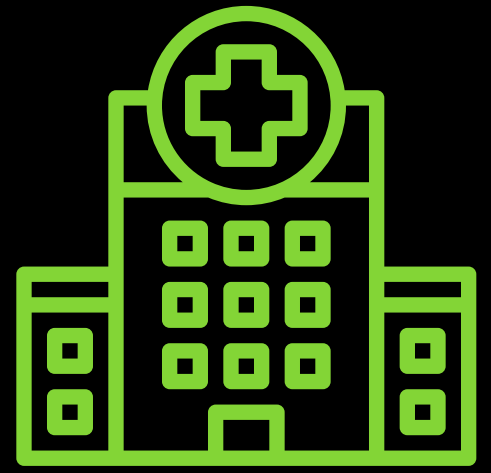


LEADERSHIP: INSIGHTS ON EQUITY, DIVERSITY & INCLUSION



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JEDI'S OF THE ENVIRONMENT: FOUNDATIONS OF THE ANTI-ECOCIDE PEACEKEEPING MISSION

If you are thinking of the Jedi Knights of Star Wars fame, you are not entirely off the mark. Just as the fabled knights were peacekeepers of the universe who avoided resorting to violence (1), as healthcare and ecosystems stewards we are tasked with the urgent mission of reducing our industry's impact on the environment in as judicious a manner as possible. How do we do so in a meaningful and judicious way? We do so by focusing on a rudimentary fact: there is no sustainability without justice, equity, diversity and inclusion (JEDI) as the foundation to any work on sustainability. How can there be sustainability when the very diversity that belies the ecosystem is not an intentional component of remedial activities?

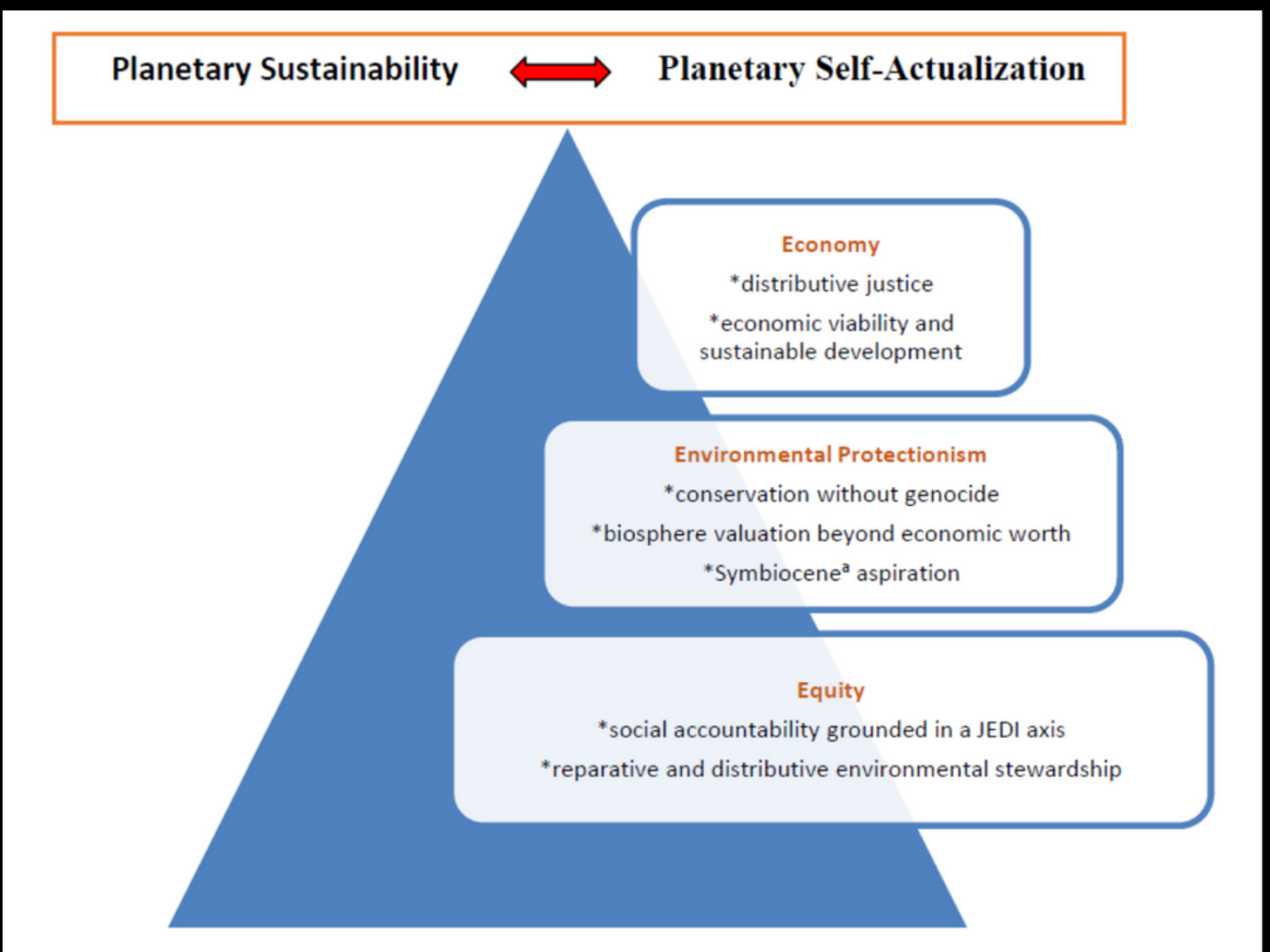


Figure 1: Reimagining sustainability using Maslow's hierarchy: sustainability is a dynamic peak that can only be transcended through a foundation of equitably distributed risks, resources, benefits and intergenerational transmission of planetary responsibility.

a: Symbiocene, coined by Albrecht (3) to describe the collective cultivation of systems that promote social and ecological homeostasis.

Sustainability is often diagrammatically illustrated as being founded on three pillars: equity, environment, and economy (Figure 1). The equity pillar covers social equity, specifically the principles of justice, equity, diversity and inclusion (JEDI). When we consider the resources we have been privileged to extract and exploit, we should pause and consider at whose expense this occurred. Who was here before us, and is our use of the ecosystem equitable, inclusive and judicious?

When we consider the historical stewards of this environment, the stalwart Indigenous groups that nurtured this land and learned its ways of regeneration, operated on principles of taking without unduly stripping, and practiced ways of putting back enough for successive generations (2), we stand to be humbled. Yet, this historic ecosystem stewardship has not been given its fair due.

How is it that some groups consistently reap the benefits whilst others unfairly bear the burden of the environmental depletion and destruction that entails economic productivity? Redressing this balance is essential to any work on sustainability, particularly in examining sustainability from a healthcare industry lens. Human health is interdependent on planetary health. As such, health equity is only truly achievable when matched by environmental sustainability.

Specifically, sustainability is rooted in environmental justice as the equitable use and conservation of resources commands acknowledgment and action on the following if we are to eradicate health inequities:

- 1) Recognition of diversity and inclusion as the route to impactful and just innovation
- 2) Respect for historical stewardship and belief in the retained knowledge and skills of Indigenous nations as historical stewards (2)
- 3) A reflexive practice of social accountability and social equity as the normative source of environmental innovation
- 4) Inclusivity as the starting point to any environmental initiative in order to avert inequitable distribution of environmental benefits and risks.

The work of sustainability cannot be successful when it replicates colonial ways of unequally distributing risks and conferring benefits (2). As the healthcare industry's chief mission is to bridge inequities, the process of reducing the industry's carbon footprint must utilize a social accountability lens, lest we act contrary to our responsibility as JEDI warriors against ecocide.

References:

1. <https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Jedi>. January 2, 2022
2. Solomonian L, Di Ruggiero E. The critical intersection of environmental and social justice: a commentary. *Global Health*. 2021 Mar 25;17(1):30. doi: 10.1186/s12992-021-00686-4.
3. Albrecht GA. Exiting the anthropocene and entering the symbiocene. *Minding Nat*. 2016;9(2):12-6.

