

The Dashboard Theory of Sustainability & the Concept of *Metricspheres* It Entails

A Brief Introduction By
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The Concept of Metricspheres

- A term we have adapted* to refer to the *measurement environments of organizations and other human social systems*, which include:
 - The tools, methods and metrics they use to measure, manage, and assess their social, economic and environmental impacts, either for internal or external use
 - Their measurement-related people, process and technology infrastructures
 - Any of the above as applied to not only their own internal operations, but to those of their external up- and/or downstream partners' activities as well (supply chains, customers, communities, etc.)

* While the term *metricsphere* has been used before in a *Business Intelligence and analytics* context, it is not clear whether it has been used as broadly as we do here to refer to the entire measurement environment of an organization or human social system, including not only the tools used to assess the internal operations and impacts of a collective, but also of its external suppliers, customers, communities, sectors or what have you.



A Dashboard Theory of Sustainability

- In 1964 while working at NASA, the British scientist, James Lovelock, put forward the idea that in order for life to exist on a planet, its atmosphere would have to display certain chemical and thermodynamic properties both caused by, and supportive, of life
- Having detected no such conditions in the Martian atmosphere, Lovelock concluded Mars was lifeless
 - A claim now widely accepted as scientifically true
 - A theory that also marked the beginning of the development of Lovelock's Gaia Theory



A Dashboard Theory (cont.)

- Just as Lovelock was able to deduce the absence of life on Mars by simply observing the absence of specific conditions in the atmosphere ...
 - So can we infer the absence of sustainability in organizations and other human social systems by the content of their *metricspheres*!
- Metricspheres, in particular, that are devoid of *context-based tools, methods and metrics* will almost always indicate the absence of ground-level sustainability in the same places
 - In order to function sustainably, an organization must be using the kinds of context-based tools, methods, and metrics (**dashboards**) that make it possible for its managers to assess their sustainability performance



A Dashboard Theory (cont.)

- The *Dashboard Theory of Sustainability* provides us with two insights of vital importance:
 1. Sustainability in the conduct of human affairs is highly improbable, if not impossible, in the absence and non-use of context-based tools, methods and metrics by organizations or other human social systems
 2. Improvements in the sustainability performance of organizations and human social systems cannot, in fact, be achieved unless such context-based tools, methods and metrics are being used
- Among the most basic sustainability strategies or interventions to be employed in an organization or other human social system, then, is to be sure that such a context-based dashboard exists!



Returning to the Gaia Analogy

- The first insight:
 - Gaia Theory: Life on a planet is highly improbable, if not impossible, in the absence of specific *atmospheric* conditions
 - Dashboard Theory: Sustainability in a human social system is highly improbable, if not impossible, in the absence of specific *metricspheric* conditions
- The second insight:
 - Gaia Theory: Life on a planet cannot even begin to form or evolve unless such atmospheric conditions exist
 - Dashboard Theory: Sustainability in a human social system cannot even begin to form or evolve unless such *metricspheric* conditions exist

In order for sustainability to be possible, context-based measurement must be in use!



Thank you!

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Foreword by Sir Ian Cheshire

The MultiCapital Scorecard



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