



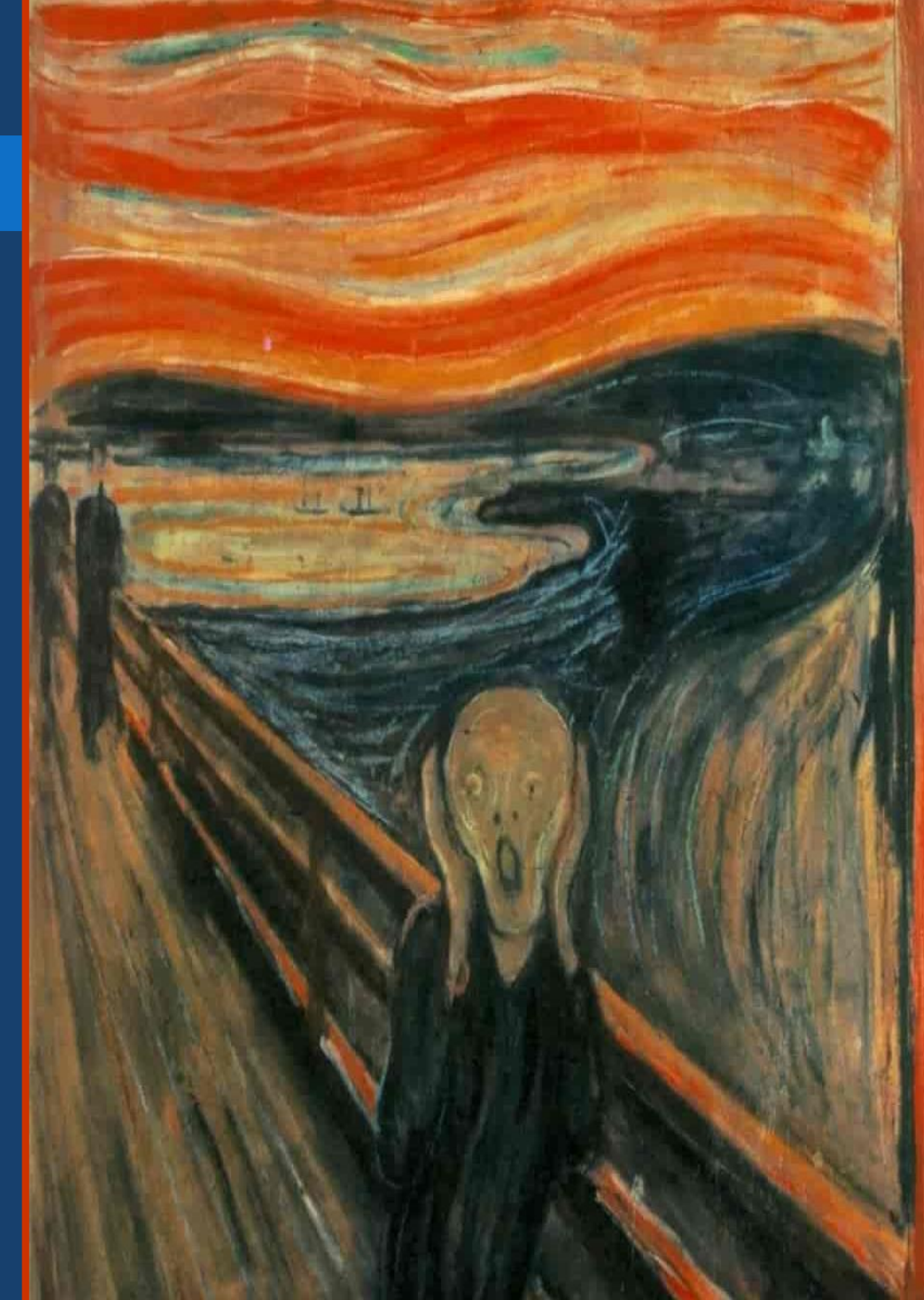
The 2030 Agenda, the SDGs and (Good) Governance

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Jan-Gustav Strandenaes

Senior Adviser on Governance, Stakeholder Forum, the
Netherlands



The Scream,
Guernica and a
Dandelion -

Angst and despair -
yet there is hope –
Our world today?



What do we want for our future? (from the 2030 Agenda)

► §50. “Today we are also taking a decision of great historic significance. We resolve to build a better future for all people, including the millions who have been denied the chance to lead decent, dignified and rewarding lives and to achieve their full human potential.

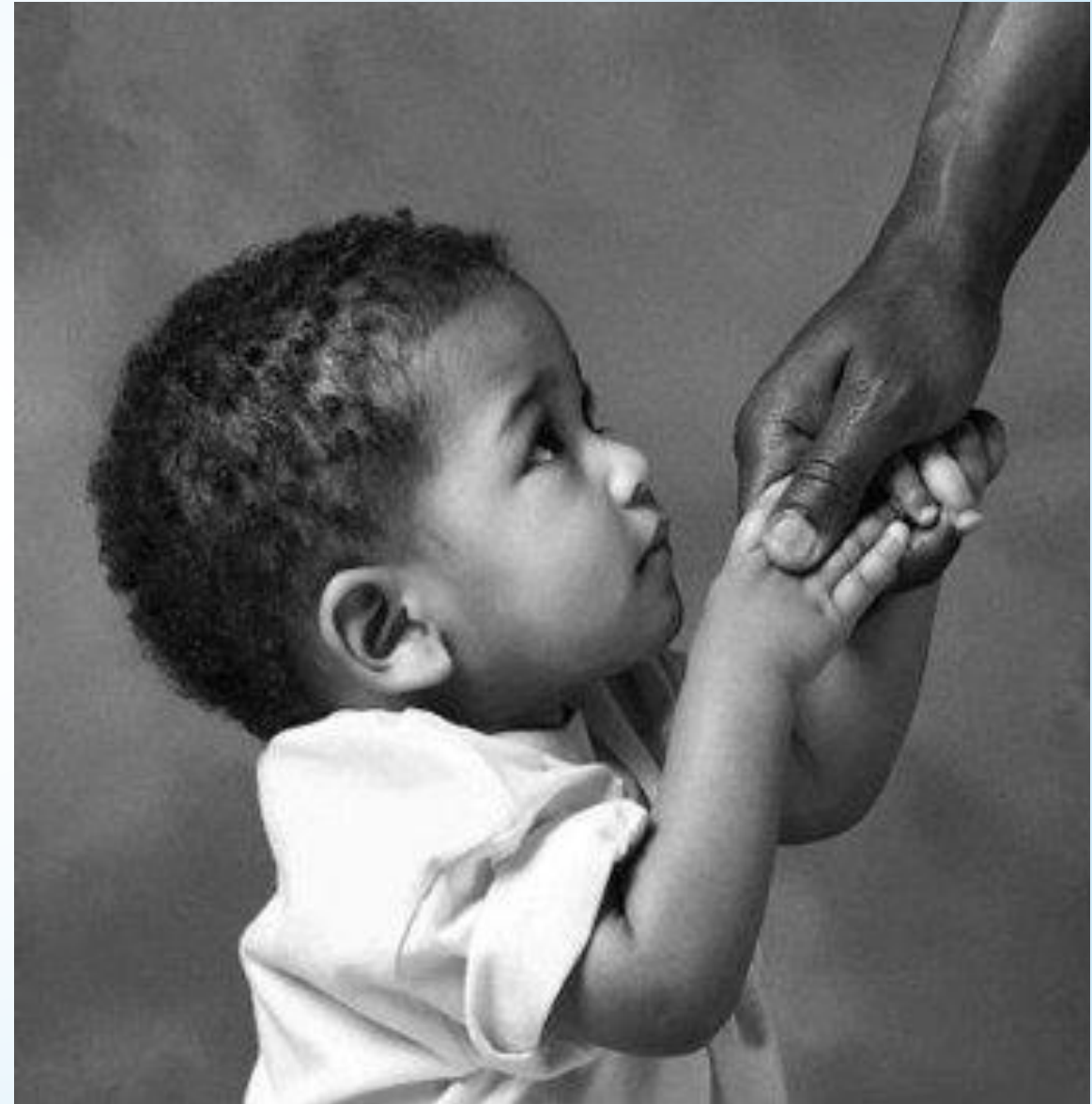
► We can be the first generation to succeed in ending poverty; just as we may be the last to have a chance of saving the planet.

► The world will be a better place in 2030 if we succeed in our objectives.”



Trust and justice are key in every governance context

- ▶ We, the peoples, are determined ... to establish conditions under which justice and respect for the obligations arising from treaties and other sources of international law can be maintained, and to promote social progress and better standards of life in larger freedom **(from the UN Charter)**



Introducing a few governance elements



Governance – not a new concept

- Etymologically of diffuse origin, at least when it comes to the context in which we use it –
- A first reference is to the Englishman William Tyndale – first part of the 16th Century –
- In institutional contexts, its usage increases during the latter part of the 19th Century -
- The usage of governance referring to arrangements of governing becomes popular among institutional scholars in England at the beginning of the 20th Century -
- Acquires general currency and increased usage when used by political scientists and economists and propagated by the World Bank and the IMF in the 1990s -

‘The UN Commission on Global Governance (UNCGC) in 1992’ – from development and security to well being – governance not an easy concept

- Commission on International Development Issues (ICIDI), Willy Brandt, Germany, 1977
- Independent Commission on **Disarmament and Security Issues** (Olof Palme, Sweden, report by Mexico, Nigeria, Sweden, 1982)
- The South Commission (28 South Countries, chaired by Julius Nyerere, Tanzania, 1987)
- The **World Commission on Environment and Development**, the Brundtland report, which planted sustainable development on the global agenda (Ms. Gro Harlem Brundtland, Norway and the UN, 1987)
- The Fall of the Wall, 1989, the cold war is on the wane
- The Stockholm Initiative on **Global Security and Governance**, 1991,
- UNGC Established by the UN SG in 1992a and Chaired by Swedish Prime Minister Ingvar Carlsson and by (former) Commonwealth General Secretary Shridath Ramphal, Guyana
- Their report **Our Global Neighbourhood** was considered very controversial
- **The proposed UN global conference on governance in 1996 was never held**

The Concept of Global Governance (UNCGC)

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- There is no alternative to (Global Governance) working together and using collective power to create a better world.
- Governance is the sum of the many ways individuals and institutions, public and private, manage their common affairs. It is a continuing process through which conflicting or diverse interests may be accommodated and co- operative action may be taken. It includes formal institutions and regimes empowered to enforce compliance, as well as informal arrangements that people and institutions either have agreed to or perceive to be in their interest.

Governance in its present usage

- **Phase I** - Governance as a means to strengthen the market and promote economic growth (1980s into the 1990s).
- **Phase II** - Governance as a means to reintroduce the state, provide it with functional institutions and **accept civil society as a possible actor**, and **curb corruption** but still to promote economic growth (1990s into the early 2000s).
- **Phase III** – governance, now also seen and understood as *good governance* promoted by civil society to serve as a propagator of democracy (already beginning in the 1990s and gaining strength throughout the early decades of the present century until now).
- **Phase IV** – good governance as a condition for democracy and sustainable development, the promotion of the **2030 Agenda** and reset the world on a good environmental footing after the pandemic (from ca 2010 and onwards, focussed strongly since 2014 and the technical agreement to the SDGs at the UN).

Understanding governance – a few thoughts

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- Governance is about the act of governing
- Add 'good' and the picture becomes complicated
- The purpose of Good Governance is to create well-being for all in a life of freedom, with freedom from fear, from want and with human rights granted including the right to live in freedom (Cfr. UN GA "In larger Freedom)
- Good Governance relates to institutions and systems,
- Institutions and systems underpin implementation, policies, plans, strategies,
- Strong institutions are often effective 'implementors', but are they also based on principles of good governance?
- Is there a conflict between individual and collective well-being, and how does this relate to good governance?
- Which are the basic values that are found in good governance principles?

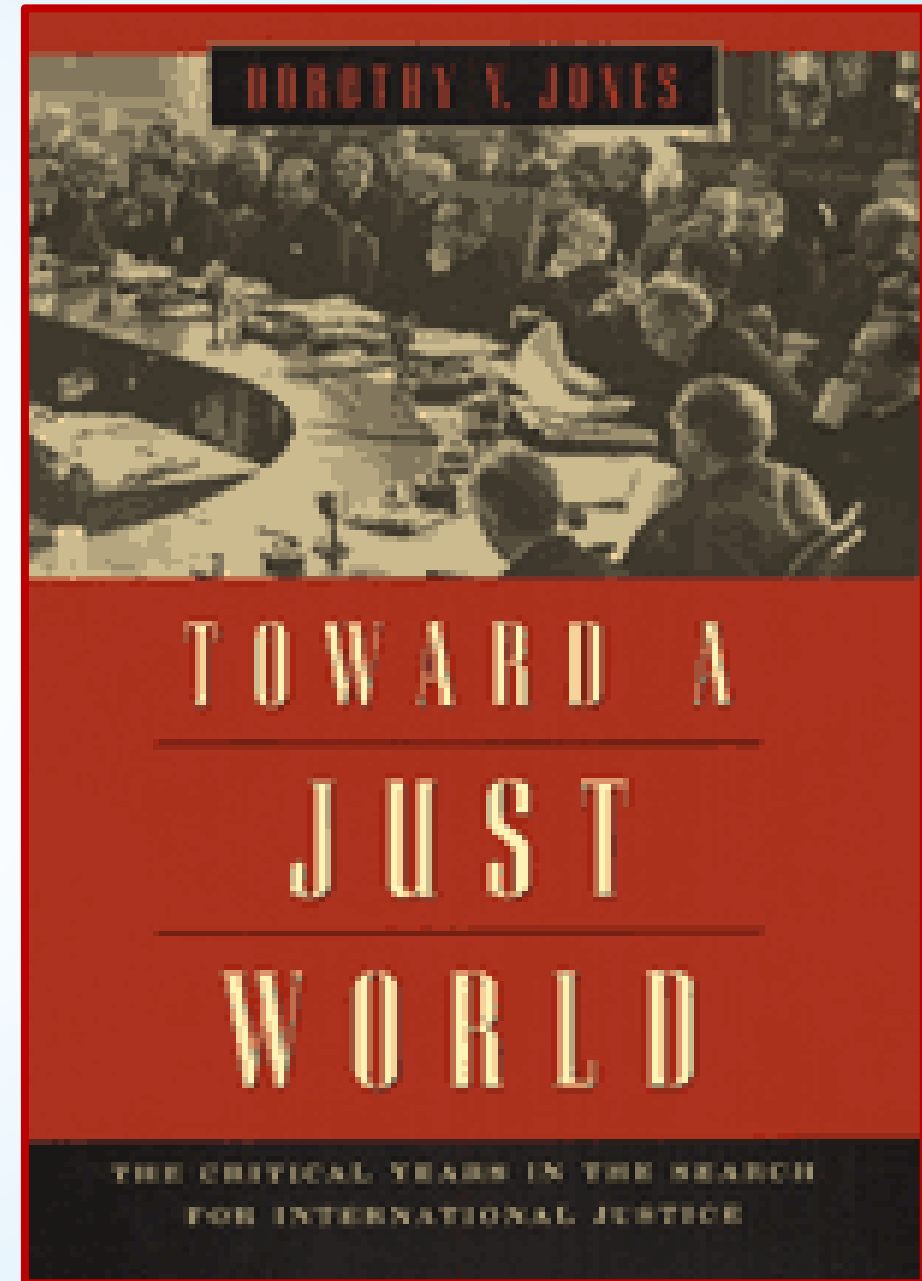
Good governance is necessary -

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- To incur and establish legality and thus legitimise processes
- To respond in operative ways to general demands of democracy
- To apply principles of justice and rule of law
- To give people a sense that they are respected, that they are heard and involved, that they are taken seriously
- To give processes respectability
- To be able to apply principles of integrity
- To be able to base decisions and implementation on trustworthiness
- To base decisions and processes on facts, apply honesty and truthfulness
- To give decisions and plans and implementations credibility
- To give people at large a sense of ownership through participation

Governance is also about justice and what does that entail?

- ➔ Justice and peace
 - ➔ Justice and rights
 - ➔ Justice and law
 - ➔ Justice and sustainable development and the environment
- 12 ➔ “Leaving no one behind”



Then – consider this

- One way of thinking about governance is to govern development through the SDGs
- Governance is ‘neutral’ – add ‘good’ and we will never stop arguing

Governance challenges - 1

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- ➔ Unless governments own intergovernmental processes, policies will never be taken seriously
- ➔ Unless people feel ownership with development, little – if anything - will be implemented
- ➔ The 2030 agenda and the SDGs will have to be implemented at all levels – local, national, regional and global

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- ➡ The implementation is based on partnerships between governments, private sector and the people
- ➡ Unless business can make a profit, they will not engage (there is an important difference in making a profit and maximizing profit)
- ➡ Are the interests of stakeholders and the challenges of governance compatible and are they conducive to implementing the 2030 agenda?

SDG basics – a necessity

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The Global Sustainable Development Report, GSDR, 2019 states: At the heart of the 2030 Agenda lies:

- ➡ “Countries’ greatest challenges in reaching the fulfilment of the 2030 Agenda lie either with improving human well-being or with excessive environmental costs.
- ➡ “The world characterized by **interconnections** not just among natural systems, but also through increasing flows of goods, capital, people, and information that link the development of nations and regions from North to South, from global to local, and from today to tomorrow.
- ➡ **Actions in one country** or one specific territory may affect many others, and sometimes **leave negative footprints** across the entire planet.”

Even small changes can lead to major events with unforeseeable consequences, either positive or negative (GSDR).

- ➡ “These inter-relationships imply positive synergies but also complex trade-offs and tough political choices. When decision-makers operate in thematic silos, they often end up **maximizing immediate returns** within those silos, **while ignoring longer term consequences**, or impacts outside of their silos.
- ➡ “Therefore, transformations toward sustainable development will be **successful only** if they **holistically integrate all SDGs**, and if they are **backed by** an appropriate **understanding** of the **complex causal chains** which affect socioeconomic and environmental systems and of the **interlinkages across goals and targets**. Indeed, **these transformations** are the best possible way forward to manage our complex socio-economic and environmental systems as a whole.”

Governance and relevance will also direct change

¹⁸ DOES GOVERNANCE DIRECT REALITY?

- Monitoring development through indicators: (SDGs are point in case)
- Are the 230+ indicators relevant?
- Whose interests do they reflect?
 - The government/authorities?
 - Private sector?
 - The people?
- Who developed the indicators?
 - Governments?
 - Experts?
 - The people?

A CHANGING PERCEPTION OF GOVERNANCE

- On which values are the indicators based?
- Collective goods?
- The collective interest of all society?
- Monetary values such as profitability and the market?
- Environmental and social concerns?
- A rights-based system?
- Do the governance systems today reflect the politics of our times, or should some governance principles be set in stone

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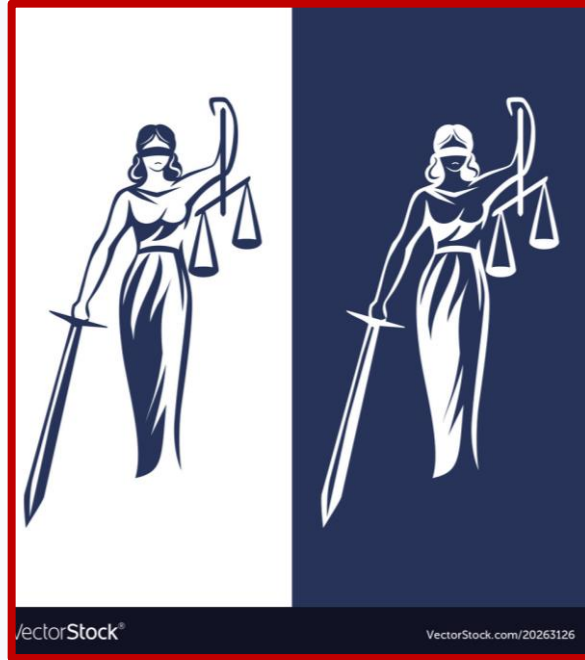
Goal 6

6.b Support and strengthen the participation of local communities in improving water and sanitation management

The VNRs reflect a country's priority – to what extent has people been consulted?

- Every country has one or another system to coordinate the 2030 Agenda. Some countries have only established such a system for the specific year they deliver their VNR- These VNRs are low on substance..
- Countries with a holistic National Strategy for Sustainable Development have more substance in their VNRs than countries with a strategy where each line ministry has been given a responsibility to deal with the SDG relevant to the work of that ministry
- Countries with a holistic national strategy for sustainable development and which also have a functional multi-stakeholder consultation process, have more substance in their VNRs than countries with merely a holistic national strategy for sustainable development dealt with by a body appointed by the authorities.

Which is the
most important
governance
issue?



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We want in governance a proper balance

- Agenda setting,
- Provide content,
- Proper process,
- Timely resolutions,
- Real documentation,
- Relevance in
 - Reports,
 - Reviews,
 - Outcomes,
- Proper implementation,
- Partnerships



We need

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- Availability
- Access
- Information
- Transparency
- Accountability
- Participation
- Lobby opportunities
- Decision shaping
- Decision making
- Impact
- Expediency

Implementation must be based on governance, and governance has a practical and operative function, depending on contexts within which we find:

- Principles,
- Guidelines
- Accountability, transparency and due diligence
- Quality participation
- Roles of intergovernmental bodies, the UN system, EU and others
- Monitoring and Mapping
- Reporting
- Reviews



There is something about governance



Which are the most important governance issues?

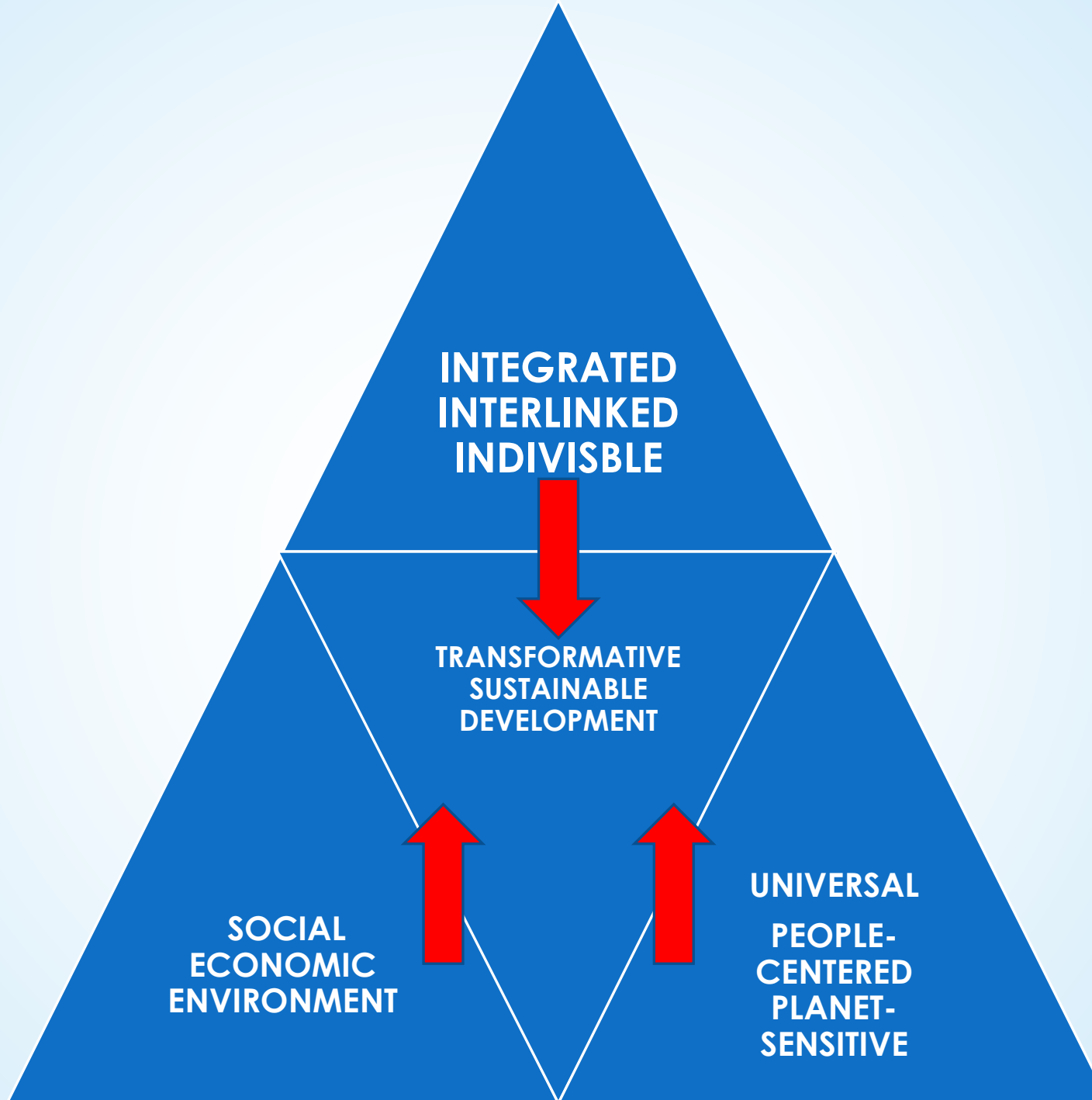
- ➔ Is it ACCESS?
- ➔ Or is it ACCOUNTABILITY?
- ➔ In an open, participatory, transparent, respectful and relevant context?
- ➔ How do we understand these issues?
- ➔ In which other contexts are they relevant?
- ➔ Other governance issues?

Tools and concepts
are available for all
stakeholders – the
SDGs can guide us



To accomplish all this, we need

- A new conceptual thinking
- A new institutional architecture
- Strong and active governance structures, proper accountability systems, transparency elements, participatory processes and new due diligence approaches
- A new economic systemic thinking, circular economy is just the beginning
- **Effective and relevant governance must reflect the following 9-dimensional thinking**



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In conclusion

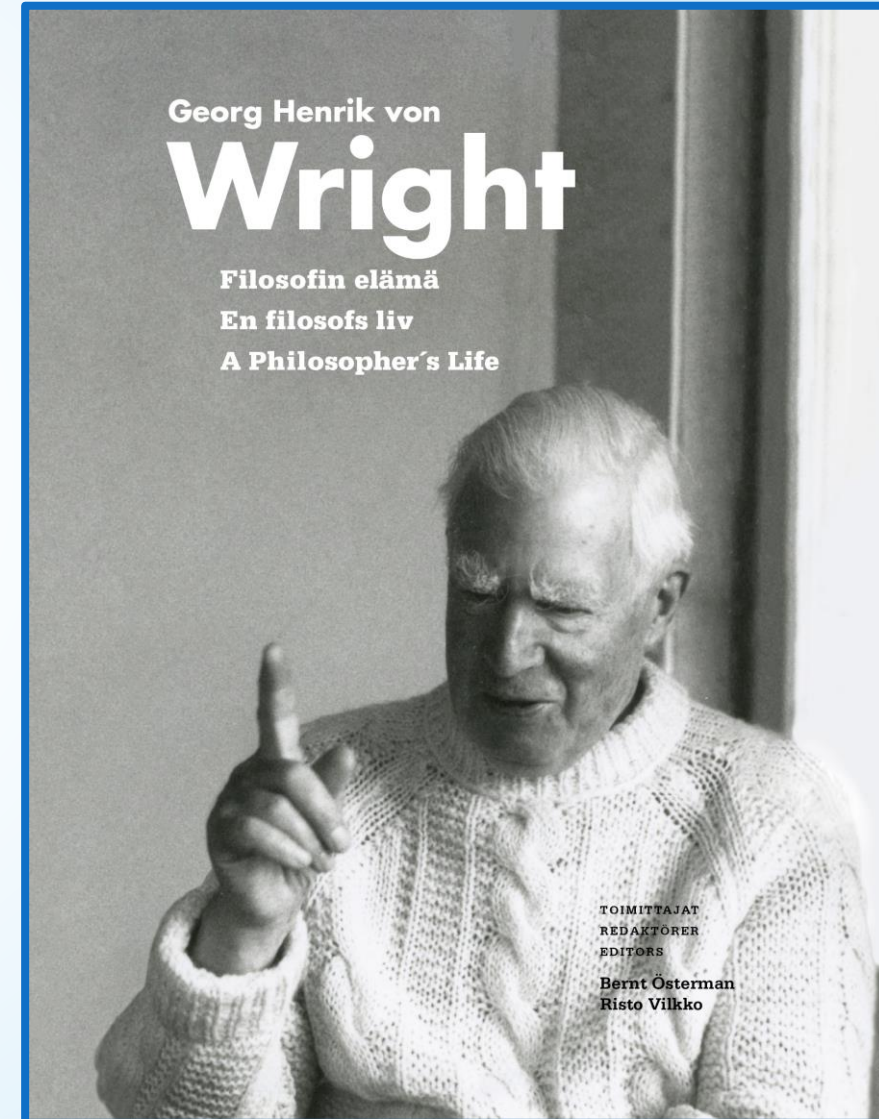
A key governance challenge is found in this statement:

**“Democracy is being able to make real choices” –
The following quote illustrates this:**

A question of scale – a serious and often ignored governance question (Georg Henrik von Wright)

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- ➡ Scaling up – everything becomes too large, details are lost
- ➡ Complexity and diversity is lost
- ➡ Getting decisions at the right level
- ➡ Standardization can be problematic



➡ **“To make the right choices, and have these choices supported by people, and have the choices improve the lives of everybody, we need to base our choices on a number of well-established values that are intrinsically found in democracy...**

- ➡ **“Among these values are two pillars:**
- ➡ **one is about the individual person being able to make an informed choice.**
- ➡ **The other is that the individual person will be able to understand the consequences of the informed choice ...**

Is this possible -

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- ➡ In a small society
- ➡ In a big, complex society
- ➡ In a technological society
- ➡ In a complex and technologically based and technologically oriented society
- ➡ In a global society
- ➡ In a fast-moving society?

Or are choices and decisions so difficult to understand that we will inevitably come to rely on:

- ➡ elites?**
- ➡ experts?**
- ➡ control systems?**
- ➡ In short - will we be subject to a dictatorship of circumstances?**
- ➡ (from Georg Henrik von Wright, the Myth of Progress)**

Finally: if we are resourceful, we allocate resources – if not, we fail.

- ▶ “Doing more with less” and “business as usual” are not truisms, they are attitudes and approaches of disasters. We are faced with the biggest challenge in humanity’s existence – saving the globe. We cannot afford **not** to give our ideas adequate resources. We will never be able to calculate **the cost of not doing enough**. That cost will be astronomical or incalculable. Will we take the responsibility for such a disaster – or will we just leave the problems for our next generations – and just leave everybody behind?



Thank you for listening to me

Jan-Gustav Strandenaes

Senior adviser on governance
and sustainability policies

Stakeholder Forum and PURE
Consulting

jgstrandenaes@gmail.com