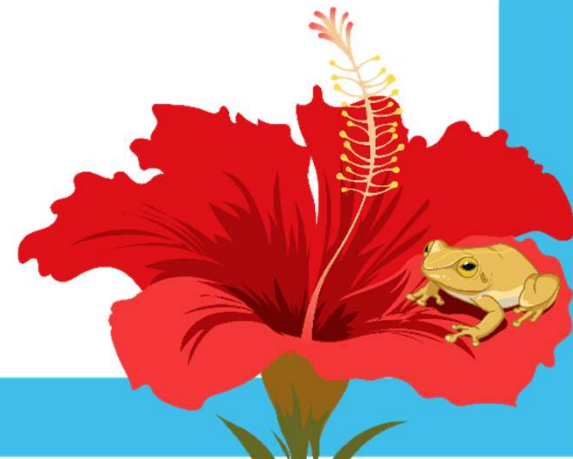


Is the cooperative identity facilitating sustainability strategies and results: the case of the funeral cooperatives in Quebec. (is the SDG framework is a good reference for coops?)



Michel Lafleur
August 9th, 2023
Association of cooperative educators
San Juan Puerto Rico



Topics

1) Conceptual framework

1.1- Sustainability

1.2- Cooperatives

2) Research questions

3) Analysis

3.1- Data

3.2- Analysis: main actions and result

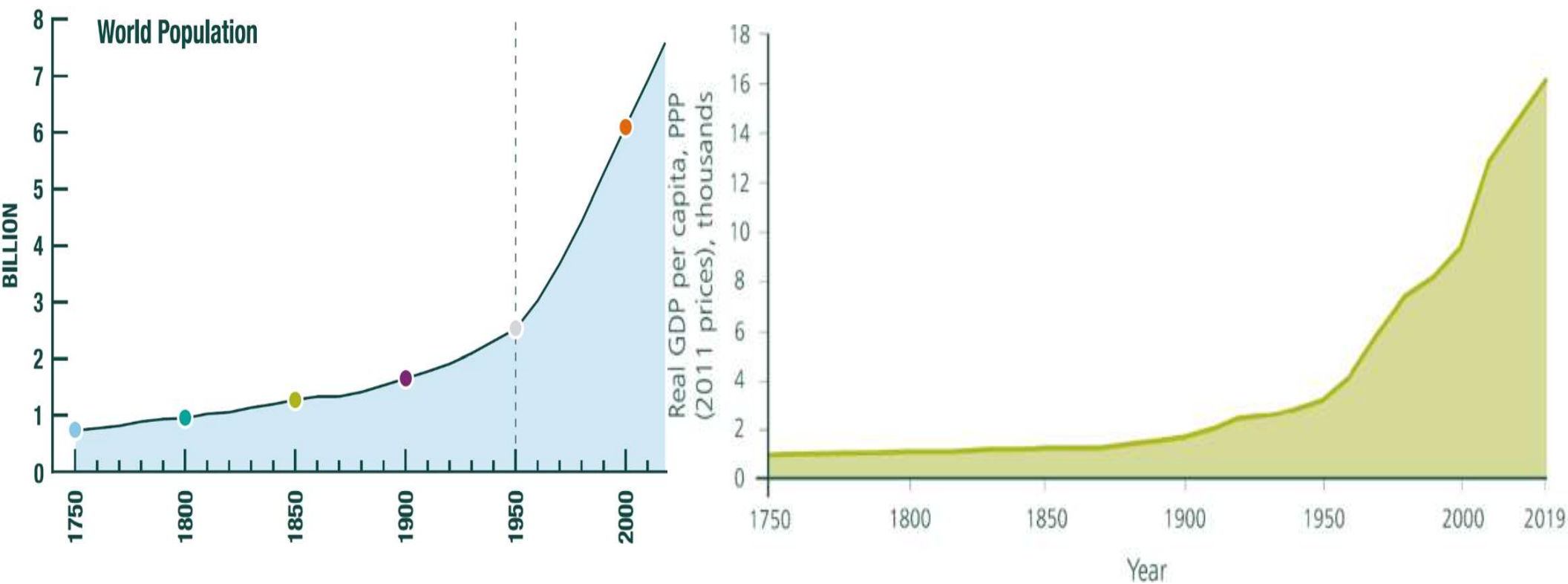
3.3- Contribution of co-op thinking to sustainability

4) Some thoughts

1.1- Reminder: sustainability

- *“development that meets the needs of the present without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs”*
 - *Respect of the capacities of ecosystems*
 - *Equity between people*
- Brundtland report
- *“Sustainability is the capacity of our human societies to continue indefinitely within these natural cycles.”*
 - Karl-Henrik Robèrt (The Natural Step)

Population and GDP growth



Source: Population, Ecological Footprint and the Sustainable Development Goals | SpringerLink



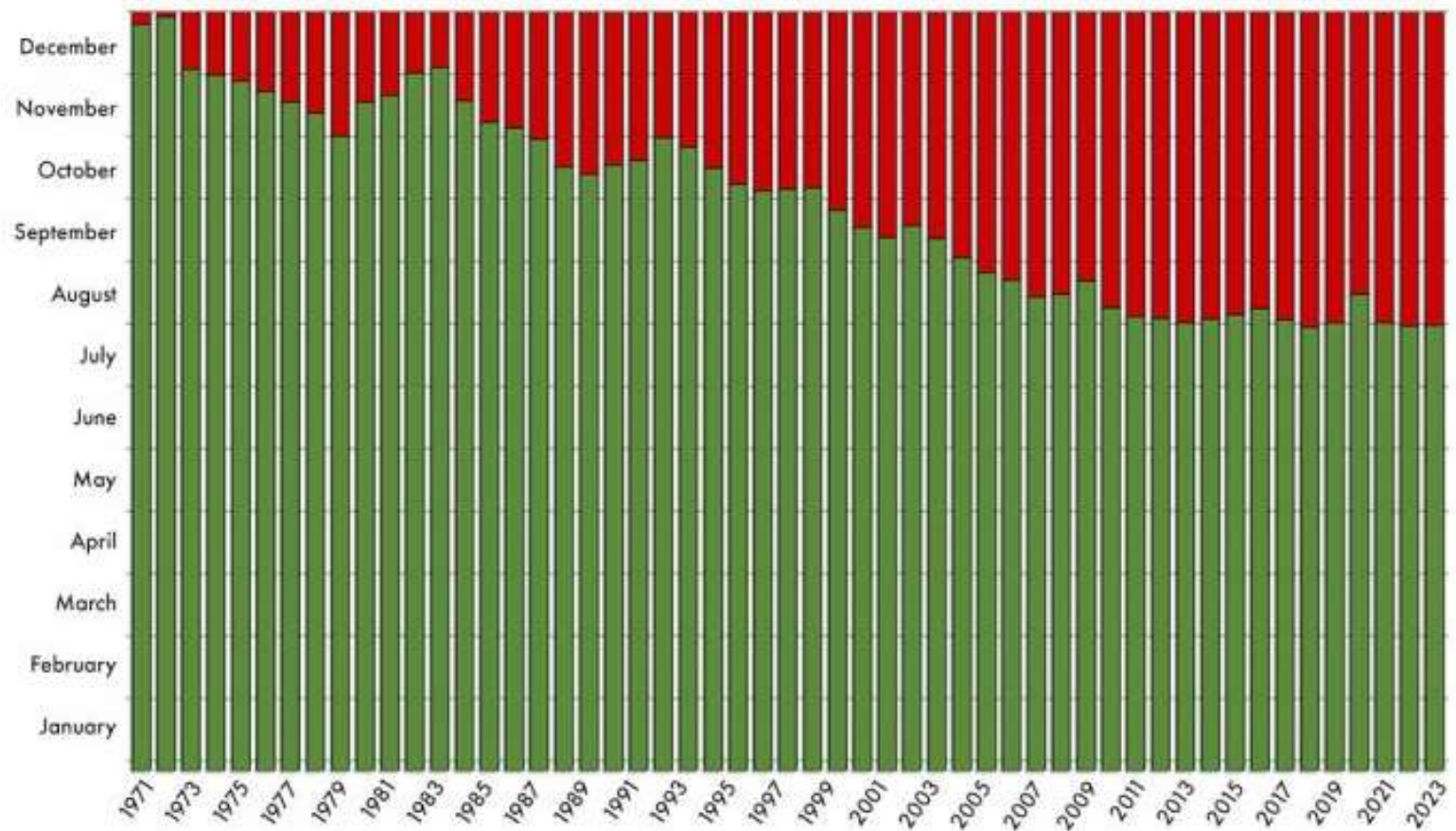
1 Earth

Earth Overshoot Day

1971 - 2023



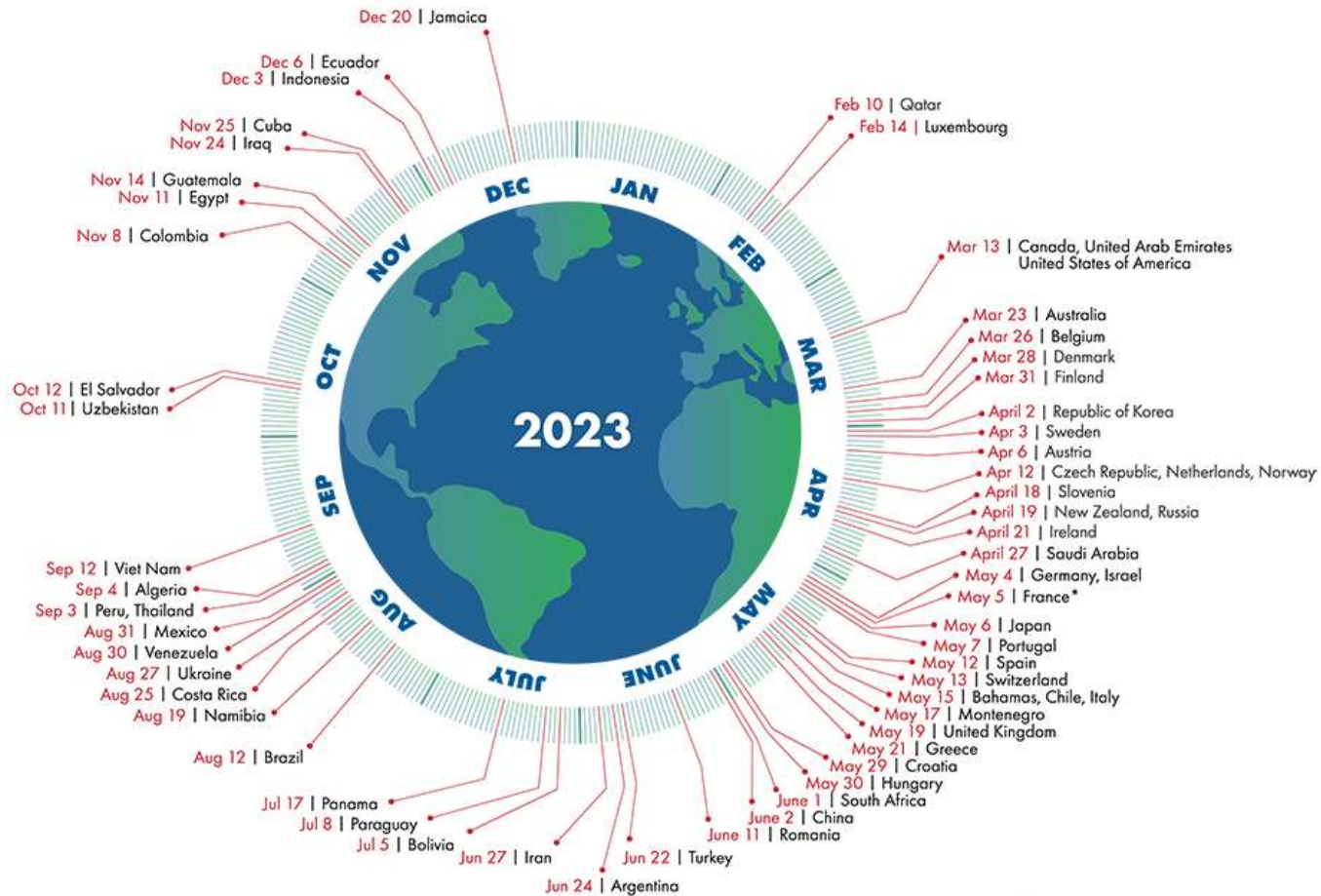
1.7 Earths



Source: National Footprint and Biocapacity Accounts 2023 Edition
data.footprintnetwork.org

Country Overshoot Days 2023

When would Earth Overshoot Day land if the world's population lived like...



For a full list of countries, visit overshootday.org/country-overshoot-days.

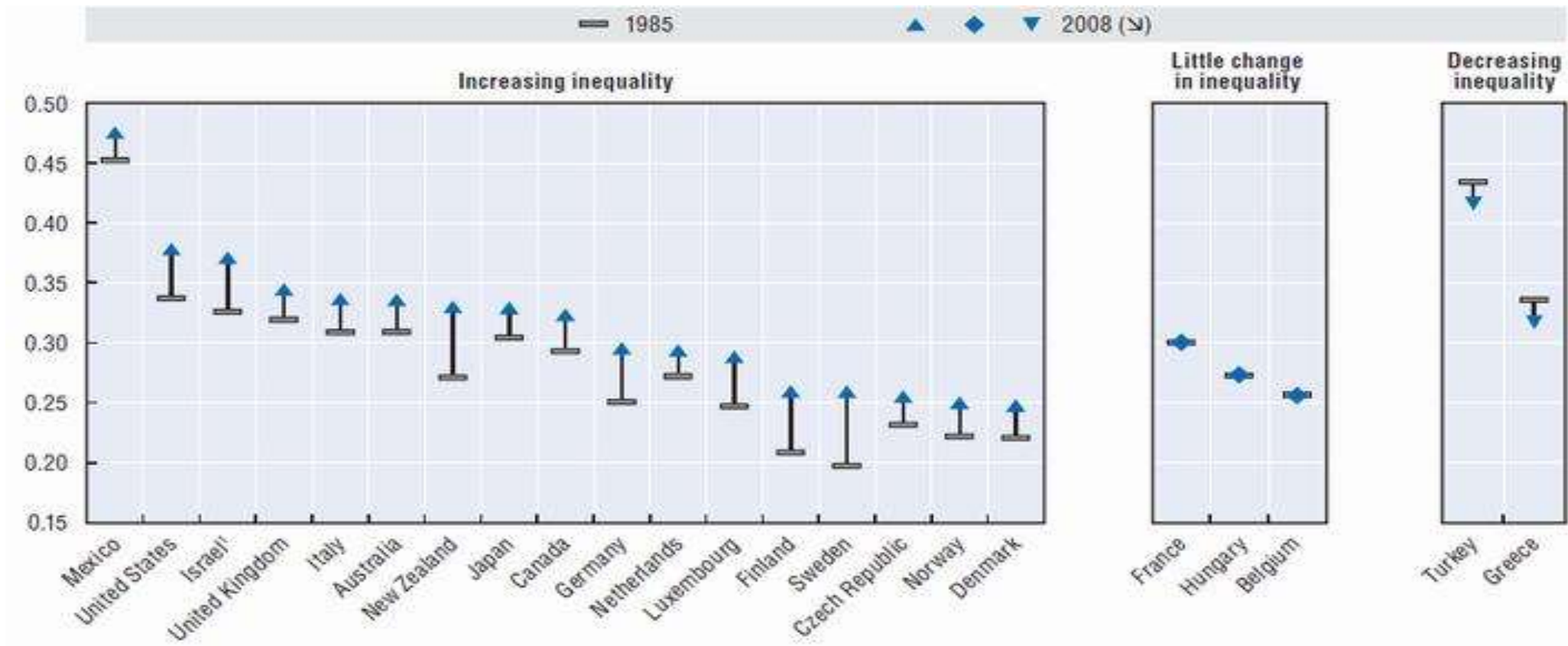
*French Overshoot Day based on nowcasted data. See overshootday.org/france.

Source: National Footprint and Biocapacity Accounts, 2022 Edition
data.footprintnetwork.org



Income inequality increased

Gini coefficients of income inequality, mid-1980s and late 2000s



Source: [Equipo Nizkor - An Overview of Growing Income Inequalities in OECD Countries: Main Findings. \(derechos.org\)](#)

Why sustainability?

Exponential population growth

+

Average consumption growth

(therefore, increases in the use of resources and the production of waste)

+

Larger gaps between rich and poor

=

Impossibility of the development past and present model

1.2- Reminder: cooperatives

- 1) **Definition:** *A cooperative is an autonomous association of persons united voluntarily to meet their common economic, social and cultural needs and aspirations through a jointly-owned and democratically-controlled enterprise.*
- 2) **Values:** self-help, self-responsibility, democracy, equality, equity, and solidarity
- 3) **The 7 Principles:** 1. Voluntary and Open Membership; 2. Democratic Member Control; 3. Member Economic Participation; 3. Member Economic Participation; 4. Autonomy and Independence; 5. Education, Training, and Information; 6. Cooperation among Coopératives; 7. Concern for Community.
- 4) **Types and sectors:** workers, consumers, producers, multi. In all economic sectors.

2- Research questions

- How can a cooperative be sustainable?
- What is the best framework for coop?
 - SDG, ISO, etc.?
- Are the cooperative principles already a good framework for sustainability?

3- Research: Funeral cooperatives in Quebec

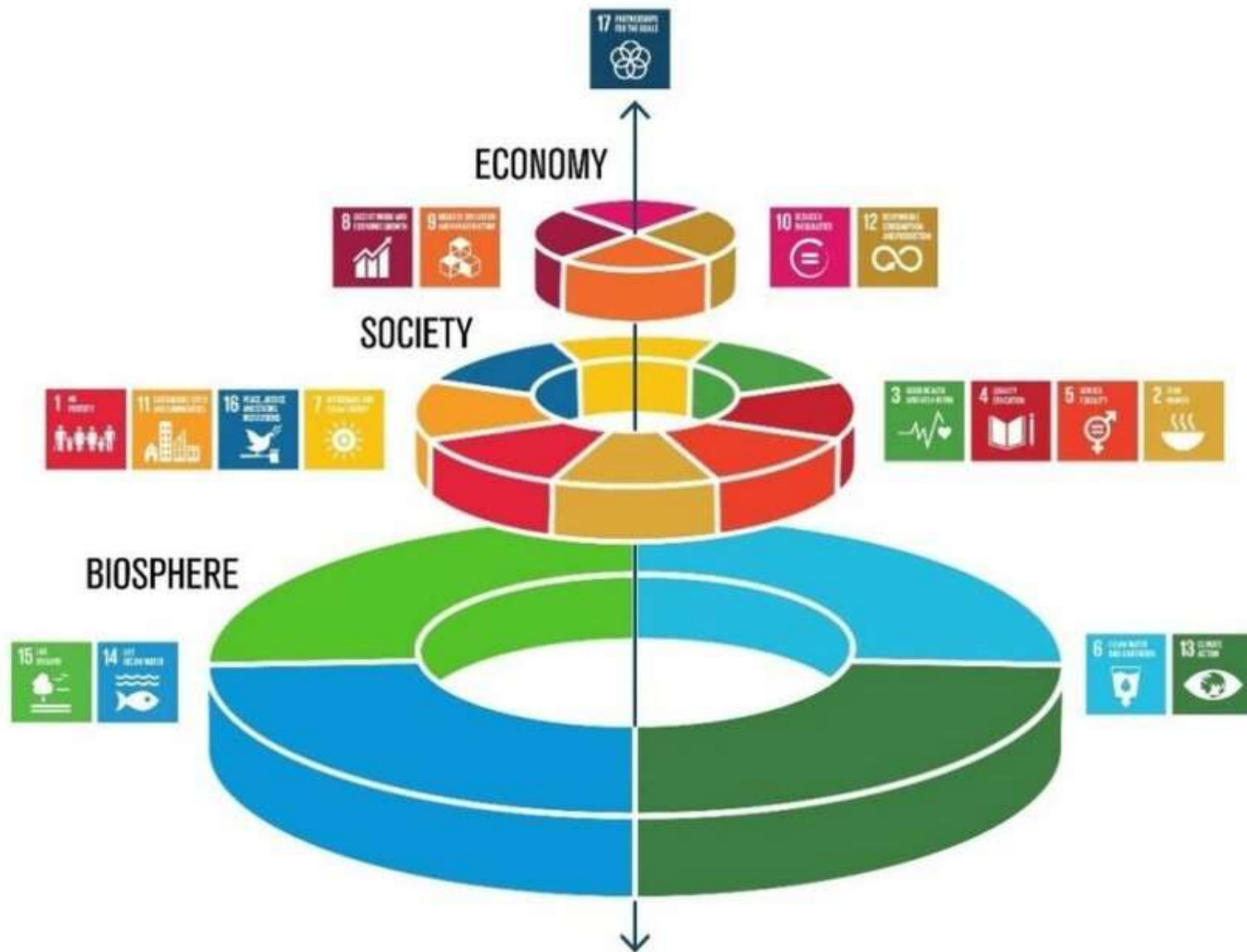
- Consumer cooperatives;
- 20 funeral co-ops are member of their federation (12 auxiliary members);
- More than 250 000 members of local cooperatives;
- 300 administrators;

- Consolidated turnover: 75 millions dollars;
- Assets: 350 millions dollars;

- More than 15,000 families served per year (21% of market shares).

3.1- Data from funeral cooperatives

- Interviews and document review with a majority of the funeral cooperatives
 - Summer of 2022
 - First report submitted in Novembre 2022
 - Report to the general assembly (May 2023)
 - Discussion within a committee for an action plan
- The SDG was selected as reference framework



3.2- Analysis: main actions and result

Social system

- ✓ Local purchase (coffin, clothing, food, suppliers, etc.) (SDG 8-10-12-13)
- ✓ Community involvement, and meals for food banks (SDG 2-10)
- ✓ Sharing knowledge with cooperatives in other countries (SDG 10-11-12-16-17)
- ✓ Men/women parity in boards of directors (SDG 5-10)
- ✓ Cooperative governance - Decision according to the interests of the members- (SDG 8-10-12-16-17)

Ecological systems

- ✓ Local purchase (SDG 8-10-12-13)
- ✓ Tree planting for greenhouse emissions compensation with forestry cooperatives (SDG 10-11-12-13-15)
- ✓ Some electric cars (SDG 13-15)
- ✓ Green cemetery (SDG 11, 12, 13,15)
- ✓ Certified ecological product (SDG 8-10-12-13)

Economic system

- ✓ Employee benefits: salary; superior working conditions; health and security; etc. (SDG 1-3-8-10)
- ✓ Better prices for members (SDG 1-8-10)
- ✓ Assets belonging to communities (SDG 8-9-10-12)
- ✓ Pay taxes (SDG 1-2-3-4-6)
- ✓ Development funds (SDG 8-12)

3.2- Analysis : main improvements

Ecological systems

- ✓ quantify ecological impacts
 - ✓ Water, ocean (ODD 6, 14)
 - ✓ Land (ODD 15)
 - ✓ Greenhouse gas, biodiversity (ODD 13)
- ✓ Alternative ways of cremation: aquamation, *humusation*

Social systems

- ✓ More room for minorities, women (ODD 5)

In general

- ✓ Have sustainability expertise, global approach
- ✓ From sustainability to strategic advantage
- ✓ (... and very lucky to have cheap hydroelectricity...)

3.3- Contribution of co-op thinking to sustainability

OK for the results, but what are the forces behind those results?

Most of those results came from the co-op thinking, not the sustainability thinking.

- ✓ In the definition of co-ops: “ ... *meet their common economic, social and cultural needs and aspirations...*”
- ✓ Principle 3: Member Economic Participation
 - ✓ “ ... *In the part of that capital is usually the common property of the cooperative...*
 - ✓ “... *members usually receive limited compensation, if any, on capital subscribed...*
 - ✓ “... *setting up reserves, part of which at least would be indivisible.*”
- ✓ Principle 2: Democratic Member Control: *The cooperative governance*

4- Some thoughts

Another sustainability framework? The Natural Step

4- The Natural Step

- Based on the work of Henrik-Karl Robèrt (Swedish oncologist)
- The general idea : why the system is not working, we need to understand that we live in a none sustainability world.
- Because our development model is exceeding certain limits:
 - 3 ecological limits
 - 1 social limit

The matrix of needs and satisfiers for development

(Based on the work of Manfred Max-Neef)

- 1) **Subsistence** (physical health, mental health, equilibrium, ...)
- 2) **Protection** (care, adaptability, autonomy, solidarity,...)
- 3) **Participation** (adaptability, receptiveness, solidarity, willingness, ...)
- 4) **Idleness** (curiosity, receptiveness, imagination, sense of humour, ...)
- 5) **Affection** (self-esteem, solidarity, respect, tolerance, generosity...)
- 6) **Understanding** (critical conscience, curiosity, intuition, ...)
- 7) **Identity** (sense of belonging, consistency, differentiation, ...)
- 8) **Freedom** (autonomy, determination, open-mindedness, tolerance)
- 9) **Creation** (passion, determination, imagination, autonomy, ...)

From that framework, with the idea of limits, they propose a social condition for sustainability

For adaptability, a society must be able to generate trust.

For social sustainability, *in a society there are no structural obstacles to:*

- 1) Health** (of individuals in the system)
- 2) Influence** (of how the system is organised)
- 3) Competence** (development to understand context and to become the best one can be);
- 4) Impartiality** (equal treatment)
- 5) Meaning-making** (a larger purpose)

5- Conclusion

- How can a cooperative be sustainable?
- What is the best framework for coop?
 - SDG, ISO, etc.?
- Are the cooperative principles already a good guide for sustainability?

