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HOW TO ALIGN GLOBAL CONCERNS AND LOCAL ISSUES?

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This themed issue titled “Global Concerns, Local Issues” is part of the collaboration between the *Journal of Management for Global Sustainability* and the Finnish-ASEAN Academic Platform for Sustainable Development (FAPSU) project run by the Finnish University Network for Asian Studies at the University of Turku, Finland. In the previous volume of the *Journal*, it was noted how great editorials are for allowing personal reflection. Building on this remark, this editorial and the theme of this issue are based largely on my experiences in working for the FAPSU project and my disciplinary background in social science, in general, and anthropology, in particular. I discuss in particular the relation of two themes, namely, the plurality of perceptions and manifestations of sustainability and the development of collaborative international sustainability education.

Our project had the pleasure of visiting our partners at the Ateneo de Manila University in December of 2022. This visit was very enlightening as it offered a brief but very concrete experience of contextual realities in the Metro Manila area. I remember sitting in a car that was driving us from the airport to our hotel and my jetlagged eyes scanning the passing scenery. Everywhere I looked, there were cars, cars, and more cars on the many roads such that the constant flow of traffic looked like giant snakes intertwining on many levels before departing into separate directions. This density of vehicles is explained partly by the fact that Metro Manila has approximately 13.48 million people inside an area of less than 620 m² (PSA, 2021). In contrast, Finland is known for its rather sparse population of approximately 5.6 million people in a country the size of Japan. Already do these simple socio-geographical circumstances shape transportation, which constitutes a significant part of carbon dioxide emissions across the globe.

During our visit, we were lucky not to get stuck for long periods in traffic jams (that I now consider nonexistent in Finland) and made it smoothly from the airport to the hotel. Yet, although the car had been airconditioned, hot and humid air encircled me as soon as I opened the door. Similarly, the experience of cars on the busy streets became more alive and multi-sensorial while walking in the vicinity of the hotel. Although this might seem self-evident, seeing, hearing, and smelling the never-ceasing traffic made me realize better than any verbal or textual explanation how traffic is an organic part of life in Metro Manila. It shapes not only the sensorial but also the temporal experience of the residents, making them evaluate time rather than distance when making flexible logistical plans that reserve extra time for unexpected traffic jams. This was something that we as novice Metro Manila visitors could not have anticipated; luckily, our hosts had planned our transportation. It was also intriguing to think about how the traffic was generated by individuals on trips from one point of the city to another. While there was a reason for their travel, many other factors in a systemic web also affected their choice of using private cars: limited availability of public transport, uncoordinated urban planning, social expectations, and values of car ownership, to name a few that I learned. Reflecting on this back to Finland, I immediately thought about long distances outside the urban areas and recognized similar thoughts of car ownership as a status symbol.

I have returned to these experiences frequently not only while sitting for a couple of minutes in the so-called traffic jams in Finland but also while working on our project and writing this editorial. Admittedly, I felt a bit intimidated at first about contributing to a management journal given my anthropologically oriented research background. I wondered how my contribution would fit into this *Journal's* scope both in terms of discipline and its focus on global sustainability. Anthropology relies heavily on qualitative, ethnographic data through which it inquires about the quotidian lives in lived social and material environments. Furthermore, its aim is not to generalize or make universal arguments. Rather, it highlights the nitty-gritty of human experience, the complexities of the webs of social relations, and the contractions of life in general. As Keane (2003) has put it, anthropologically oriented researchers often respond to generalizing examples of culture and society with the (potentially irritating) remark, "We need to complicate the story" (Keane, 2003: 222). Therefore, I felt somewhat uneasy addressing sustainability on a global scale; finally, I found myself wondering what global sustainability is, anyway.

When I started writing this editorial, I familiarized myself with the *Journal's* first editorials, aims, and scope as well as its article selection criteria. Global sustainability is defined as a process that touches us all since for “true sustainability to be achieved anywhere, it must be pretty well achieved everywhere” (Stoner, 2013: 3). Global sustainability is undeniably a crucial and urgent aspirational universal objective. Yet, as Bentz and colleagues (2022) have argued, global sustainability solely as a shared acknowledgement of *what* needs to be done does not necessarily manifest as mobilization, organization, action, and decisions. What helps close this gap between knowledge and action is the important *how* of transformation. According to Bentz and colleagues (2022), this *how* entails both the methods and purposeful actions that they refer to as “the means” as well as the underlying core values and relationships that they refer to as “the manners.”

It is also important to note that although sustainability refers to sustaining and maintaining, transformation has come to have intrinsic value as a buzzword for sustainability. Transformation is considered vital, yet it may pave the way toward normative policies and top-down directed transformation which may also be experienced as threatening (Blythe et al., 2018). Therefore, merely *implementing* globally defined, universalized, and apolitical SDGs through generalized “means” of transformation locally may result in imposed policies that bypass the “manners” of local realities (cf. Bentz et al., 2022). Similar tensions are observed in the resilience-building paradigm closely connected to the acutely increasing disasters caused by climate change. Resilience-building is a two-edged sword—while it embraces the value of local community capacity in crisis mitigation and recovery, in doing so, it regenerates the neoliberal agenda by pushing the responsibility of recovery to these very communities affected by the crisis and diverts attention away from structural socio-political problems (Barrios, 2016).

In the worst-case scenario, the insistence on radical change, including degrowth, may serve as a form of continued colonialism or economic and environmental imperialism (Dengler & Seebacher, 2019). For example, the European Union plans to ban the sale of new fossil fuel cars by 2035 to reach its climate neutrality target by 2050. However, the development of zero-carbon transportation does not come without cost as the mining of lithium for electric car batteries causes various environmental, social, and economic problems locally. Furthermore, representatives of the Global South voiced strong demands for climate justice and compensation

at the United Nations Climate Change Conference at COP27 in 2022. This reflects how the grand narrative of the common future of humanity has been based largely on the socio-political developments and motivations of the Global North, which has enforced the economically, politically, and socially subordinated position of the Global South (Valentine & Hassoun, 2019). This underlines both the need to understand the systemic effects of sustainability transformation as well as the urgency to develop innovations responding to these effects. Moreover, it is also necessary to remember to consider critically the geo-political premises of the hegemonic narrative of one common future of humanity both in sustainability research and practice.

Nevertheless, I fear that I do not have an answer to the question presented as the title of this editorial. I am not even certain if the question is the right one to pose. Instead of creating a dichotomy between *the* global and *the* local, should we not ask how to understand the multiplicity of sustainable futures? The global sustainability objectives are realized ultimately through place-based local initiatives (Howarth et al., 2022). However, local realities and associated sustainability visions, practices, emotions, and interpretations vary and, as such, are argued to constitute a plurality of sustainabilities (Murphy & McDonagh, 2016). These constitute diverse and sometimes conflicting futures with differing hopes, dreams, practices, and ideals resulting in new forms of personhood, sociality, and power dynamics (Ringel, 2021). Yet, at the same time, these “locals” cannot be understood independently from the mesh of global connections they are tied to (Tsing, 2005). This raises the question of whether there is such a thing as one universal and true global sustainability.

Having said that, I consider nevertheless that the notion of global sustainability is of utmost importance. I think its value is largely in how the very awareness of the shared objective serves as a dynamo for efforts to build a better, sustainable future despite the inevitable bumps on the road. This *Journal* has contributed to this advancement of sustainability by bringing forth various problems, efforts, practices, and suggestions for solutions in various contexts and from diverse perspectives. One central focus of these has been the development of sustainability education in business schools, which can serve as a valuable forum for the integration of purposeful action or “the means” and local relationships and values or “the manners.” This is important because understanding how people relate to values, beliefs, politics, environments, and the self and others creates a foundation for any transformation process (Bentz et al., 2022). However, this challenges us to consider how to facilitate experience exchange in teaching and learning in practice.

This brings me back to the experience of Metro Manila's crowded roads and the learning experience of local reality and its underlying meanings, values, and social structures. As part of the FAPSU project, we developed a joint online course on socio-ecological problem-solving with our partners at the Ateneo de Manila University. The course aims to introduce approaches to sustainable development and engage students in discussing related case studies from the Philippines and Finland. This kind of joint, interactive, and online teaching mode can provide opportunities for remote discussions about the students' different contexts. These kinds of exchanges in sustainability education enable the acknowledgement and critical exploration of multiple sustainabilities and their embedded power relations.

However, "teaching that *only* focuses on critique often leaves students feeling that there is no space left for change or hope" (Schwittay, 2023: 13 [*italics in the original*]). Thus, while global sustainability as a shared objective can serve as motivation for joint efforts in advancing sustainability, sharing the massive nature of global-scale problems can also create hopelessness, cynicism, disillusion, or pessimism. Sustainability education and research, therefore, need to maintain a constant balance between the critical acknowledgement of multiple interpretations of sustainabilities and the sharing of global aspirations, disillusionment, and hope. Having felt quite small inside one of the cars in the never-ending traffic jam of Metro Manila, I found myself with complex and contradictory feelings—I had flown to the other side of the globe to encounter a situation that seemed too big and complicated to solve. How could I make any difference? Why should I even care given that I also contributed to emissions and cannot fully solve the problem?

I think many of us are familiar with these kinds of sentiments in quotidian life as well as in research and teaching. They reflect the sense of loss of agency in the face of overwhelming global sustainability problems whose solutions are seemingly beyond the reach of individuals. Pedagogical approaches in sustainability education for overcoming this paralysis caused by the felt lack of agency include, for example, transformative pedagogy (Salonen & Siirilä, 2019; Sipos et al., 2008) and critical-creative pedagogy (Schwittay, 2023). Both these approaches stress that it is important to consider, in addition to the cognitive aspects, the social, embodied, and affective dimensions of learning and pedagogical tools to empower the students. Here, once again, I found myself reflecting on our visit to the Philippines in relation to the planning of our joint online course. Online learning environments enable trans-local exchanges of knowledge and ideas but seldom allow for the sharing of first-hand

experiences of locally lived social and material realities. I have often wondered how we could enable students to share these experiences as well as their hopes, fears, and dreams with each other in the online environment.

The very first editorial of this *Journal* provided a clue, in fact, on how to approach this challenge—the author remarked that “global” refers to a process and completeness in the sense that it is present in everything we do (Stoner, 2013: 4). This echoes Anna Tsing, who argues that the universal objective of global sustainability takes form and is enacted in “the sticky materiality of practical encounters” (Tsing, 2005: 1). These encounters and interactions create friction that may not only complicate and slow things down but also, at their best, create movement as mobilization and action. Our online course may not offer the materiality of encounters in a traditional sense, yet it not only functions within the limits of digital technology but also explores its possibilities in sustainability education. Our joint course seeks to ground the learning experience in contextual realities by engaging students in sharing their experiences, such as through photographs, for example, and in analyzing real-life case studies from Southeast Asia and Europe accompanied by audio-visual material. Nevertheless, besides these pedagogical solutions, I think it is the very possibility of encounter and interaction that will hopefully help to close the gap in online teaching between theoretical conceptualizations and immediate and different social and material experiences. This kind of exchange also helps us explore our own self-evident contexts from different perspectives.

This perspective also helped me reflect on my learning experience as this issue’s guest editor. In essence, I have suggested in this editorial to maintain awareness of the complexities of sustainable development and the acknowledgement of the multiplicity of sustainability interpretations and practices with their embedded power relations. This “complication of the story,” seasoned with anthropological sensitivity to lived everyday reality, urges us to pause regularly to ask not only what a sustainable future is but also how it is reached, whose it is, and on what terms. This does not, however, undermine the necessity of collective aspirations for a global sustainable future shared and cared for in interaction. Similarly, interdisciplinary discussions provide valuable learning experiences not only on the subject of sustainability but also as acts of encounter and exchange. Personally, I gained confidence in writing this editorial after inspiring exchanges with the insightful representatives of the editorial team and other collaborators of our project. In a sense,

this process was an example of how co-learning in locally grounded global webs of social connections can enhance both the understanding of the kaleidoscope of lived reality and the significance of shared aspiration. Finally, I would like to express my warmest thanks to the editorial team of this *Journal* and particularly to the managing editor, Assunta C. Cuyegkeng, for providing this opportunity to contribute to the *Journal of Management for Global Sustainability*.

PREFACE OF THE ARTICLES IN THIS THEMED ISSUE

This themed issue continues this *Journal's* efforts to advance sustainability by addressing global-local interactions and dynamics from various perspectives. The articles shed light on issues ranging from outdoor education to educating local innovators, engaging stakeholders, the circular economy, and sustainable careers, while the geographic scope spans from China, India, and the Philippines to the European Union and Mexico. What is common among these seemingly divergent cases is that they all discuss issues that they resonate with and are applicable in many contexts. This, in my opinion, captures well the notion of global sustainability in terms of the relation between contextual realities and collectively shared signposts toward the future provided, for example, by the globally adopted Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). Furthermore, the articles provide examples not only of how the general SDGs are operationalized and mobilized in local action but also of the wealth of social issues and potential revealed in the process.

Santa Stopniece's article, "Outdoor Workshops: A Means of Restoration Amidst COVID-19 Online Modes," explores the role of outdoor workshops as a regular practice for sustainability in education based on the case study of Suzhou Polytechnic Institute of Agriculture (China). The results of the study indicate that workshop experiences outdoors provide renewal of motivation, the joy of getting together, learning by doing, involvement in a vivid way, and a chance to create milestone memories of achievement. The paper provides guidance to those interested in implementing this method by outlining important aspects to note while organizing outdoor workshops, possible challenges, and their solutions. For facilitating the sustainability goals of the UN, including good health, well-being, and quality education, outdoor workshops offer a counterbalance to online and classroom learning, are globally relevant, and can be applied creatively in a variety of settings, learning situations, and disciplines. The triple bottom line model's consideration

of sustainability from economic, environmental, and social perspectives concludes the usefulness and reasonable application of this approach. In conclusion, the wider use of outdoor workshops is proposed as an interculturally relevant tool based on fundamental human values such as being with nature and face-to-face interaction.

The article “Local Approaches to Address Global Challenges: Educating Local Innovators for Positive Social Change” by Martha Leticia Silva-Flores and Melisa Ladrón de Guevara addresses the role of local innovators in sustainable development. The article contends that aligning global concerns with local challenges is crucial to achieving long-term sustainability. This means developing effective and sustainable solutions to address communities’ specific needs and issues and positively impact the environment and society. In this process, local innovators play a fundamental role in promoting sustainable development by creating creative and sustainable solutions that address problems affecting their communities. However, their ventures often have a limited lifespan, restricting their ability to address global challenges effectively. Therefore, as this article argues, there is a need for empowering local innovators with knowledge. The study explores how local innovators acquire knowledge through formal and informal training, emphasizing the importance of connecting formal and informal education to drive social innovation projects that address local concerns with potential global relevance.

Building on the role that localization plays in the realization of the 2030 UN Agenda for Sustainable Development, “Engaging Stakeholders to Achieve the SDGs: The Case of the Province of Bataan” by Sherilyn Valdecañas and Assunta Cuyegkeng analyzes how stakeholder engagement in the localization process aids in the rapid achievement of the Sustainable Development Goals within a provincial setting in the Philippines. The case study performs a thematic analysis of the experience of ten SDG actors coming from different stakeholder groups, namely, business enterprises, government institutions, and civil society. Interviews reveal that a wide range of stakeholders, including the government, non-government organizations, civil society organizations, the private sector, the academe, students and young leaders, and local communities, are being engaged through consultations, partnerships, networking, dialogues, and the dissemination of records in carrying out projects and programs that are responsive to the 17 SDGs. Using the results, a framework for stakeholder engagement in achieving the SDGs was developed to serve as a guide on how local SDG actors can engage their stakeholders in each step of the programs and projects

directed toward SDG attainment. This study emphasizes how the collective efforts of stakeholders should be at the center when undertaking SDG localization.

Erja Kettunen presents European perspectives in her paper “Towards the Aim of the EU Circular Economy in a Multi-Stakeholder Process: From Policy to Industry and Back.” The process of agreeing upon the EU circular economy consists of communicating, negotiating, and publishing the interests of different stakeholders who may represent a business, an industry, a state, an NGO, or the EU. The communication involves bargaining that takes place in a dynamic multi-party network. From the perspective of companies, the EU bodies are the main decision-makers in the EU strategy for a circular economy. The case study on textiles and clothing indicates that the stakeholders have different routes for communicating their interests, such as from company to industry association, company to member of the European Parliament, or industry association to the European Commission. The companies involved in the circular economy aim to save textiles from being burnt or discarded as waste, and their innovative solutions include producing new fibers from discarded textiles, designing clothes and accessories from leftover materials, and selling high-quality vintage clothes.

In their article “Nurturing Sustainable Careers: How New India’s NEP 2020 is Driving Employability Through Skill-Based Education,” Elizabeth Abba, Sadhna Dash, and Ramakanth Tallapragada examine 1) the many factors and meanings involved in pursuing sustainable careers and 2) industry-academia partnerships of the government, educational institutions, organizations, and individuals as key driving factors impacting New India’s global footprint. The article reviews policy objectives and related literature across these related domains, leading to a conceptual model that supports but also challenges the nurturing of sustainable careers and its multiple benefits. The analysis is based on India’s National Education Policy 2020 (NEP 2020) crafted to cater to the country’s new role as it prepares to emerge as the third-largest economy by 2030 and its aspirations to become a “developed” country by 2047. The policy has set the context for enhanced employability for the masses and the development of sustainable careers, potentially transforming the skills and capacities of the world’s youngest workforce. Sustainable careers are meaningful for the individual when providing security and economic rewards, and they are crafted to form a unique pattern over time, often crossing diverse social spaces. However, as nurturing sustainable careers anticipates a supporting ecosystem for

enhancing employability, the analysis reveals that NEP 2020 will not succeed as a standalone initiative. Two critical stakeholders in addition to the government have been identified, namely, business entities and educational institutions that play a significant role in enabling the nurturing of sustainable careers.

The compilation of these articles illustrates the multifaceted nature of sustainability and the global-local interaction. However, the articles' variety consists not only in the topics of their studies but also in their disciplinary and methodological commitments. This connects to my last remark about the importance of acknowledging, learning, and appreciating different and "local" disciplinary approaches to sustainability. Much like the work of an anthropologist embarking on ethnographic fieldwork in another culture, conducting interdisciplinary research on sustainability may require learning a new language, comprehending a different logic of thinking, and respecting a collaborator's practices. Involving practitioners in the many fields of sustainability work involves yet further adjustments to another sphere of culture and practice. While these efforts may require some extra trouble, I believe that at their best, these kinds of dialogues and exchanges can be very enlightening and may constitute steppingstones toward a more sustainable future. Therefore, I would like to thank all the contributors in this themed issue for sharing their interesting research findings and insightful analyses. I also hope these articles provide the readers of this themed issue with an inspiring read and ideas for the further advancement of sustainability research.

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