VALTIONEUVOSTO
STATSRÅDET

Holistic sustainability assessment in Finland - lesson learned

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Holistic sustainability assessment

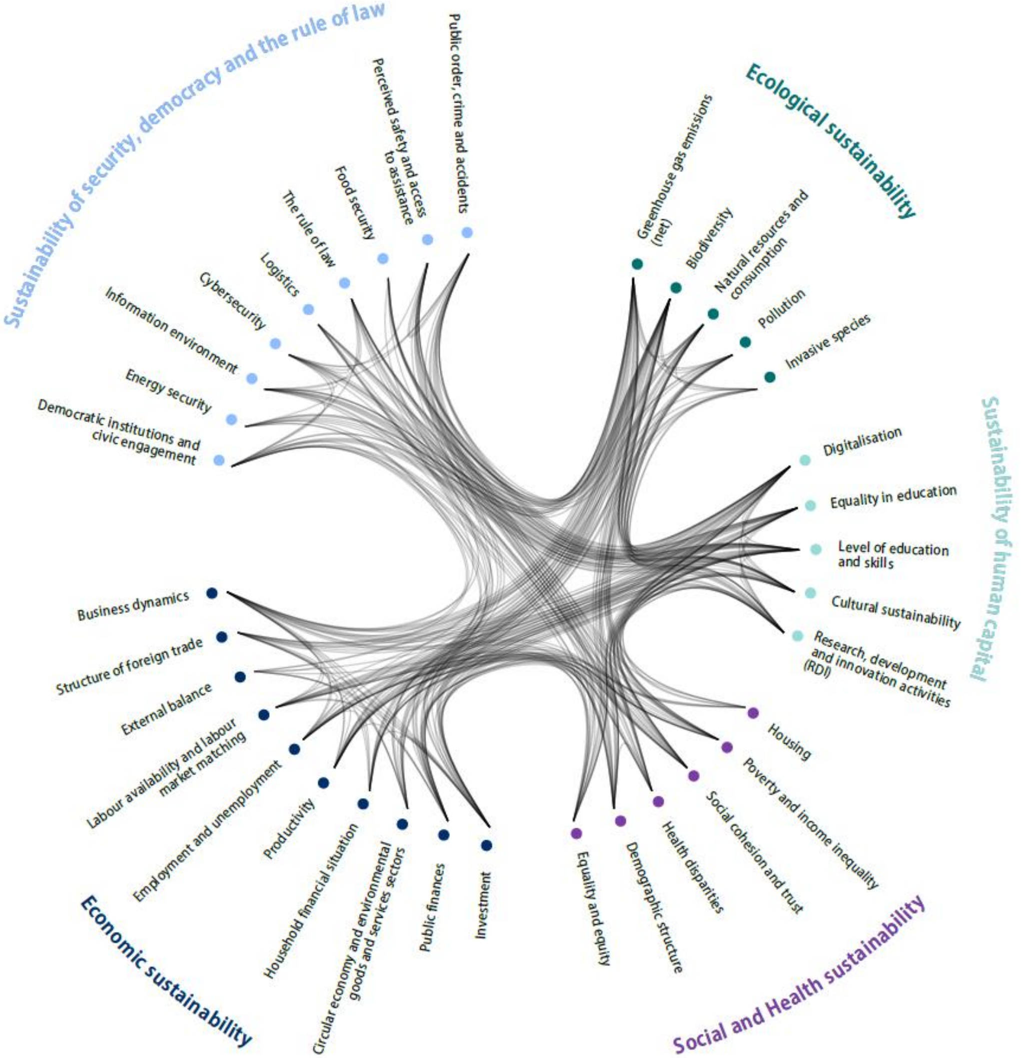
First report on the sustainability of the Finnish society from 5 perspectives:

1) Evaluates the current state of sustainability challenges and their development trends over the past decade;

2) Insight into possible developments over the next 5-10 years for all 5 sustainability dimensions and for 2 special themes. Focus on risks and opportunities.

3) Proposes 42 directions for solutions prepared by civil servants.

Based on available data, research publications and scenario analyses and on extensive cooperation with research institutes, ministries and other experts. Assessment utilizes system analysis methods.



Topics covered broader than in traditional sustainability/SDG work

Sustainability dimensions (5) divided to 36 smaller sub-areas = Assessment framework

Sub-areas

Ecological sustainability	Human capital and cultural sustainability	Social and Health sustainability	Economic sustainability	Sustainability of security, democracy and the rule of law
Greenhouse gas emissions (net), incl. ETS, effort sharing, LULUCF, and consumption based emissions	Level of education and skill	Demographic structure	Public finances	Democratic institutions and civic engagement
Natural resources and consumption, incl. use of natural resources, circularity rate	Equality in education	Poverty and income inequality	Productivity	The rule of law
Biodiversity, incl. protected areas, endangered species and habitats	Research, development and innovation activities (RDI)	Equality and equity	Structure of foreign trade	Public order, crime and accidents
Pollution, incl. air, water, and ground pollution	Digitalisation	Social cohesion and trust	External balance	Perceived safety and access to assistance
Invasive species	*Cultural sustainability*	Health disparities	Investments	Cybersecurity
		Housing	Household financial situation	Information environment
			Employment and unemployment	Logistics
			Labour availability and labour market matching	Food security
			Business dynamics	Energy security
			Circular economy and environmental goods and services sectors	

Key findings on development trends of past decade

Development in **35 sub-areas were evaluated** in comparison to formal or informal targets (such as the UN Paris or Kunming-Montreal agreements), or in comparisons to international peer countries. Cultural sustainability was not evaluated, nor external security.

Improving / good	Mixed / stagnant	Undesirable
6	14	15

Improving / good

- RDI
- Digitalisation
- Energy security
- Business dynamics
- …

Mixed / stagnant

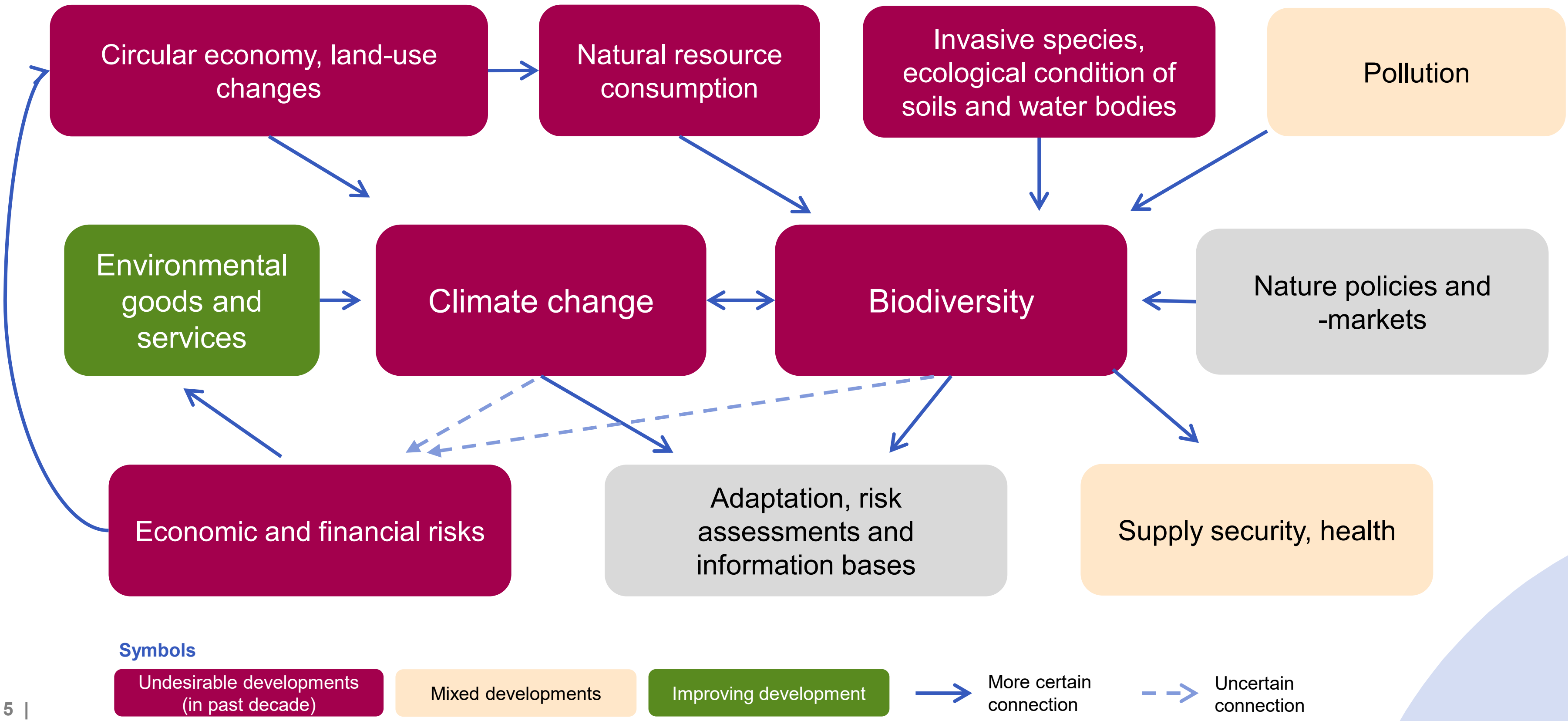
- GHG emissions, pollution
- Food security
- Equality and equity, income and health disparities
- Public order, perceived safety and democratic institutions
- …

Undesirable

- Natural resources and consumption, biodiversity, invasive species
- Public finances, productivity, investments
- Level of education and skills
- Demographic structure
- Cybersecurity and information environment
- …

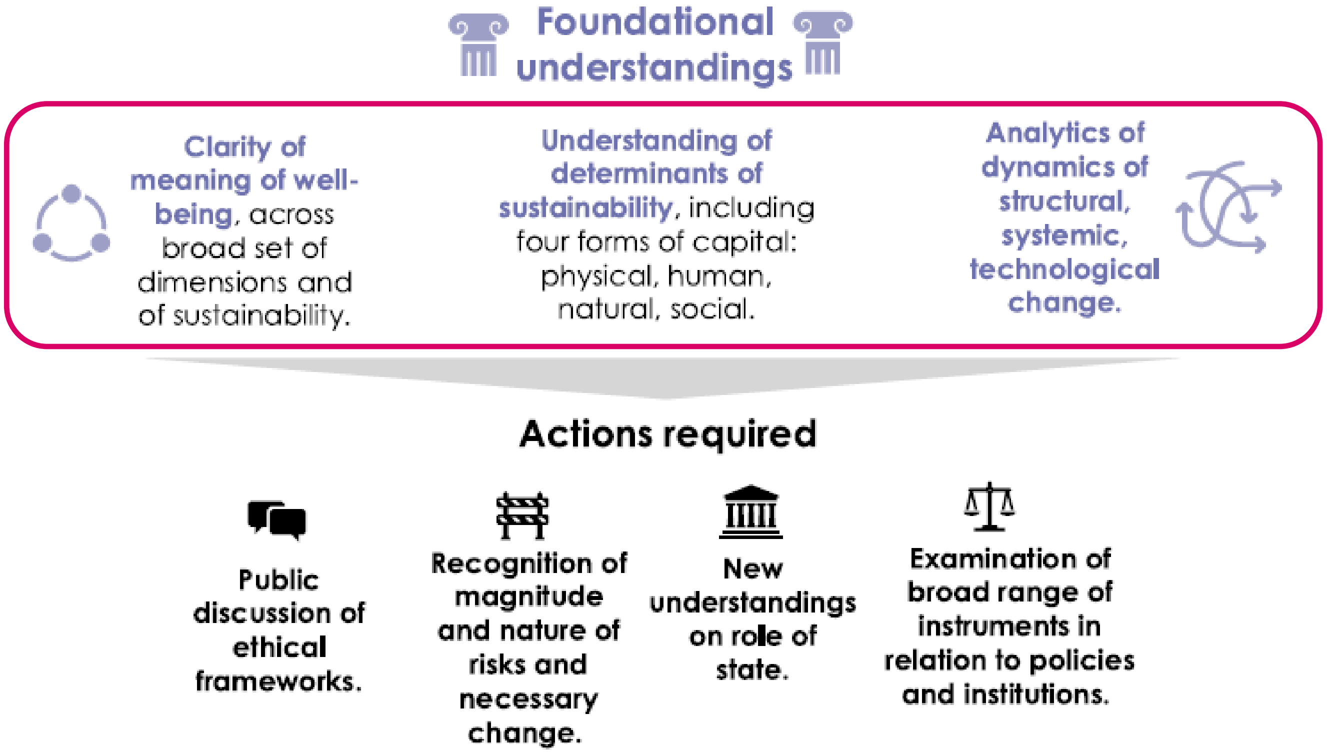
In comparison: Finland has reached 86% of SDGs

Examples of risks and opportunies over next 5-10 years: Biodiversity



Comparison: New Stern review (2025, p. 409)

Figure 11.1: An overarching research agenda for economics and the social sciences



Source: Author's elaboration.

Source: Stern (2025). *The Growth Story of the 21st Century: The Economics and Opportunity of Climate Action.* LSE Press.

Lessons learned from sustainability assessment

1. Importance of strong collaboration models and networks
2. Systemic and multidisciplinary approach for the work
3. New (5 dimensional) framework provides a new view on the situation
4. Organisational design of work and communications
5. Considerations on how the work/results can impact decision-making in practice

Link to the holistic sustainability report: