adds....Our economic systems, investments, and policies can bring about **degeneration** of the world or its **regeneration**. We are either **stealing the future** or **healing the future**.



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From sustainability to regenerativity

- "No longer is it enough to talk about sustainability, where being sustainable means minimising negative impacts on the environment. Simply put, we can't afford any negative impacts. Negative impacts lead to the same outcome – a potential environmental and human catastrophe. The only thing that changes with the slowing down effect of minimisation strategies, is the timeframe of the negative outcome, the catastrophe. Seriously, we urgently need to be talking about what it means to be a regenerative business (or society). A business (or society) that emphasises maximising the positive impacts of its activities, systems and processes. We need to work toward a regenerative future, where the goal is a flourishing society and planet for all".

Dr. Dave Webb



Photo by Andreas Guckelhorn on Unsplash



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Step into the present - **Regeneration**



- Regeneration is not only about bringing the world back to life; it is about bringing each of us back to life.....It **restores** forests, lands, farms and oceans. It **transforms** cities, **builds** green affordable housing, **reverses** soil erosion, **rejuvenates** degraded lands, and **powers** rural communities. Planetary regeneration **creates** livelihoods-occupations that bring life to people and **people to life** (Hawken 2021).



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Step into the present - **Regeneration**



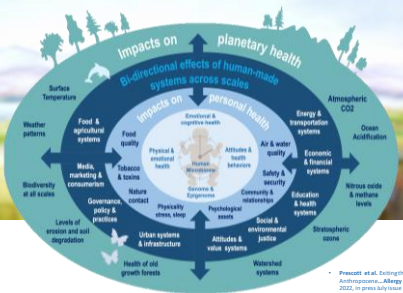
- So many people are feeling lost, anxious and even fear at the state of the world.
- It has a name even! Ecoanxiety.
- We need to reframe those energies and apply them toward co-creating a regenerative future for all and the planet!



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Regeneration and Business

- Regenerative thinking in organisations starts with the realisation that humans are embedded in, part of and fundamentally dependent on nature (Dasgupta 2021).
- This is consistent with planetary health view that sees human-made systems mediating the relationship between PBs personal health.



Freundt et al., Daring to Anthropocene... Allergy 2022, in press July 2022

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Goal: flourishing on all scales (interdependent)



Depends on values, mindsets and policies that support this

For individuals to achieve flourishing we require value systems that support flourishing places and communities and flourishing planetary systems.

Preuss et al., Exiting the Anthropocene: Achieving personal and planetary health in the 21st century. Allergy 2022, in press

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Regenerative Business – Differing views. RB's.....

- ...emphasize role of **leadership** in developing sense of meaning, purpose, engaging in keen observation, listening to and participating in generative conversations (Hardman 2013)
- ...have a **net positive** impact i.e., when the handprint is bigger than the footprint (Norris 2015)
- ...as **multi-capital accounting methods** and the need to ensure that profits flow back into surrounding environment and local communities (Fullerton 2015)
- ...are viewed from a **design** perspective and engage in biomimicry, circular economy and closed-loop approaches (Wahl 2016, Caldera 2022)
- ...promote the **self-renewable** capacity of natural systems that have been damaged or overexploited (Morseletto 2020)



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How is industry responding?



- KPMG: [Regenerative by design](#)
- KPMG and [Regenerative family businesses](#)
- PWC and [global centre for nature positive business](#)
- Ernst & Young: [Putting regeneration at the heart of creating value](#)
- McKinsey: [What companies can do to restore natural capital](#)
- WEF 2024: [The future of sustainable business is regeneration](#)
- IMD: [The new triple bottom line](#) - 3R's of responsibility, resilience and regeneration



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What are we as educators doing?

- UN PRME, UNGC, MSRC, Sustainability Strategy
- UWA Campus management engaged in many sustainability initiatives
- Across campus much focus on SDGs in our teaching and research
- UWA Grand challenges initiative
- UN RCE on Education for Sustainable Development (Western Australia)
- UWA is a founding member of the inVIVO collaborative network for Planetary Health
- PHA (individual) membership
- UWA Professor of Planetary Health: Professor Susan Prescott M.B. PhD. FRACP
- UWA Institute for Agriculture
- UWA Centre for Energy
- UWA Oceans Institute
- BUT: Where's the conversation and what's the narrative?
- This is a question for all of us to ask of ourselves in terms of our teaching, research and service – our wider purpose!



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Planetary boundaries

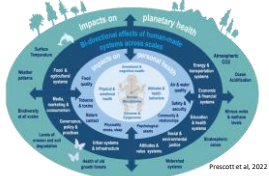
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Planetary health

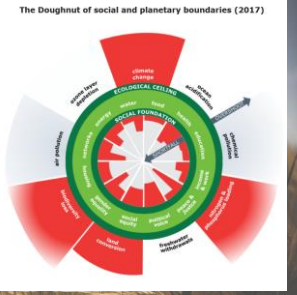
- Not only climate change impacts society (health and wellbeing)
- Other planetary boundaries have an impact too. For example....
 - Erosion and soil degradation impacts land use, residential areas, housing and community stability, agricultural productivity and food security, economic activity (employment and income) etc.
 - In other words, much of the social fabric that makes up society.



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Doughnut economics

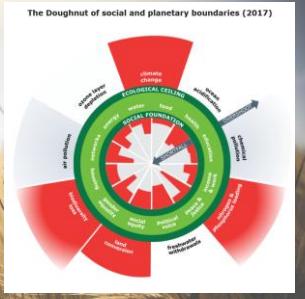
- The SDGs identify 12 social dimensions that reflect internationally agreed minimum social standards
- Between social and planetary boundaries lies an environmentally safe and socially just space within which humanity can flourish



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Doughnut economics

- The SDGs identify 12 social dimensions that reflect internationally agreed minimum social standards
- Between social and planetary boundaries lies an environmentally safe and socially just space within which humanity can flourish
- Only when we have the necessary resources to respond on behalf of the most vulnerable members of society are we working toward a more regenerative and inclusive future for all.



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Planetary health is not a new concept
Inherent to indigenous cultures for centuries!

"Human health and planetary health are the same thing...
...to harm the Earth is to harm the self"



1. Roth and Jacobs, 1998 - Environmental Consciousness. *Nature American Worldviews*, 2018, April, pp. 2.
 2. Powell et al. (2016) "On Nature and Planetary Health." *Emerg* 3(2) 143-154-630.
 3. Roberts, et al., Indigenous Natural and First Care in Planetary Health. *Challenges* 2020, 11, 29.

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Need for imaginative integrated solutions that build on the 'best' of human nature
Tap into the deeper values that unite, empower and refocus priorities of individuals and societies towards healthier futures

Regenerative future



Logan, Sermon, Berman, Pivotal. Project Equinox: Inspiring Creativity, Resilience and Innovation in Planetary Health. *Challenges* 2020.

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