

# SYNERGY ACROSS BORDERS FOR BUILDING SUSTAINABLE COMMUNITIES

Dr. Gabriela Sabau

Inaugural Conference on Collaboration  
for Sustainable Communities

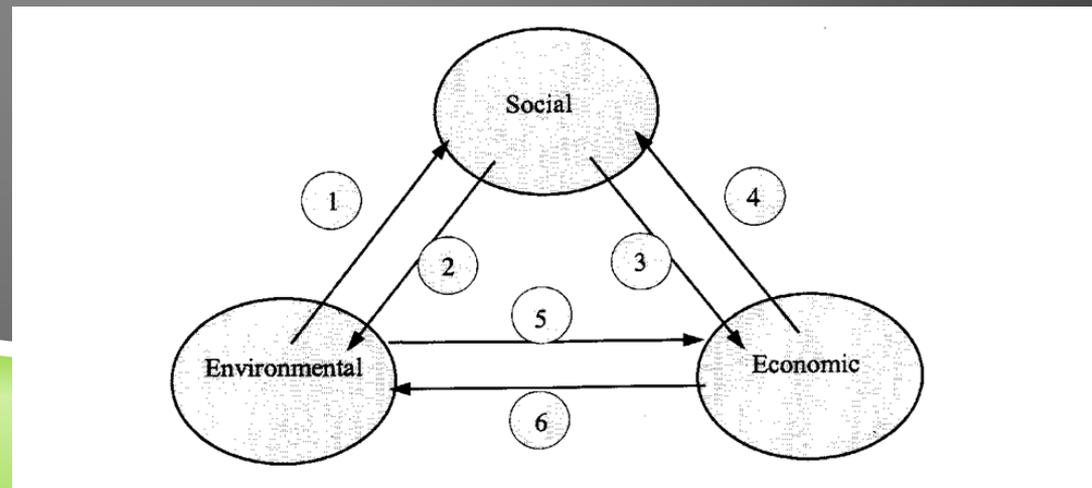
Memorial University, Grenfell Campus,  
November 13, 2015

# RATIONALE

- ▶ **Humanity's dilemma:** stay the unsustainable path of development which has created innumerable hazards and risks associated with climate change and has deepened inequalities and poverty, or choose a new model of sustainable development which starts with ecological stability and renewal and using nature to provide for our need, no longer for our greed (Mahatma Gandhi).
- ▶ **We are all responsible:** The consequences of unsustainable development are not limited to a community or a nation; rather they affect the entire human habitat by dangerously altering numerous ecosystems and social systems.
- ▶ **Synergetic efforts are required** to deal with this universal anthropogenic problem and to direct humanity on a sustainable path.

# SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT

- ▶ “Development that meets the needs of the present without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs” (Brundtland Report, 1987).
- ▶ A sustainable system requires harmony within and among its economic, social and environmental sub-systems.



# OUR FAILED MODEL OF DEVELOPMENT: “WEAK” SUSTAINABILITY

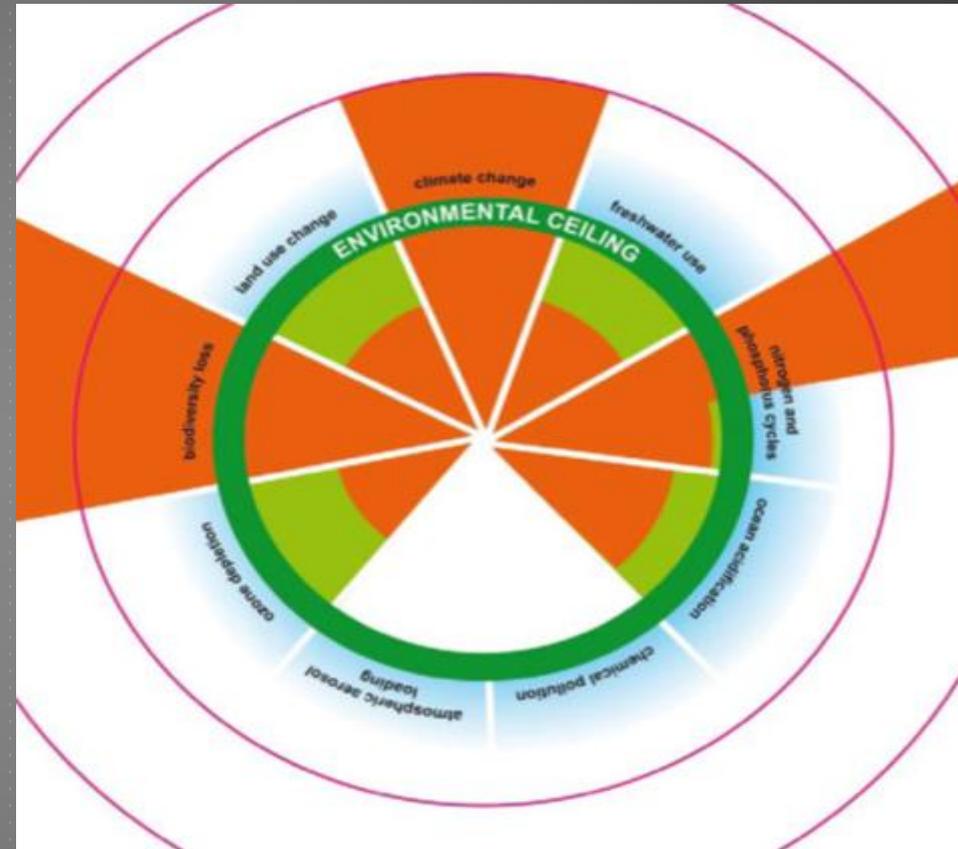
- ▶ Pareto efficiency is **a value-free theory of choice** with respect to individual and social well-being.
- ▶ The standard definition of a Pareto social optimum “compares social alternatives exclusively in terms of the goodness of their outcomes (rather than the rightness of their procedures) and **identifies the goodness of outcomes with satisfaction of individual preferences**” (Hausman and McPherson, 1993).
- ▶ The rule for weak sustainability, “constant capital rule”, **the ability of economies to produce economic goods must be non-decreasing**.

# Reality Check I: Ecological Limits

2009, Rockstrom et al identified nine planetary boundaries for safe human operation and proposed quantifications for seven of them.

- climate change (CO<sub>2</sub> concentration in the atmosphere)
- ocean acidification (mean surface seawater saturation state with respect to aragonite)
- stratospheric ozone depletion
- biogeochemical nitrogen (N) cycle and phosphorus (P) cycle
- global freshwater use
- land system change
- biological diversity loss
- chemical pollution and atmospheric aerosol loading.

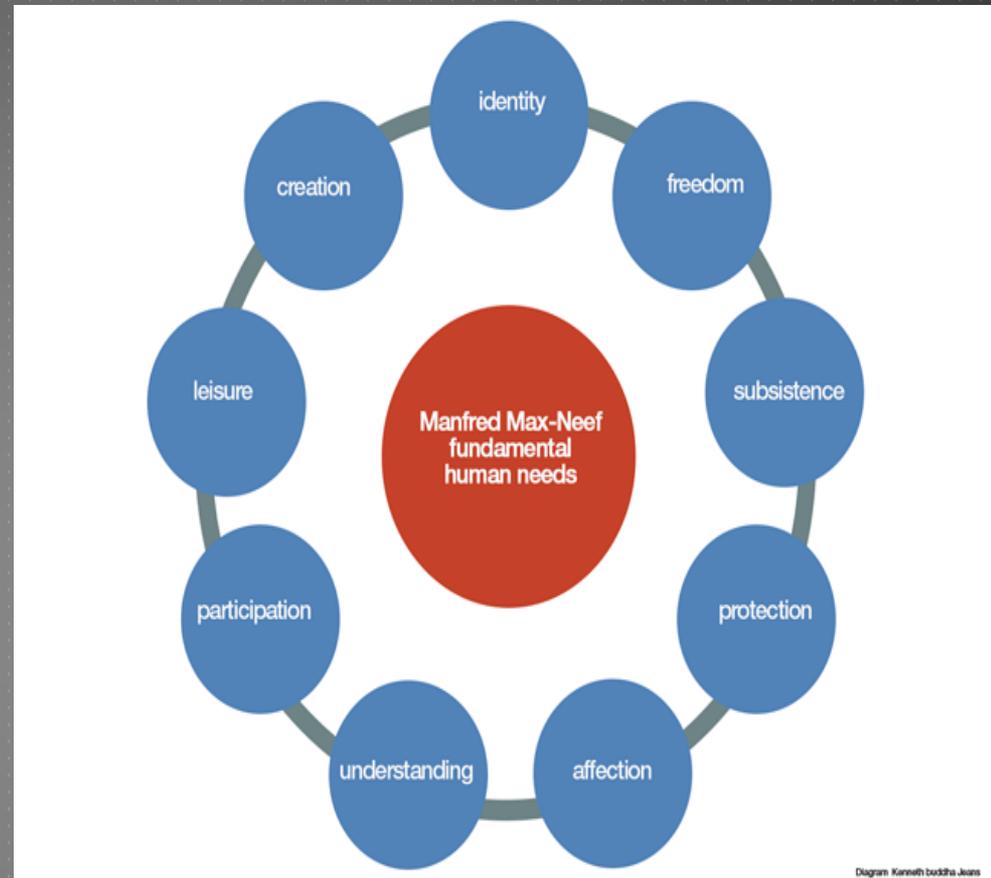
Humanity has already transgressed three planetary boundaries: for climate change, rate of biodiversity loss, and changes to the global nitrogen cycle.



# Reality Check I I: Human Needs are Limited

Max-Neef, et al., 1987, *Human Scale Development*:

- Wellbeing is not about accumulation of material wealth, is about creating solutions or satisfiers to finite human needs (9)
- Wellbeing encompasses cultural understandings of how a person can realize their potential.
- Satisfying strategies for the development of individuals and communities should be defined by them and not external agents.



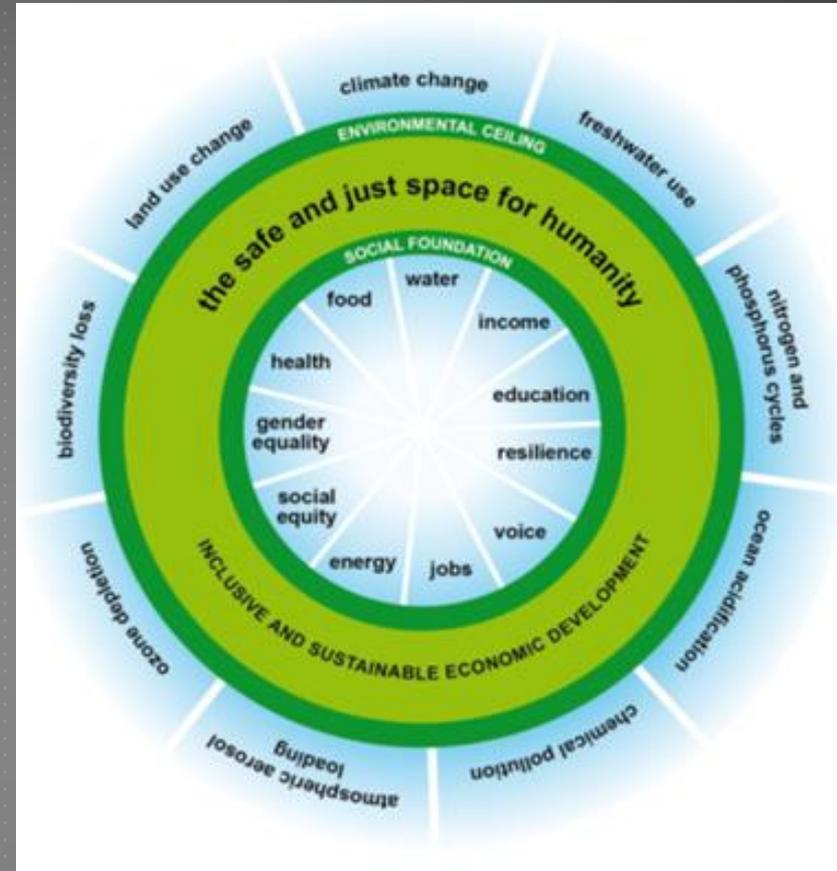
# HOLISTIC SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT

“Holistic sustainability is a complex and multifaceted vision of development. **It is a multidimensional model of development which limits economic growth and other human activities to the capacity of nature for self-regeneration, places the improvement of the human condition (social and human development) as its primary goal, and places respect for environmental quality and the limits of nature at the core of any economic, political, educational, and cultural strategy.** This is a qualitatively different kind of development: a development intended to sustain life, the human condition and values, and the balance of the systems of nature.” (C. Cuello Nieto, 1997)

# Can We Live Within the Doughnut?

(Kate Raworth, 2012): Any vision of sustainable development fit for the 21st century must recognize that eradicating poverty and achieving social justice is inextricably linked to ensuring ecological stability and renewal.

The 11 dimensions of the social foundation are based on governments' priorities for Rio+20 (2012): food, water, income, education, resilience, voice, jobs, energy, social equity, gender equality, and health.



# UN, 2015, GLOBAL SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT GOALS TO 2030

## THE GLOBAL GOALS For Sustainable Development



## SYNERGY (Goal # 17)

Synergy is the purposeful interaction or cooperation of two or more stakeholders to produce a combined effect which is greater than the sum of their separate effects.

It implies:

- Complementary skills or knowledge
- Increased communication: sharing best practices
- Better use of resources
- Innovative solutions
- Building partnerships



# SUSTAINABLE COMMUNITIES: PRIORITY#1

- ▶ Community is where life happens.
- ▶ Communities have suffered from damage to our ecosystems and social systems caused by our choice of development modality: industrialism, depletion of natural resources, and relocations.
- ▶ “Building sustainable communities with capacity for resilience is not only a matter of equitable disaster planning and equitable relief provision when disaster strikes. Building sustainable communities with capacity for resilience requires an intentional public policy of restoration and reparation countering the dangers and harms left from prior development policies” (Collin and Collin, 2015).

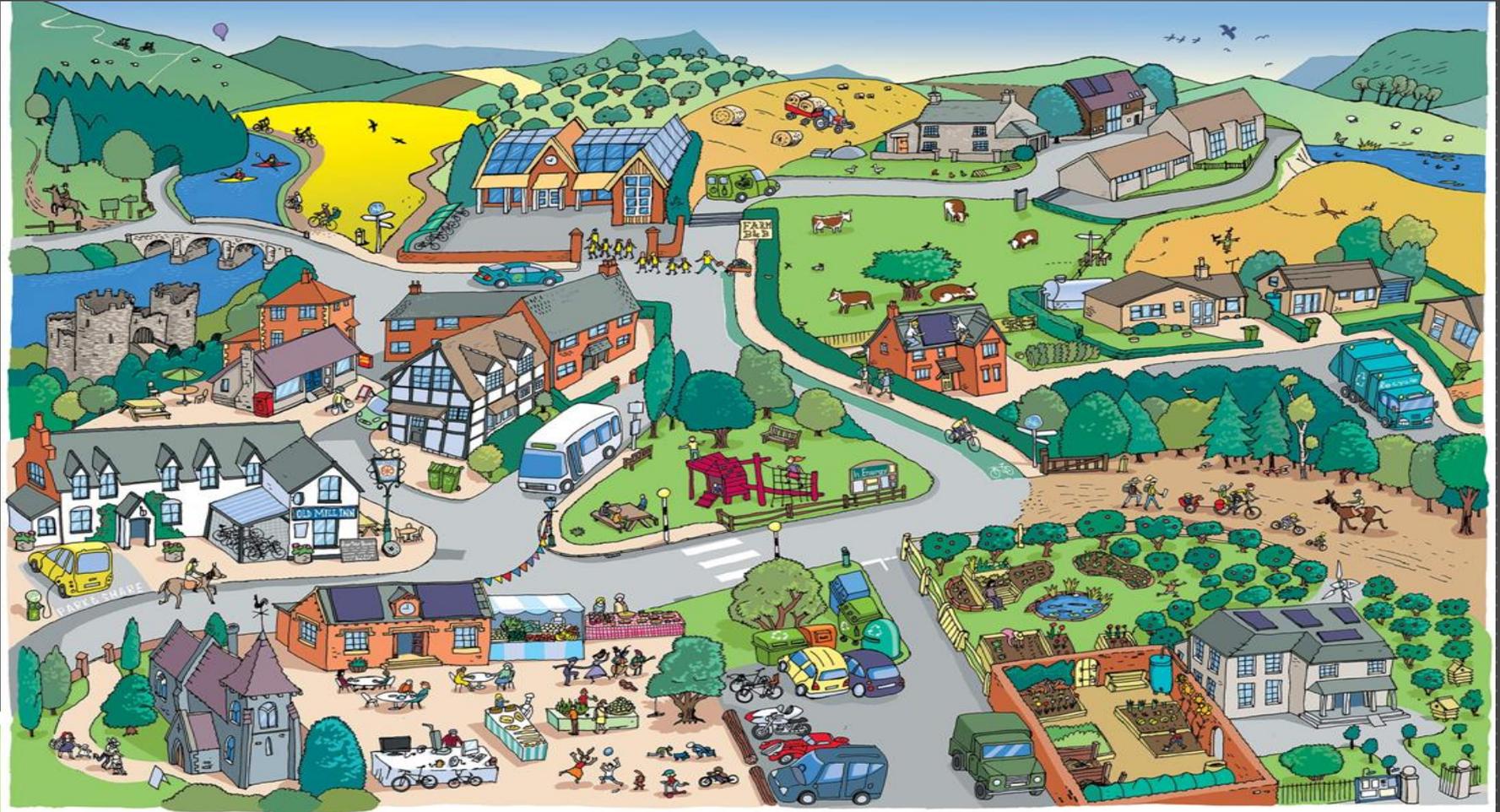
# HOW TO BUILD SUSTAINABLE COMMUNITIES?

- ▶ Work together: “If you want to go fast, go alone, but if you want to go far, go together.” (Old African proverb)
- ▶ “1. Ask of any proposed change or innovation: What will this do to our community? How will this affect our common wealth?
- ▶ 2. Include local nature -- the land, the water, the air, the native creatures -- within the membership of the community.
- ▶ 3. Ask how local needs might be supplied from local sources, including the mutual help of neighbors.
- ▶ 4. Supply local needs first (and only then think of exporting their products, first to nearby cities, and then to others).
- ▶ 5. Understand the ultimate unsoundness of the industrial doctrine of 'labor saving' if that implies poor work, unemployment, or any kind of pollution or contamination.
- ▶ 6. Develop properly scaled value-adding industries for local products in order not to become merely a colony of the national or the global economy.
- ▶ 7. Develop small-scale industries and businesses to support the local farm or forest economy.
- ▶ 8. Strive to produce as much of our own energy as possible.” (W. Berry, 1994)

# THIS CONFERENCE

- ▶ This conference is a worthy initiative of our graduate students enrolled in the Mater's in Environmental Policy program, aiming to bring representatives of various NL communities together and improve the mutual understanding about the necessity of collaboration for building sustainable communities.
  - ▶ It has been conceived as a stepping stone for greater collaboration in the future in sustainable development projects including local, national, regional and global actors.
  - ▶ I hope it will be sustainable.
- 

# THANK YOU!



Bulmer Foundation - Herefordshire Sustainable Communities Poster

# SELECTIVE BIBLIOGRAPHY

- ▶ WCED, 1987. Our Common Future. Report of the World Commission on Environment and Development. Published as Annex to General Assembly document A/42/327.
- ▶ Rockström, J., Steffen, W., Noone, K., Persson, Å., Stuart Chapin, F., Lambin, E.F., Lenton, T.M., Scheffer, M., Folke, C., Joachim, H., Schellnhuber, Björn Nykvist, Cynthia A. de Wit, Terry Hughes, Sander van der Leeuw, Henning Rodhe, Sverker Sörlin, Peter K. Snyder, Robert Costanza, Uno Svedin, Malin Falkenmark, Louise Karlberg, Robert W. Corell, Victoria J. Fabry, James Hansen, Brian Walker, Diana Liverman, Katherine Richardson, Paul Crutzen & Jonathan A. Foley, 2009. A safe operating space for humanity, Nature 461, 472-475 .
- ▶ Collin, R.W. and Collin, R.M., 2015. Sustainable development. Environmental justice and sustainability, Chapter 13 in Routledge International Handbook of Sustainable Development, Edited by M. Redclift and D. Springett, London: Routledge.
- ▶ Wendell Berry, 1994: A 17 Points Guide ,From a speech delivered November 11, 1994 at the 23rd annual meeting of the Northern Plains Resource Council.
- ▶ Raworth, K, 2012. Living within the doughnut, Resurgence, July/August 2012.
- ▶ Cuello Nieto, C., 1997. Toward a holistic approach to the ideal of sustainability PHIL & TECH 2:2 .
- ▶ Max-Neef, M., Elizalde, A and Hopenhayn, M., 1987, Human Scale Development: Conception, Application and Further Reflections, New York, Apex Press.