

UNST 124g fall 2011

force of nature

1 introduction

In his Transition Towns talk, Rob Hopkins (2009) suggests that there are four kinds of stories about the future

- business as usual
- hitting the wall
- technology can fix everything
- transition

The last of those options is the one he clearly prefers to tell. Jaime Lerner's *urban acupuncture* falls into this category as well. Keep these story types in mind as you read the *Economist* article, The Anthropocene: A man-made world, and Rockström *et al.* (2009) on planetary boundaries. You should also keep in mind that the Hopkins' talk and story list are given and heard from the point of view of the developed world. Do the same principles and narratives apply in the developing world?

The review article written by Johan Rockström and colleagues represents the work of a large research group at Stockholm University, the Stockholm Resilience Centre. You may wish to visit the Centre website, <http://www.stockholmresilience.org/>.

2 assignment

1. If you have not already done so, write an outline of the article from the *Economist*. What are the challenges and opportunities outlined by its authors? Where does this article fit in Rob Hopkin's schema (is it optimistic, pessimistic, or something else)?
2. List and write a short description of each of the *planetary boundaries* identified by Rockström *et al.* (2009).
3. The article by Rockström and colleagues is written from a scientific perspective while the *Economist* article is written from an economic perspective. Do the two articles

address the same set of climate and sustainability issues? Identify the similarities and differences in the two presentations.

3 references

editorial. (2011). The Anthropocene: A man-made world. *The Economist*, 399 (8735), 81-83. <http://www.economist.com/node/18741749>

Hopkins, R. (2009). Transition to a world without oil. TED Conferences. http://www.ted.com/talks/rob_hopkins_transition_to_a_world_without_oil.html, accessed 31 March 2012.

Rockström, J., and 29 others. (2009). A safe operating space for humanity. *Nature*, 461, 472-475.