

Reos Review

SDG EDITION 2018

Transformative Approaches to the SDGs

“The SDGs are a disruptive agenda, whether or not you use that word. This isn’t business-as-usual and status quo. To the extent that it is, it’s a fiction. Let’s not discover in 2030 that we didn’t mean it.” - Kate Gilmore, OHCHR



Mille Bojer
Director
Reos Partners



Through several multi-stakeholder projects over the last year, the Reos Partners team has had the opportunity to delve into the substance of the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). Through this work, we have realized that the SDGs are not just

another set of international policy goals. Rather, they represent a shared vision for humanity and a new mental model for development.

We have also understood that the SDGs are more than a set of colorful boxes, each with a theme heading. Each goal has a set of associated targets and indicators to deepen the meaning of the goal and to guide transformative action. It is when we look at

this deeper level, at the mindset behind the SDGs and at the actual implementation of the agenda, that the urgency of transformative approaches (such as those applied by Reos Partners and others around the world) becomes clear.

The Mental Model of the SDGs

The mental model underlying the SDGs is different from that of their predecessor, the Millennium

Development Goals (MDGs), and from the mindset with which most institutions are wired.

First, while the MDG mindset focused on the “problems” of “developing countries” and how the “developed world” could “help,” the SDGs are a set of global challenges that are common to us all and are present everywhere to varying degrees. This is the **Universality** principle. It finally breaks with North-South

[> read page 2](#)

> continued from page 1

thinking, which was outdated a long time ago but which is still very pervasive. This new approach requires us to acknowledge that we are all part of shared challenges and that we all have expertise and leadership to bring.

Second, if you read through the 17 goals and their associated targets, you will notice the two most common words are “**for all.**” These two words reflect the “leave no one behind” principle. This principle is a break from the mindset that some people are dispensable, that progress that leaves a certain percentage of people behind is acceptable.

Third, the SDGs are **indivisible.** They all depend on each other, which demands a systemic and holistic approach. This is of course the reality of the world – everything is connected, but this explicit recognition of complexity from the United Nations is refreshing. The possibility of drawing uncommon connections and the

permission and stimulus to work across divides and differences is liberating. Indivisibility is not about everyone working on everything, but about everyone working in an interconnected way.

Finally, in relation to **accountability**, the SDGs represent an opportunity for a new social contract, where the focus is not on accountability from “South” to “North,” nor from “recipients” to “donors.” Rather, the focus is on accountability from leaders to their people, and from people to each other. This implies a shift in power structures and is an invitation for all of society to engage and share responsibility for reaching the goals, each with our contribution.

The SDG mindset isn’t philosophical dreaming. It deserves contemplation, slowing down, digestion, dialogue, and of course conscious practice. Every day, I see small things that we would do differently if we were really thinking this way – if we

really meant it. Many individuals working in the realm of the SDGs are buying in to these ideas but get stuck in habits, comfort zones, or structures that aren’t designed along these principles. The good news is that there are processes that can help put this shift in practice.

Transformative Approaches for the SDGs

Steve Waddell, author of “Change for the Audacious” and leader of the SDG Transformations Forum, argues that the SDGs require a new and deeper form of change and the development of “transformation systems” (see his article in this Review). Through our work on the SDGs and working with the SDG Lab in Geneva (www.sdglab.ch) we have found that many of the 169 SDG targets associated with the 17 goals require re-imagination, new linkages, and shifts in rules, mindsets, narratives, and power structures. In other words, they require transformative approaches.

In this Review, we have featured 8 case studies that illustrate some of the projects that Reos Partners is involved in that we believe represent transformative approaches towards the SDGs. These projects bring together profoundly diverse groups to shift mindsets and narratives, connect across their different interests and logics, and experiment with new approaches together. Learning from these cases and the work of many others, the challenge to us all is to explore how to support and create transformation to make the SDGs come to life.

The 2030 Agenda is entitled “*Transforming our World.*” What if we really meant it? We invite you to collaborate with us in facing the challenge of meeting this ambition.



The New Frontier: Transformations Systems



Photo Credit Rookuzz..



Steve Waddell
Lead Staff
SDG Transformations Forum

“Transformations systems” is a new concept for most people. Just as we have food systems to deliver food, we need transformations systems to realize appropriate responses to a whole range of issues and opportunities. Supporting the emergence of such systems is the focus of the SDG Transformations Forum.

The Forum uses the word “transformations” in quite a specific way. “Incremental change” occurs within current rules (eg: opening a new Starbucks) and “reform change” involves new structures and rules (eg: policy reform, restructuring); “transformation” is a paradigm shift with radical innovation and fundamental change in mindsets, power and goals (eg.: from disregard of nature to nurturing nature). As a whole process, transformation moves from the experimentation to reform

to incremental change; of course, this is not an entirely linear or smooth process.

Transformations systems already exist, but they’re very weak and under-developed. They comprise the confusion of people, initiatives, programs, organizations and networks working for transformation. Around specific issues, these elements, their relationships and their roles can be mapped. Their focus is to transform the status quo. Of course organizationally there can be many overlaps – a company may be producing within the status quo, and at the same time have an initiative that is experimenting with transformation. This happens often with energy companies, for example, moving towards zero carbon emissions.

Transformation systems evolved around the marriage equality transformation in the US. They included those emphasizing “collaboration” such as with religious-gay marriage coalitions; “entrepreneurs” who simply “did it”

outside the law with private marriage ceremonies; “warriors” who took to the streets, legislative hallways and courts; and those who were in positions of power and influence such as heads of corporations and supreme court justices who directed there be support for marriage equality. This resulted in a fundamental redefinition of “marriage” and the goals of it as a social institution.

Very different questions and actions arise when approaching a change challenge as one of creating a powerful transformation system, rather than simply creating another transformation initiative. You ask questions about the structure of the system, duplication, unrealized synergies, inertia, gaps in effort, and conflicts.

The SDG Transformations Forum aims to steward emergence of powerful transformations systems. It is an open, multi-stakeholder platform working to remove impediments to transformation, such as inappropriate assessment methods, inadequate financing, fragmented capacities, and

inhibiting narratives. It does this by describing transformations systems (mapping, data visualization), connecting transformation activities so they can identify how to enhance the transformations systems they are part of (convenings of initiatives), and radical learning and acting where transformation agents experiment to strengthen transformations systems.

For more information visit <http://transformationsforum.net/> or contact Steve at swaddell@transformationsforum.net.



SDG
Transformations Forum
...accelerating our pathways to flourishing futures

Transformative approaches

Sustainable Fashion Lab



A model of a whole-value-chain approach to sustainable production, consumption, and social and economic development
2017 –on going

The Challenge

The fashion value chain in Brazil, as in other countries, faces social, economic and environmental sustainability challenges. These challenges are related to labor issues, social inequalities, consumption patterns, the product life cycle, quality of education and training, use of technology and the predominant business model.

The Approach

Bringing together 40 leaders in Brazil, among them garment workers, retail giants, the public sector, academia, associations and unions, institutes and foundations, international organizations, civil society organizations, media and others, Reos Partners has supported a process in which participants have so far created 4 scenarios for 2035 and are prototyping initiatives with systemic-level impact focused on the challenges listed above.

The Transformation

This process has created unlikely relationships across value chains in the fashion industry in Brazil, new understandings and new ideas, opening new possibilities for creating a fashion industry in Brazil that is environmentally, socially and economically sustainable and just.

Region

Brazil

Convenors

Abvtex - Associação Brasileira do Varejo Têxtil (Brazilian Textile Retail Association)
Abit - Associação Brasileira da Indústria Têxtil e de Confeção (The Brazilian Textile and Apparel Industry Association)
ILO - International Labor Organization

Funder

C&A Institute

Partners

Additional support provided by Pernambucanas and the International Labour Organization

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Land Reform Futures for South Africa



A model of how to build mutual understanding around a contentious issue in a divided society
2014-2016

The Challenge

Given the colonial and apartheid history of South Africa, land, its use, distribution and ownership have been contentious issues, and action towards land reform a frequent demand. How to enable effective land reform is a question on the minds of many South Africans. The approaches could serve to increase equitable outcomes, food security, and reinforce democratic institutions and processes.

The Approach

In order to help the country on a path towards land reform as a tool towards sustainable development, Reos Partners supported the Vumelana Advisory Fund to convene and undertake a Transformative Scenario Process to explore potential futures of land Reform in South Africa.

The process brought together policy makers, traditional leaders, Communal Property Institution (CPI) leaders, activists, business people, academics and consultants and provided a framework within which difficult conversations and debates could productively take place. These conversations led to decision-making about how to adapt to anticipated challenges and opportunities, and how to shape the future of land reform.

The Transformation

The four scenarios that were created tell stories of how South Africans might respond to the challenges and uncertainties they face about the future of land reform. The process of creating them led to new relationships between formerly divided players, new understandings of each other's perspectives, and the emergence of new considerations and approaches.

The scenarios are being referred to in current conversations in Parliament around land expropriation and a number of the scenario participants are working on proposals for supporting expropriation more effectively.

Region

South Africa

Convenor

Vumelana Advisory Fund

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Electricity Innovation Lab



A model of cross-sector innovation to shift an industry from business as usual to sustainability
2012- on going

The Challenge

Issues such as the growing need for reinvestment in electricity infrastructure, climate change, an increasing focus on grid resilience, and the changing cost of technologies that produce, deliver, and use electricity are fundamentally changing the U.S. electricity landscape. Shifting the electricity sector will require engagement and innovation across traditional institutional boundaries.

The Approach

e-Lab is an assembly of thought leaders and decision makers from across the U.S. electricity sector who focus on collaborative innovation to address critical institutional, regulatory, business, economic, and technical barriers to the economic deployment of distributed resources in the U.S. electricity sector. The lab brings these leaders together regularly and supports them to identify and undertake transformative initiatives together. It enables team members to regularly share learnings, best practices, and analysis; collaborate around key issues or needs; and conduct deep dives into research findings.

The Transformation

This multi-year Social Lab has created a critical structure for engagement and innovation across traditional institutional boundaries. The structures and processes of the lab are already generating new business models, policy approaches, and strategies as well as new beliefs and perspectives.

Region

United States

Convenor

Rocky Mountain Institute

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More information

www.rmi.org/our-work/electricity/elab-electricity-innovation-lab/

Inclusive Insurance Innovation Lab



A model of national innovation and cross-national learning to enable an industry to advance the SDGs and "leave no one behind"
2017-2018

The Challenge

Insurance protects against unforeseen losses and financial vulnerability and plays a vital role in promoting economic growth. Having access to insurance benefits can mean the difference between staying afloat or slipping into poverty in the face of an adverse event. Yet in most developing and emerging economies, insurance penetration rates are low and vast segments of the low-income population as well as micro and small businesses remain excluded from insurance. Many barriers stand in the way of providing good quality insurance to vulnerable people and businesses, leaving many around the world without access to options that can help them through crisis. The reasons can be found both on the supply and demand sides and may be intensified by the policy environment.

The Approach

Working with Reos Partners and the GIZ Global Leadership Academy, the Access to Insurance Initiative has convened teams in Albania, Ghana, Kenya and Mongolia to engage in a Social Lab with the aim of increasing the uptake of good quality insurance to vulnerable people and businesses. Each team consists of the regulator, private insurers, NGOs, consumer protection groups and insurance associations. The Lab process has involved national and international dialogues and analysis, innovation incubation, and prototyping. The innovations are implemented at national level, while the cross-national dialogues provide a stimulating space for learning and inspiration across contexts.

The Transformation

At the time of publication, the lab was midway through completion. Already, new relationships, narratives and leadership skills have been developed and knowledge sharing has taken place within and across country teams. It is expected that by the end of the lab, there will be innovations in place that have increased the resilience of vulnerable people and businesses in the four participant countries and that examples will have been generated that can inspire further action elsewhere.

Regions

Albania, Ghana, Kenya and Mongolia

Convenors

Global Leadership Academy – GIZ
Access to Insurance Initiative

Funder

GIZ

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Transformative Scenarios for Basic Education in Brazil



A model of multi-stakeholder dialogue to transform a national institutional system
2014-2017

The Challenge

Brazil's basic education system is struggling. Its 50 million students rank between 54th and 60th out of 65 countries on international tests, and grade repetition and drop-out are common. Further, many of the systemic problems in Brazil such as high levels of violence and youth incarceration and continuing gender, race and class inequality have roots in the failing education system.

The Approach

This project brought together a scenario team of 41 leaders in the field of education in Brazil to engage in dialogue about the different – and often conflicting – perspectives in order to develop transformative scenarios for the future of basic education in Brazil. Rather than aiming to build a negotiated pact or a common agenda among participants the scenario development process became a meeting point and a place for active listening including exploring conflicts and differences.

The Transformation

The scenarios provided new language, an invaluable rhetoric-free focal point, and a precedent of relationship within the sector. The scenarios have been used to enrich and stimulate discussion in many fora including schools and communities, regional and national conferences, and society at large. In doing so it has inspired, stimulated and informed strategies, decisions and actions in the field of education in Brazil.

Region

Brazil

Convenors

Ação Educativa (Educational Action)
Campanha Nacional pelo Direito à Educação (National Campaign for the Right to Education)
GIFE (Group of Corporate Institutes and Foundations)
Todos pela Educação (All for Education)
UNDIME (National Association of Municipal Education Managers)

Funders

C&A Institute
Itau Foundation
Telefonica Foundation
Unibanco Institute
Ação Educativa

More Information

www.cenarioseducacao2032.org.br/en/

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Mexicos Posibles



A model for advancing national dialogue in a highly complex environment
2015-2018

The Challenge

With high levels of crime, violence, and corruption many people in Mexico felt that they were in the midst of a national crisis of three compounding issues: inequality, insecurity and illegality.

The Approach

With the aim of working toward a Mexico where there is more equality, security and rule of law, a group of concerned Mexican leaders invited Reos Partners to design and facilitate a Transformative Scenarios Process (TSP) to consider possible futures, followed by a Social Lab to experiment with pathways to the desired future. This project gathered the perspectives of 180 people including Indigenous leaders, businesspeople, union leaders, politicians, government employees, artists and military leaders and brought together 90 leaders who had the desire to attend to the problematic reality from their different and complementary situations.

The Transformation

The TSP produced a set of 4 scenarios describing possible futures in Mexico which have generated insights and priorities for action leading to a variety of experiments designed to reduce illegality, inequality and insecurity at the local, regional and national levels. Through this process, plural and inter-systemic relationships emerged, including among actors who previously considered themselves “enemies”.

Region

Mexico

Convenors

Include CMM and Fundación Avina, among many other supporters

More Information

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The Future of the North Cauca Valley and Buenaventura, Colombia



A model for advancing implementation of a peace agreement in a post-conflict context
2017-2019

The Challenge

After decades of civil war, in 2016 a national peace accord was ratified officially ending the conflict in Colombia. However, many actors in the region of the North Cauca Valley and Buenaventura felt that accord alone would not be enough to bring peace and prosperity after years of conflict. They believed that they would need to develop new ways of being and doing in this new context.

The Approach

Working with Reos Partners, actors in the region, who have been on different sides of the armed conflict for decades, have undertaken a Transformative Scenario Process. This group has included farmers, landowners, Indigenous leaders, Afro-descendant leaders, the FARC, other political parties, as well as academic and business leaders. Following the scenarios process, and having understood what factors can and will impact the future of peace in the region, the group has now identified and begun to act on opportunities for action to create positive peace in the region.

Through this process, Reos Partners has supported the development of a team of Colombian facilitators to support this project and other regional peace projects around the country.

The Transformation

Still ongoing, this project has created four scenarios about possible futures in the region, which illuminate the need for action. The project has also generated initial connections between leaders in the region, some of whom were involved in armed conflict with one another previously. Further, by creating a local team of skilled facilitators, it has created an environment where other similar processes can take root and receive the support that they require.

Region

Southwestern Colombia

Convenor

Pontificia Universidad Javeriana de Cali, Colombia

Funder

Ford Foundation

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Emergency Aid Lab



A model of how to catalyze innovation and transform behaviour across an entire sector of similar institutions
2016 – on going

The Challenge

College affordability is an increasingly formidable challenge for many students in the United States. It is estimated that over three million students leave college annually in the United States due to a small, but time-critical financial crisis. Finding a way to help students to weather these short-term crises and remain in school is critical to enabling them to complete their education.

The Approach

In order to address this challenge, the Emergency Aid Lab is aiming to create a field of practice for effectively providing emergency aid to students to enable them to complete their studies. The Lab provides support to five U.S. colleges to fast-track research, design, and implementation of emergency financial aid innovations on their campuses. The innovations and learnings are being captured to create an Emergency Aid Lab Playbook, enabling a rapid scaling-up of effective solutions.

The Lab is also convening an Emergency Aid Community of Practice, which is a peer-to-peer community of emergency aid champions across the U.S. who are keen to connect with other institutions and partners, share learnings, and continuously evolve the EAL Playbook.

The Transformation

Prior to the Emergency Aid Lab U.S. colleges acted in isolation and provided ad-hoc emergency funds to students in need. Now there is a nascent, but growing number of campuses who are starting to develop integrated emergency aid programs to enable more students to continue studying despite short-term financial crises.

Region

USA

Funders

Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation

Participant Groups

University of Washington - Seattle (UW-S)
University of Washington - Tacoma (UW -T)
Lorain County Community College (LCCC)
Florida International University (FIU) Austin Community College (ACC) and a growing Community of Practice of 25+ other post secondary institutions.

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Using Transformative Scenarios Process to Deliver on SDG 14 in the Western Indian Ocean



Photo Credit Muhanned Al Nuaimy

Trisha Lerato Mpfu
Consultant
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The 220 million residents of the Western Indian Ocean (WIO) countries, 60 million of whom live in the coastal zone, derive more than US\$20.8 billion in economic benefits from the ocean each year — equivalent to the size of a national economy. But this value is under threat.

With increasing climate change impacts, rapidly growing populations, escalating investment and infrastructure projects, and rapid technology changes, there is a risk that poorly planned development will undermine and destroy the environment that supports so many subsistence-level and low-income communities in the coastal zones.

Faced with these challenges and uncertain futures, the

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Northern Mozambique Channel initiative (NMCi), consulting with national stakeholders through the Nairobi Convention, embarked on a process with Reos Partners to engage in a Transformative Scenario Process (TSP) on the future of the Northern Mozambique Channel, and more broadly, of Western Indian Ocean region. The goal of the process was to guide future decision-making to support achievement of the SDGs, focusing on SDG 14 “*Life Below Water*” (*Conserve and sustainably use the oceans, seas and marine resources for sustainable development*).

The Process

Through a process which involved national cross-sector consultations, dialogue interviews, regional workshops,

and engagement in United Nations-led global initiatives, a diverse group of stakeholders in the region developed their official commitments and action plans regarding SDG 14 while also engaging in a TSP. Being conducted in tandem, the national processes have been informed by insights and perspectives that have emerged during the TSP.

Jointly produced by a group of “unlike-minded” people, the scenarios are an important product. At the same time, longer-term outcomes include stronger collaboration and shared understanding between influential role-players who have historically worked in parallel or at cross-purposes.

The TSP has built on a rich history of regional projects and planning in the Nairobi Convention, including on marine pollution and marine ecosystem and fisheries management. The imperative

now is to use that body of knowledge and the mandate given by the SDGs for transformative governance to embed the SDGs and sustainability in the new drives toward blue economic development across the African maritime states and globally.

We hope that by bringing this knowledge and these risks to life through the TSP and highlighting risks and potential outcomes through the scenarios themselves, we are supporting national leaders, economic sector leaders, and international and multi-sectoral actors lead the way to success on the SDGs — the true pathway for a sustainable blue economy.

Updates on the scenarios can be seen at www.cordioea.net/nmc/scenarios.

Transformative Scenarios

While most planning methodologies focus on adapting to the future, the transformative scenario process seeks to also shape it. This structured yet creative method, involving multiple events over several months, helps diverse actors discover what they can and must do.



The SDG Solution Space: Innovation and Learning in the Heart of International Geneva



François Grey
Project Manager
The Tsinghua-Geneva Initiative,
University of Geneva

When I moved back to Geneva in 2014, after several years in Beijing and then New York, I found the city buzzing about the SDGs - 17 goals, with their hundreds of targets and indicators carefully crafted to be as inclusive as possible of all nations. Over the three years that followed, I've worked with a determined and committed team to build the SDG Solution Space, an innovation hub and learning center for the SDGs, which has taken root in the heart of International Geneva.



The choice of location for the SDG Solution Space is essential. It is within walking distance of the offices of dozens of UN agencies, international organizations and NGOs. This enables us to collaborate and indeed share the space with many like-minded people working in and with these organizations. Reos Partners are one outstanding example of this new spirit of collaboration, inspired by SDG 17, connecting silos of expertise to address challenges that transcend them.

The Geneva Tsinghua Initiative

The Geneva Tsinghua Initiative (GTI), which runs out of the Solution Space, was officially launched in 2017 at Davos. The concept was clear: use International Geneva as a source of challenges and mentors for a novel and comprehensive challenge-based learning programme for the SDGs: use

China as a model – for better or for worse – of how the developing world needed to innovate in order to achieve sustainable development.

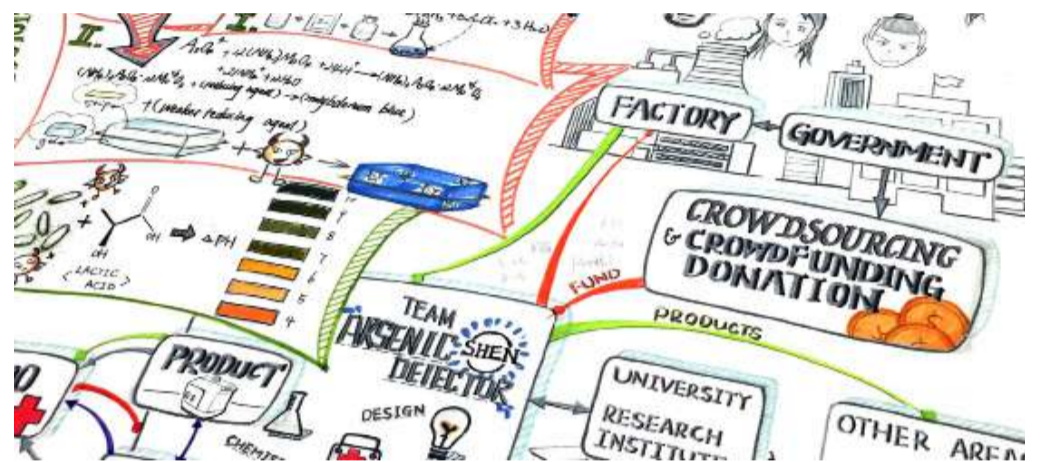
Since then, a two-month SDG Summer School with 24 students has been established, as has an initial SDG Master programme on both campuses – Geneva and Tsinghua. This autumn, the Master will become a dual degree – the first of its kind for University of Geneva with a foreign university, accepting up to 60 students on both campuses.

On the Shoulders of Giants

One of the biggest inspirations for the SDG Solution Space, and the Geneva Tsinghua Initiative, comes from Geneva's past. It is Jean Piaget, a pioneer in the field of child developmental psychology, and University of Geneva professor for over 50 years, who was a fervent advocate for rethinking traditional models of education. One of his oft-quoted (and misquoted) sayings is:

“The principal goal of education is to create men and women who are capable of doing new things, not simply of repeating what other generations have done—men and women who are creative, inventive, and discoverers.”

While much of what happens in schools and universities today still resembles the sort of classroom-based lecturing that Piaget was railing against, with its emphasis on rote learning and exams, change is in the air. One reason is digital technologies are posing an existential challenge to conventional education institutions. Waves of more participative, challenge-based, and interactive learning formats



are gradually altering the shape of higher education, and to some extent its purpose, too. This is a slow process. But there is one reason, that the SDGs bring into focus, why we need to redouble our efforts. For the planet, time is running out. We need to find solutions, fast. Another quote attributed to Piaget captures this well:

“Only education is capable of saving our societies from possible collapse, whether violent, or gradual.”

It is this call to action that, I hope, will imbue the SDG Solution Space and its denizens in the coming years with a sense of urgency. And while size is not everything, I also hope that the concepts on which my colleagues and I are building this space prove scalable. Already, more ambitious plans are brewing to transform the area around the SDG Solution Space into an innovation park for all of International Geneva. And we are reaching out to other parts

of the world, to encourage other SDG Solution Spaces to take root and bloom.

When we started to conceive of the Geneva SDG Solution Space, there were fifteen years to complete the audaciously ambitious goals of the UN's Agenda 2030. Today, as the space celebrates its first anniversary, there are only twelve years to go. It is time to think big. It is time to move fast. Above all, it is time to join forces with like-minded initiatives – like Reos Partners – to ensure that the impact of the SDG Solution Space is felt well beyond its own walls.

A Theory for Transformational Change

Reos Partners works with a wide diversity of multi-stakeholder initiatives that share a high-level “Theory of Change”, which outlines the fundamental logic of our work. In our experience, there are five ingredients that are required for a transformative Reos Partners process:

A whole-system team. The first prerequisite is a team of influential, insightful actors representative of the system’s many facets.

Experienced guides. Collaboration on problems characterized by overwhelming complexity, confusion, and conflict requires expert facilitation.

A strong container. In order to experiment with new ways of acting, relating, and being, the team needs a structured space to do their work that is suitably set up—physically, psychologically, and politically.

Requisite resources. Social, human, and financial resources must be available at a scale that matches the scale of the challenge.

A generative approach. A creative, experimental method that engages team members’ whole selves—head, heart, and hands—enables breakthrough results.

The events, processes and platforms we host generate not only new innovative initiatives

but also relationships, insights, capacities, and commitments among leading stakeholders. We believe it is this set of outputs together, and the interactions among them, which generate movement in a previously stuck system towards transformation.

Our Theory of Change

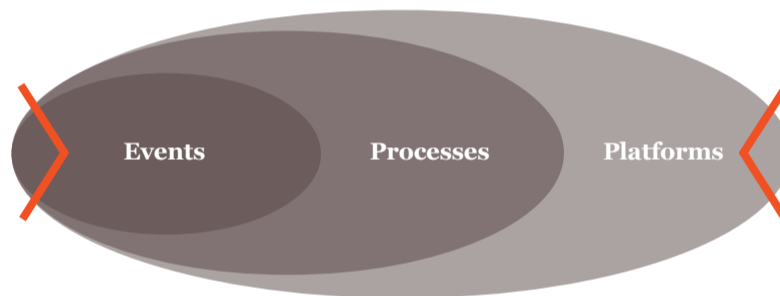
1. Starting Point

A diverse coalition of leaders thinks that their situation is unacceptable or unsustainable and that it cannot be transformed unilaterally, directly, or immediately

3. Methods

2. What is needed

Whole-system team
Experienced guides
Strong container
Requisite resources
Generative approach



4. What is produced

Relationships
Insights
Capacities
Commitments
Initiatives

5. What emerges

The situation has been transformed through new alliances, narratives, approaches, policies, and/or institutions

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This edition of the Reos Review was published on the occasion of the 2018 Reos Partners Learning Festival, held in Geneva, Switzerland. The Learning Festival gathered 70 convenors and facilitators of multi-stakeholder partnerships from 15 countries on 5 continents to meet and learn from each other and from the Geneva ecosystem.

Reos Review concept developed by Mia Eisenstadt and Zaid Hassan

Original layout by Emily Wilkinson

Format of this edition by Jan Van Mol

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