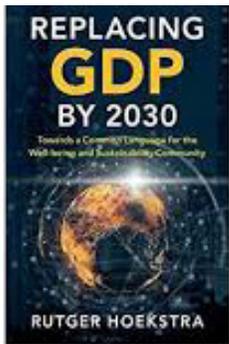


# “Replacing GDP by 2030: Towards a common language for the Well-being and Sustainability Community”

**Speaker: Rutger Hoekstra**, Founder of MetricsForTheFuture.com and author of the book “Replacing GDP by 2030: Towards a common language for the Well-being and Sustainability Community”

On April 30th, the CIES had the pleasure to welcome to our e-seminar Rutger Hoekstra, Founder of MetricsForTheFuture.com and author of the book “Replacing GDP by 2030: Towards a common language for the Well-being and Sustainability Community”, published by Cambridge University Press.



Rutger Hoekstra first portrayed a broad picture of the emergence of Gross Domestic Product (GDP) in our society. Although only nine countries used this indicator in 1900, the concept became increasingly popular in the second half of the century and today more than 200 countries are using GDP to measure economic growth. GDP, however, is a very limited tool to measure economic activity and is not a metric of how successful

societies are. It fails to measure the differences between the qualitative and quantitative aspects of economic growth, and is for instance poorly suited to track digitalization and globalization. More importantly, GDP does not allow to take into account well-being, sustainability, and equity.

In his book, Rutger Hoekstra compares various alternative indicators to include well-being and sustainability. Economists themselves have proposed the metric of Genuine Progress Indicator (GPI), which includes environmental and social factors. The evolution of GPI over time suggests that society has not been making progress since the 1970s. In addition, the GPI presents some important limits as it emphasizes monetary values.

Instead, Rutger Hoekstra’s core argument is that we need to think more broadly about our narrative and develop a common language to promote an alternative set of indicators. The environment, economy, and society share the same features and language in relation to stock/flow accounting, networks, and limitations. Such a harmonized system can be created through a system of accounts with four layers. The first one includes the environmental system, the second one is the society, the third layer is the economy, and the last layer involves distribution. Policy organizations, such as the UN or the World Bank, can take a leading role in changing our narratives beyond GDP.

## About the Centre for International Environmental Studies

Established in 2010, the Centre for International Environmental Studies (CIES) is the Graduate Institute’s focal point for research on environmental issues. The centre is dedicated to the better understanding of the social, legal, economic and political facets of global problems related to the environment, with an emphasis on the international dimension and the North-South relations.

The centre addresses complex problems such as climate change, biodiversity, food security, energy, natural resources and development. CIES’s mission is to conduct high level academic research to improve the quality of decision making in public and private spheres. This goal is achieved by creating a platform for researchers to conduct interdisciplinary research on the environment, by providing training to PhD students in specialized areas of research and by disseminating research results through outreach activities targeted to academic experts and policymakers.

CIES is part of a number of academic networks and partners with academic institutions and stake-holders throughout the world. Located in the heart of International Geneva, CIES regularly hosts workshops and conferences that bring together researchers and policy-makers.