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ADVANCING A **NEXUS APPROACH**
TO THE SUSTAINABLE MANAGEMENT
OF **WATER, SOIL AND WASTE**



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CONNECTING PEOPLE WITH THE NEXUS:

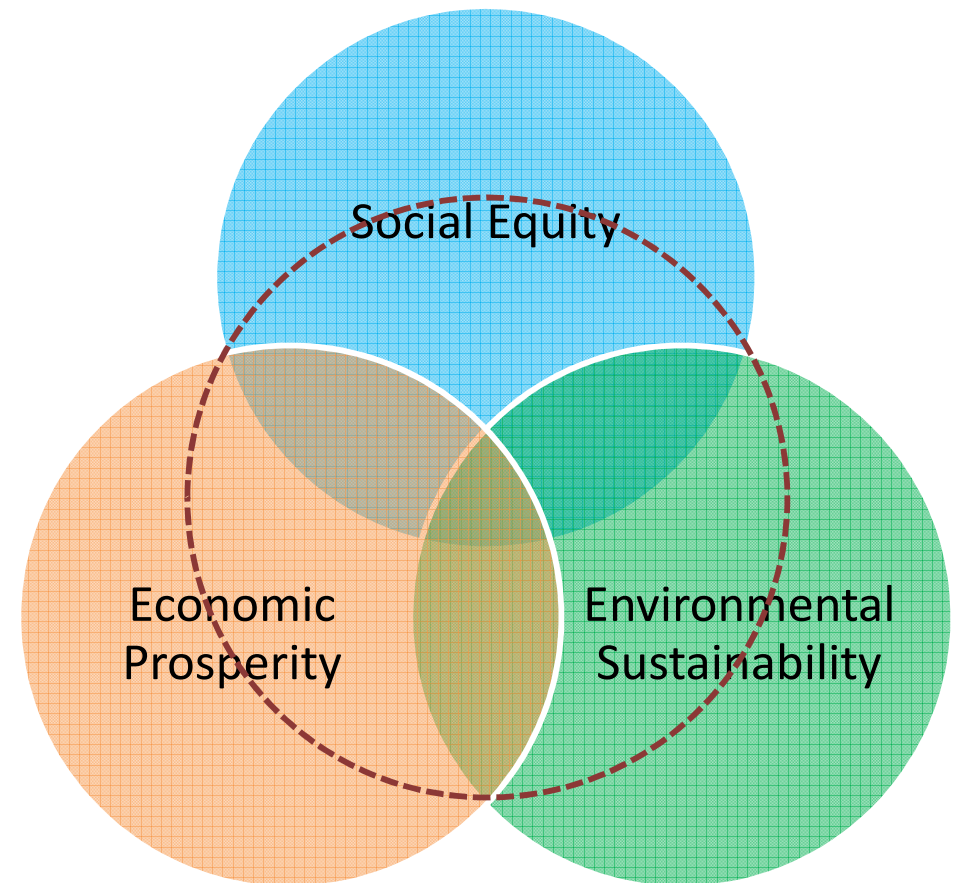
Engaging Stakeholders in Sustainable Management of Water-Soil-Waste





Is the nexus approach meant for profound transformations towards sustainability?

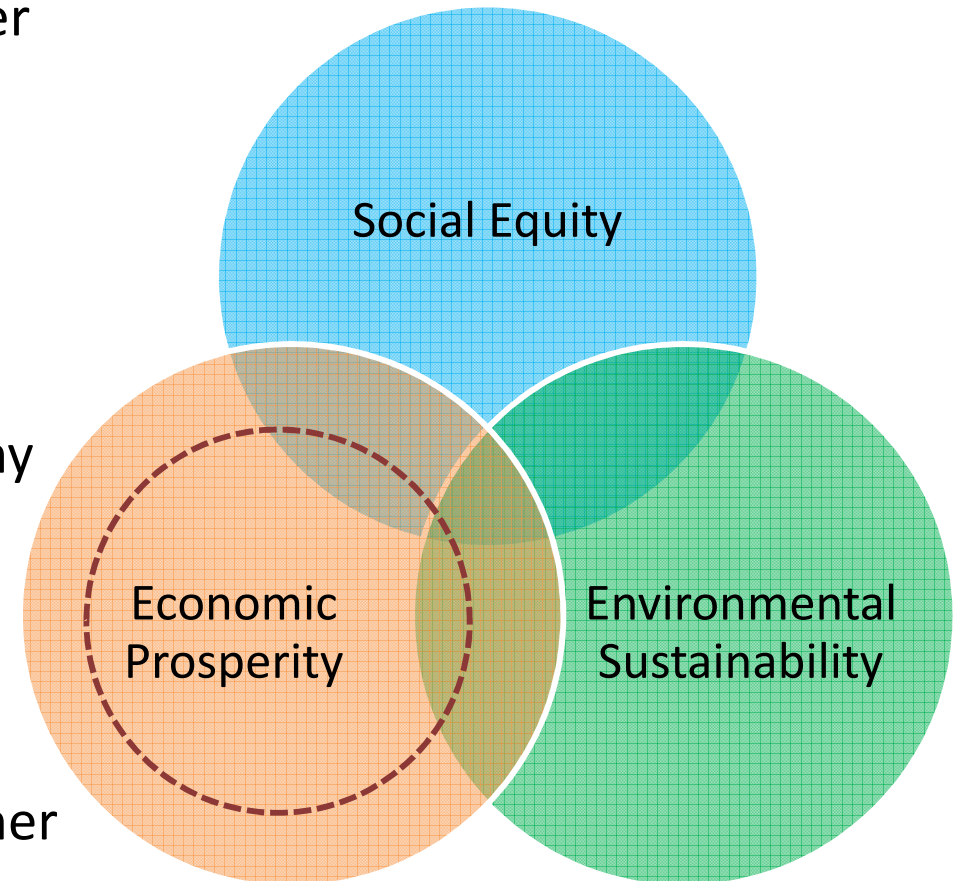
- The multiple crises' of the world compels us to seek holistic approaches towards a profound transformation towards sustainability.
- The nexus approach needs to be analysed and assessed on its ability to either provide such profound transformations or significantly contribute in a holistic manner.
- If it claims either, then the investigation needs to go further in to analysing the objectives and strategies of a nexus approach.





Is the nexus approach another attempt to maintain the growth based development model?

- During the past decades we have seen numerous approaches proposed to alter or modify the prevalent growth based development model.
- Approaches such as decoupling environment from economic growth, efficiency as a means of productivity, green growth strategies, green economy drives, etc. have all been viewed by critiques as attempts to continue with the growth based development model.
- One wonders if the current interest in promoting the nexus approach is another such attempt towards maintaining the growth based development model.





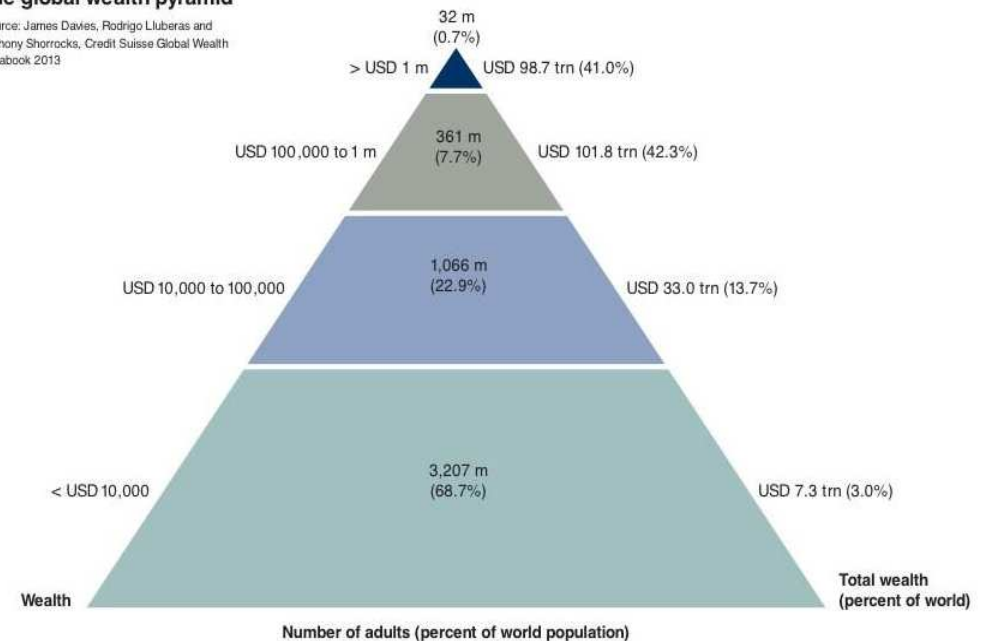
The growth based development model is fundamentally flawed!

- The prevalent growth based development model has not only failed to lift a large section of humanity above unacceptable levels of poverty, but has also greatly increased the inequities between the wealthy and the poor and has led to ecological unsustainability and climate change.
- It is fundamentally flawed in that it is predatory of both nature and people, ecologically unsustainable, and socio-economically inequitable.

The prevalent development model continues to deconstruct the inter-related nature of global issues, delink interdependencies of the natural environment, marginalise actors and stakeholders from governance, and then tries to find alternative ways of presenting justifications through subsystems of integrated management tools.

The global wealth pyramid

Source: James Davies, Rodrigo Lluberias and Anthony Shorrocks, Credit Suisse Global Wealth Databook 2013





Seeking Comprehension on the Nexus Approach: Raising Fundamental Questions

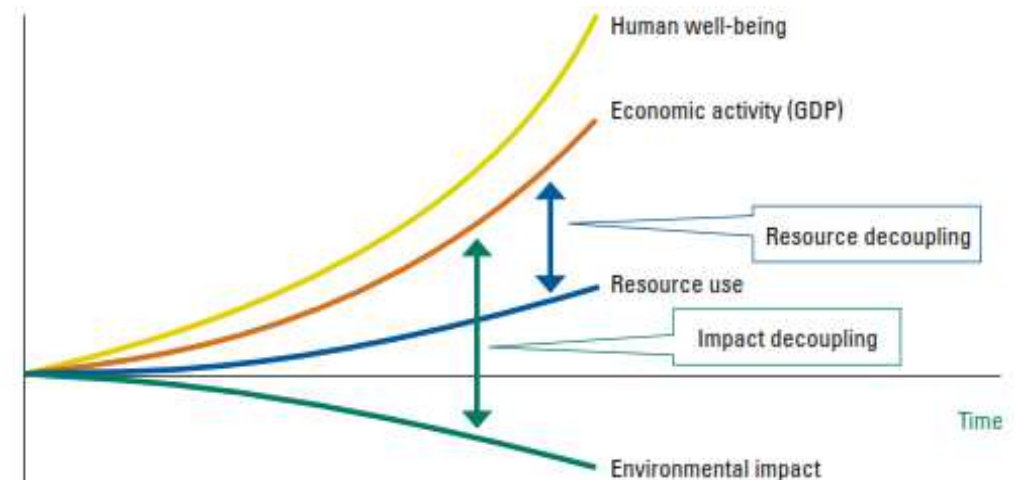
- The Nexus approach now being proposed to be linked with the efforts towards a transformation agenda raises more fundamental questions.
 - Can the nexus provide a holistic approach to a sustainability transition or is it attempting to address few components of the global challenge?
 - Is the nexus approach seeking correlation between the different subject issues or convergence between broader dimensions of global issues?
 - Is the nexus taking a project based strategic approach to resource management or a systems thinking approach?
 - Is the nexus approach different to or an extension of decoupling?
 - Is the nexus approach a continuation of resource efficiency or can it also seek alignment with a conceptual framework of sufficiency?



Can the nexus approach ensure wellbeing of all?

- Approaches such as decoupling environment from economic growth appear to be based on several assumptions.
- Firstly it assumes that economic growth, measured by GDP, will increase human wellbeing.
- Secondly it assumes that efficiency will decouple resource consumption from economic growth.
- However, there is no evidence to show that decoupling approaches consider distributive growth for equitable consumption; hence, by the virtue of reducing the impact on the environment it assumes that wellbeing would rise along with growth.

By ignoring the principle of prosperity of all and the necessity of inclusive or distributed growth, the approach of decoupling may fall short of ensuring actual wellbeing meant to be for all societies and individuals within the planet.

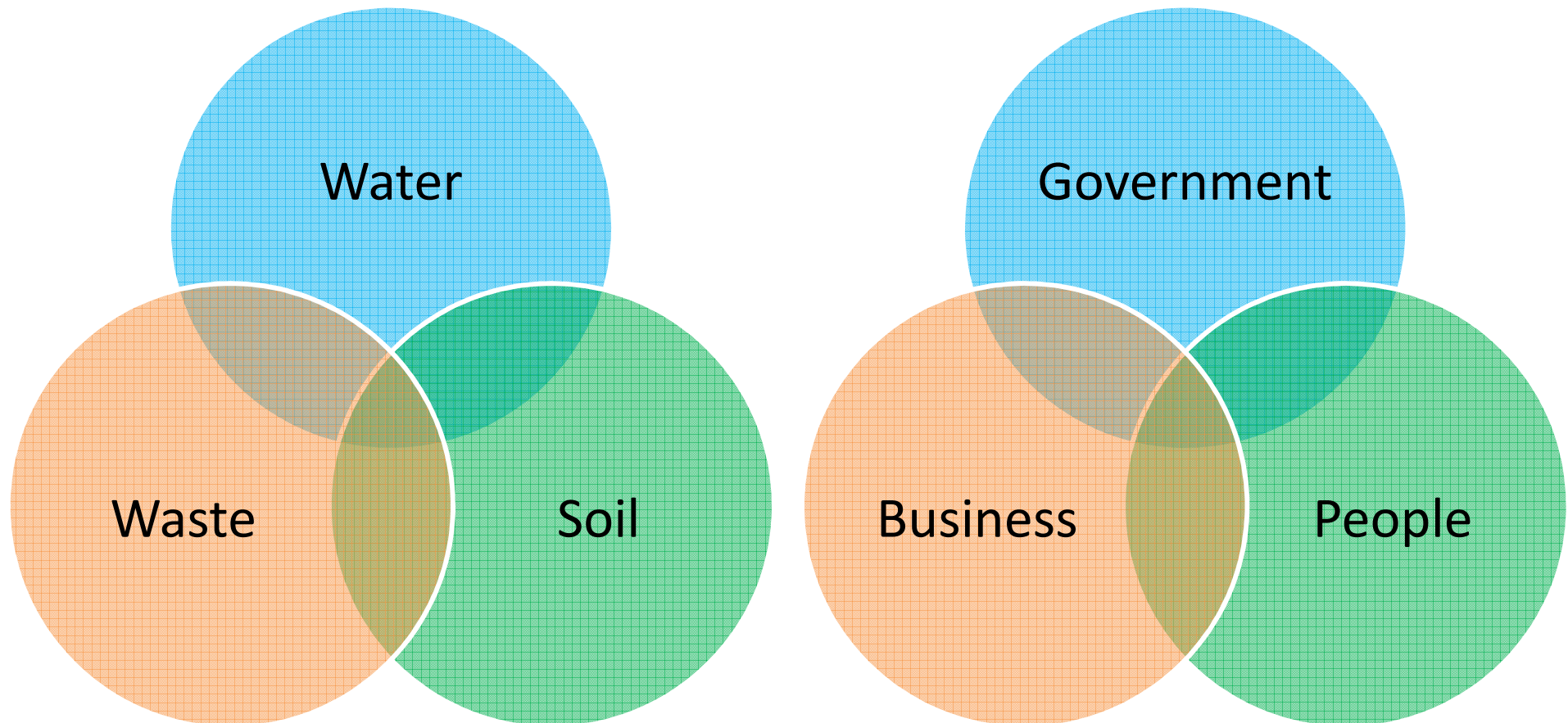


Two aspects of decoupling (source: UNEP)



Water-Soil-Waste Nexus: The Stakeholder Mirror

How can the nexus approach engage all the people and stakeholders in a water, soil and waste nexus governance system? A governance of water-soil-waste nexus is mirrored with similar linkages between government-people-business. The balance between the different elements is critically important in managing the nexus.

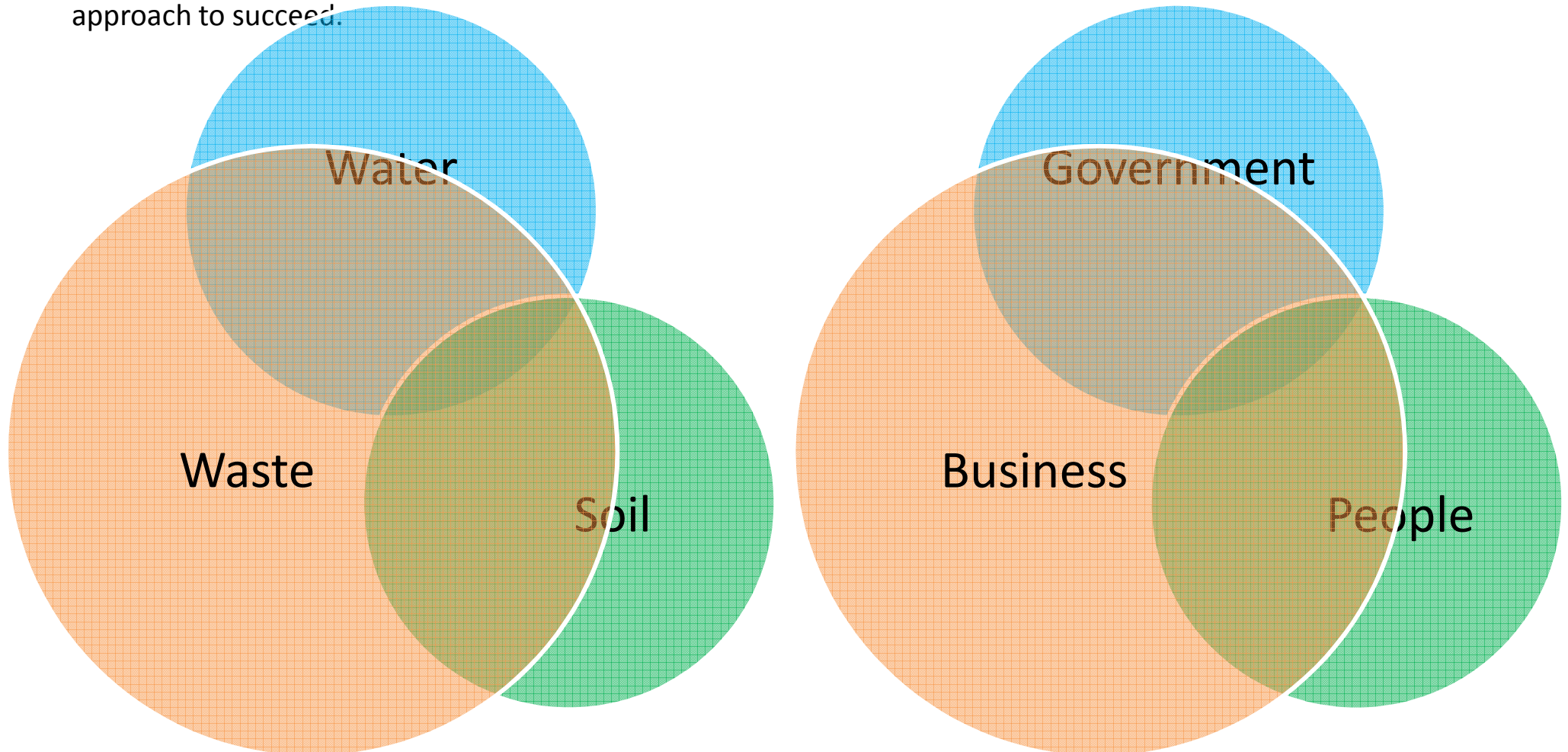




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Water-Soil-Waste Nexus: Waste-Business High Influence

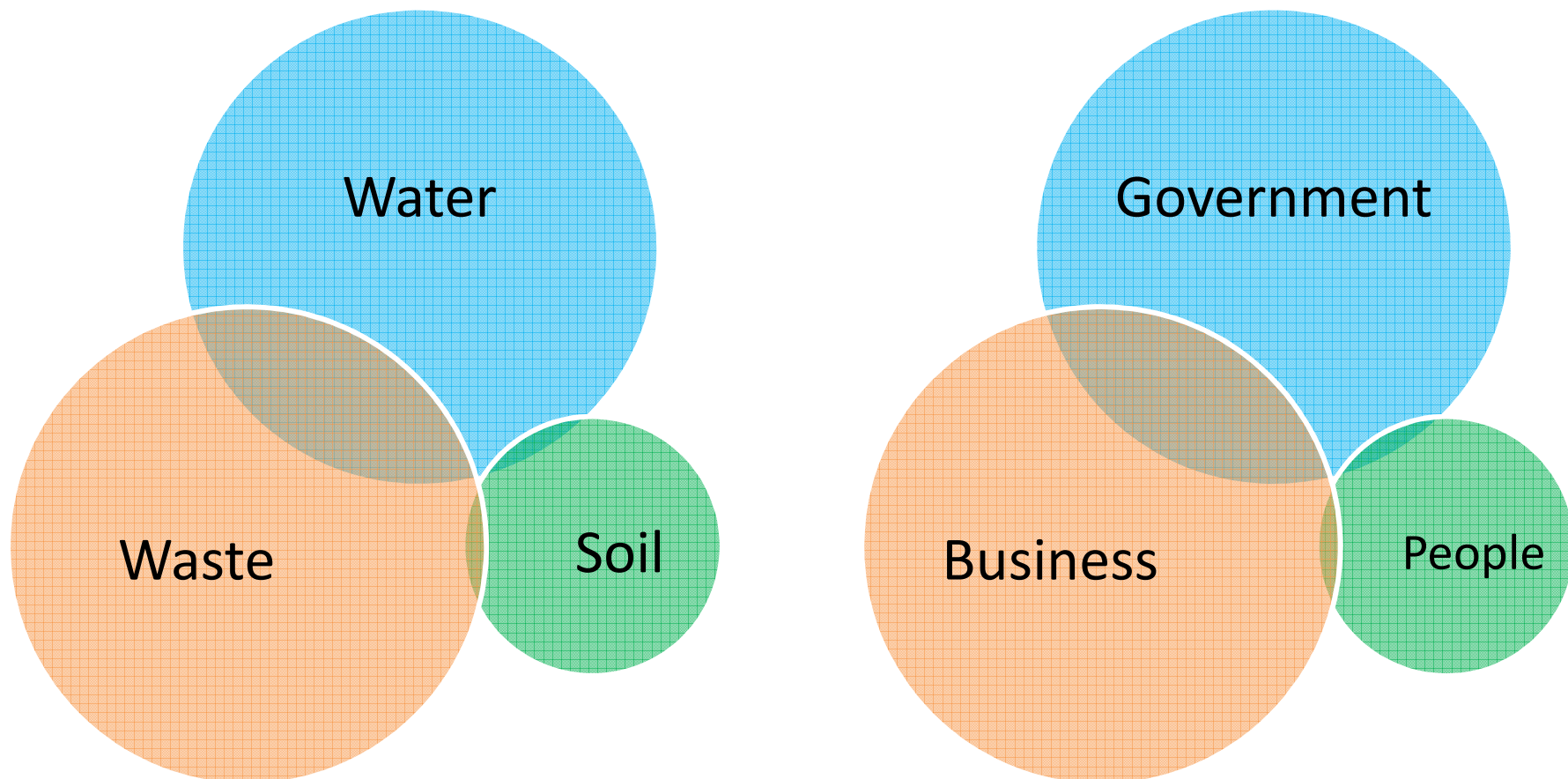
The balance between different elements is critically important in managing the nexus. The high production of waste will upset the balance of nature. Similarly, when the governance lean more towards favouring a business centred development, an imbalance in managing natural resources is most likely to take place. Controlling the business domination in governance systems, as in the dominant development model, would be critical for a nexus approach to succeed.





Water-Soil-Waste Nexus: Low Peoples Engagement

A rights based approach would argue that proponents of modifying the current development model are a continued effort to limit the role of people or marginalise them from their own resources. Figure below would imply that despite growth through such initiatives, wellbeing of people would be very low and sustainability would be a remote possibility.





Can the nexus guide us through a transition towards sustainability?

- Change “unsustainable consumption and production habits” and adopt **“sustainable lifestyles and livelihoods”**.
- Move from mere “efficiency” focus to **‘sufficiency’** based ‘sustainability’ paradigms
- Replace the growth based economic development model with **“sustainable economies”**
- Propagate an **“equity”** based world order
- Create **‘wellbeing & happiness for all’**
- Cultivate **‘mindfulness’**



“A new world order is emerging, but the people are not involved in designing of it as well. A better world order needs to be created upon the mindful aspirations of the people; and should essentially be based on equitable opportunities for all to find peace, prosperity, sustainability, wellbeing and happiness.” *de Zoysa (2009)*



Conclusions and Way Forward

- A nexus approach to the sustainable management of water, soil and waste needs to be further analysed in its potential contributions to a profound global transformation.
- The linkages between the sustainable management of water, soil and waste should be able to relate to the broader nexus between social equity, environmental sustainability and economic prosperity.
- As the current international programmes seeking to evolve a post 2015 agenda and sustainable development goals (SDGs), the nexus initiatives could provide strategic pathways towards finding a convergent outcome between the two processes.
- The efforts of a nexus approach should endeavour to create greater inclusive processes of resource governance towards sustainability.
- Therefore the nexus must connect the people, all stakeholders, effectively and adequately to ensure that sustainability initiatives are inclusive and equitable.



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Thank you!



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