

**PLANET  
UNDER  
PRESSURE**  
2012 MARCH 26-29  
LONDON

NEW  
KNOWLEDGE  
TOWARDS  
SOLUTIONS

# Welcome to the ANTHROPOCENE

Mark Stafford Smith

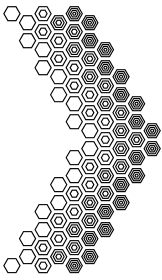
*ANU Rio+20 Policy Forum, Nov 2011*



Data visualization: Felix Pharand Globaia



And their Earth System Science Partnership



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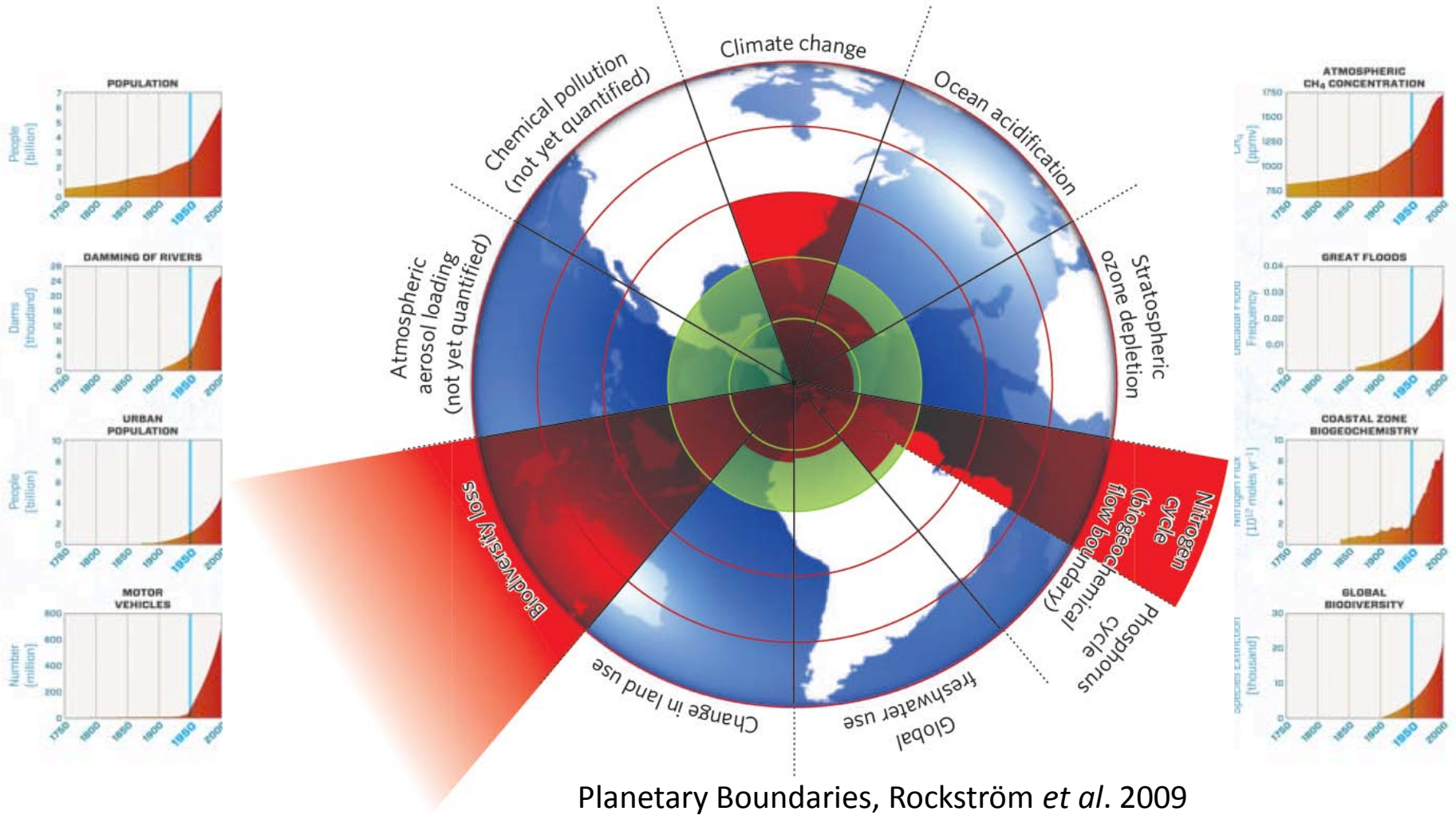
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## Setting Rio+20 in a new context – key messages

- We are now a prime driver of change at the planetary level – the Anthropocene
- Humanity is driving the Earth system towards dangerous thresholds
- Solutions exist, but time is the natural resource in shortest supply

# Great Acceleration



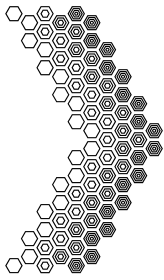
IGBP synthesis: Global Change and the Earth System, Steffen *et al.* 2004  
Data visualization: Felix Pharand Globaia



“Our foot is stuck on the accelerator and we are heading towards an abyss.”

Ban Ki-Moon





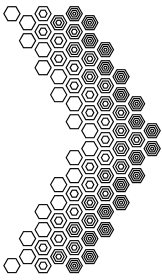
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- The Great Acceleration happened in one lifetime
- We have entered the digital age
- We have become global citizens, unconsciously
- We now need to become *planetary stewards, consciously*



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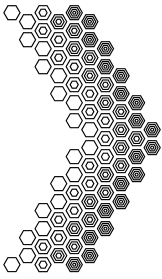
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## POLICY BRIEFS

- [www.icsu.org/rio20/policy-briefs](http://www.icsu.org/rio20/policy-briefs)
- Published Oct-Dec 2011
- 9 Briefs – food, water, energy, biodiversity, health, green economy, governance, wellbeing, & *interconnected* risks and solutions.

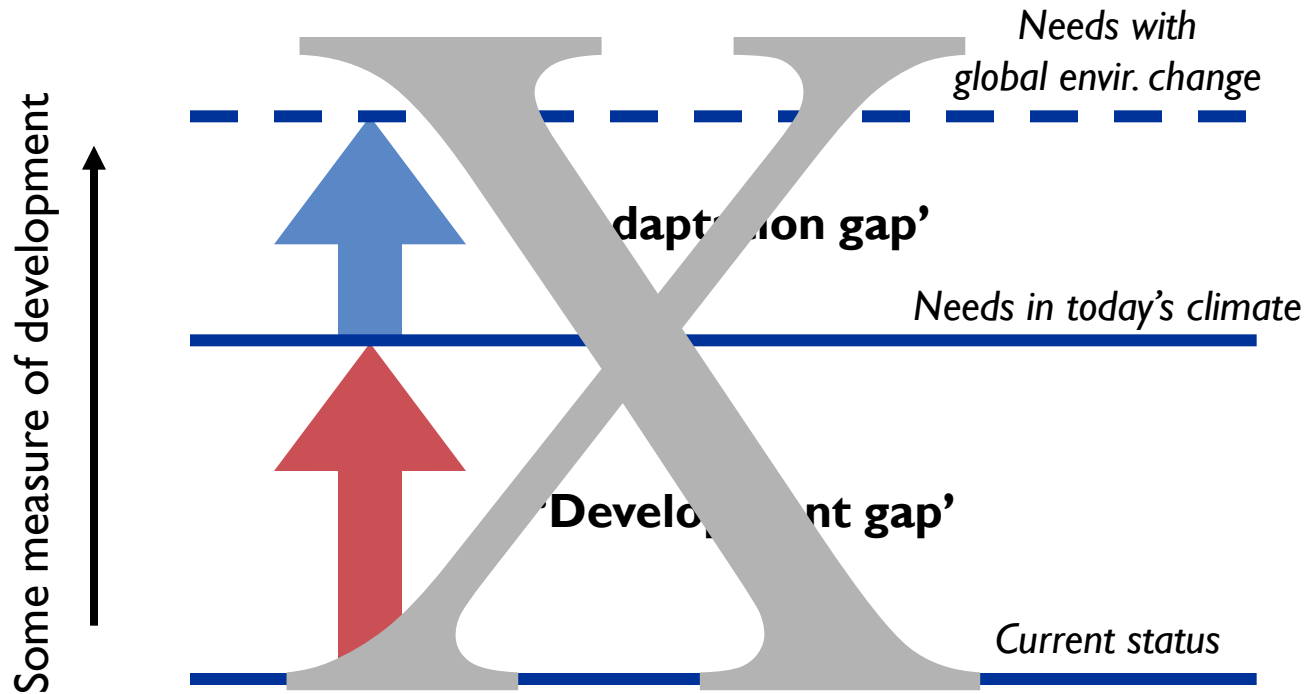


## The green economy: beyond business as usual

- ‘Sustainable development’: mainstreamed since 1980s
  - Incremental change has been quite successful
    - Sense of comfort...
  - But we have failed to address transformative needs
    - Consumption
    - Equity
    - ...
- Needs an institutional *focus*

# Adaptation and development – 1

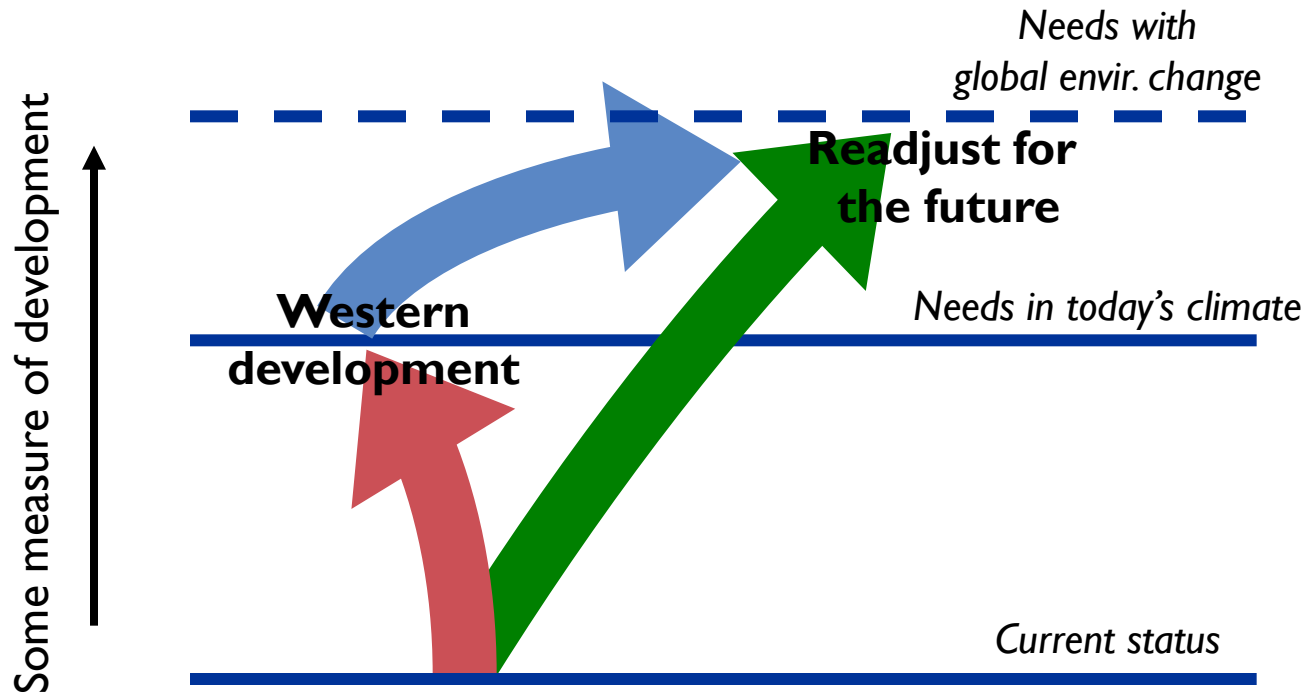
- Nicholas Stern, 2009
  - “Adaptation is development in a carbon constrained world”
- (Old) conventional view:





# Adaptation and development – 2

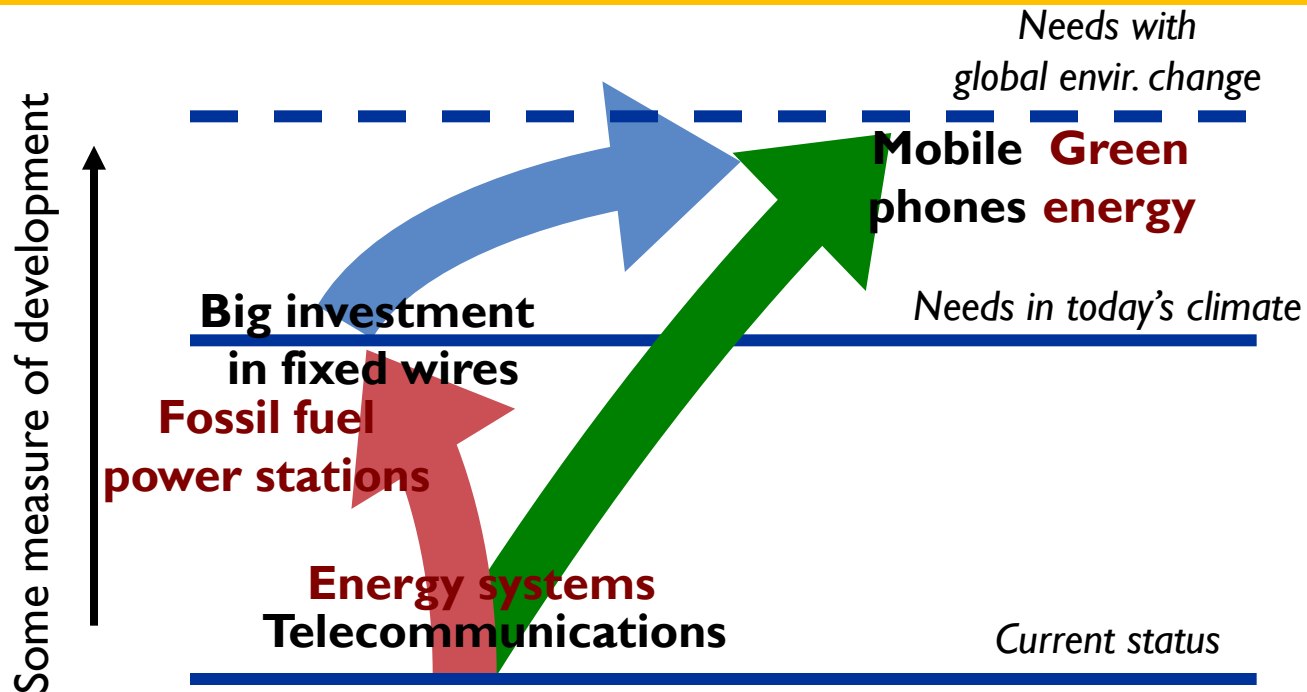
- Reality: often *different* development is needed once global change taken into account
  - Failure to see this risks maladaptation



# Adaptation and development – 3

- Reality: often *different* development is needed once global change taken into account

- Other examples for the green economy??
- How to facilitate this thinking/prevent thoughtless commercial aid??



# Where to for (and beyond) Rio?

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- Vital steps but a bit mundane
  - Account for ecosystem good and services
  - Target *wellbeing*, not only economics
  - Action on energy, water, food, blue economy, but as *systems*
- Seeking a visionary component?
  - Deep understanding of the interconnected nature of the risks and solutions
    - A new compact between science, society and decision-makers?
  - Transformative reform of governance
    - Grasp a 'constitutional moment' in world history, akin to 1945
  - Big commitments that really move towards equity
    - (because it is good for *everyone*)
  - New SDGs that profoundly connect well-being and environment
    - Don't just push western development
  - Real leadership on articulating planetary stewardship, to the benefit of us all, and our children's children



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## Narrative

