



Lifeworld Learning for Sustainable Regenerative Futures

Exploring the SDGs One Story at a Time



**Edited by
Norman Jackson, Jenny Willis
& Josefina Ramirez**

HAPPY BIRTHDAY LIFEWIDE EDUCATION

This issue celebrates two milestones. The first is the 10th anniversary of Lifewide Education which was founded in 2011 as not for profit, community-based, educational enterprise whose purpose is to champion and support a lifewide and ecological approach to lifelong learning, personal development, education and achievement. We believe that the whole of a person's life holds potential for learning therefore education has no ending. We would like to thank our wonderful team of supporters and advisors who have worked hard to support our wonderful community of people who value the ideas and practices we advocate. The second milestone is the publication of the 25th issue of Lifewide Magazine. Each issue explores in a scholarly but informal way, a different aspect of lifewide learning, education, personal development and achievement. We are proud of the substantial body of inquiry this represents and we are proud to offer it as a free open-access publication to our community and the wider world. We would like to thank everyone who has contributed articles or helped to edit the magazine.

Editors of Lifewide Learning for Sustainable Futures



Norman Jackson is the Founder of 'Lifewide Education' and Senior Editor of Lifewide Magazine. His career in education spans over 4 decades and he has worked in many roles teacher, researcher, inspector, researcher, policy maker, facilitator, educational developer in several universities and national agencies including the Quality Assurance Agency and the Higher Education Academy. He Directed the Surrey Centre for Excellence in Teaching and Learning (SCEPTre) at the University of Surrey, where he developed and applied the idea of lifewide learning and education. He is Emeritus Professor at the University of Surrey and has author/edited several books exploring lifewide learning and learning ecologies.



Jenny Willis began her career in education as a languages teacher in London areas of social deprivation before taking on school management roles and later teaching for the Open University. Whilst working as an Assistant Registrar at the University of Surrey, she completed a PhD in socio-linguistics and held a Fellowship in the Surrey Centre of Excellence in Teaching and Learning (SCEPTre), where she became interested in lifewide learning, conducting research into professional and personal development, creativity, wellbeing and lifewide learning. She is a founding member of Lifewide Education and continues to teach children and adults while pursuing her other interests related to mental illness and wellbeing.



Josefina Ramirez is Head Mistress and founder at The Greenery House in Chile—an innovative nursery school. She is also a Lecturer in Teacher Training at the University of Los Andes, Chile and has an MA Education from Kingston University, UK. She joined the Lifewide Education team in 2021.

Cover image credit

Sustainable Development Goals Image

<https://gheli.harvard.edu/media-gallery/lightbox/1127510/1011282>



Contents

	Page
Our Opportunity to Contribute to “The Great Work” <i>Editorial</i>	04
Foreword <i>Daniel Christian Wahl</i>	06
Introduction to Exploring the SDGs One Story at a Time <i>Norman Jackson</i>	08
Engaging With the SDGs Across the Whole of Our Life—Synthesis of Personal SDG Statements <i>Jenny Willis, Norman Jackson & Josefina Ramirez</i>	16
The Important Role of Education in Societal Change to Support Achievement of the SDGs <i>Catalina Caicedo</i>	32
In Search of Personal Growth and Living a Life for a More Sustainable Future <i>Elisa Daka</i>	36
Stories that Connect Us with the World and with Each Other <i>Zahra Bahrani</i>	41
Developing More Hope for the Future <i>Melissa Shaw</i>	43
Reflection on the Lifewide Learning for Sustainable Futures Experiential Inquiry <i>Dory Reeves</i>	45
Experiencing the Gift of Inter-Being <i>Rahul Hasijah</i>	47
Working with the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) <i>Tricia Tikasingh</i>	49
A Brush with Sustainability <i>Glynn Kirkham</i>	52
Developing ‘Sustainable Employability’ in Congruence with the Sustainable Development Goals <i>Arti Kumar</i>	54
Lifewide Perspectives and Motivations for Engaging with the Sustainable Development Goals <i>Norman Jackson & Jenny Willis</i>	57
What Have the SDGs Got To Do With Wellbeing? <i>Jenny Willis</i>	74
The Wisdom of the Collective <i>Norman Jackson</i>	79
What Does An Ecological Civilization Look Like? <i>Jeremy Lent</i>	86

Our Opportunity to Contribute to “The Great Work” Editorial

Science tells us that doing nothing to avert the future we have created for ourselves is no longer an option, but the idea that we need to take seriously the UN’s Sustainable Development Goals is hard for many people to grasp. While the world around us seems, at the best of times, to be socially, politically and economically turbulent, we are cocooned from a future that is hard to imagine, by our present. Hardly a day goes by without some manifestation of a world in rapid formation as the media confronts us with yet another natural disaster brought about by the weather on some part of the planet. While it is easy to empathise with the people who are caught up in these disasters, they rarely happen to us, and the next day we move on to whatever the next headline story the media decides deserves our attention.

From our privileged and comfortable lives in 2022 it is all too easy to dismiss futurists with their doom-laden forecasts. It is also difficult for higher education institutions, driven by the educational needs for the present to pay attention to the educational needs for the future. But the tide is turning, more and more future predictions can be based on science and big data gathering and processing that model the future in terms of best, worst and most likely scenarios. We ignore these forecasts at the peril of our children and grandchildren’s future lives.

If education is to embrace fully and systematically the sustainable development goals in our everyday lives, we need a cogent vision of what is heading our way. I recently came across an article by Jonathan Watt the Guardian’s respected global environment editor published in the Guardian in 2019¹ it provides a science-based glimpse of the Earth in 2050. He says:

“The difference will be visible from space. By the middle of the 21st century, the globe has changed markedly from the blue marble that humanity first saw in wondrous colour in 1972. The white northern ice-cap vanishes completely each summer, while the southern pole will shrink beyond recognition. The lush green rainforests of the Amazon, Congo and Papua New Guinea are smaller and quite possibly enveloped in smoke. From the subtropics to the mid-latitudes, a grimy-white band of deserts has formed a thickening ring around the northern hemisphere.”

“The world in 2050 is more hostile and less fertile, more crowded and less diverse. Compared with 2019, there are more trees, but fewer forests, more concrete, but less stability. The rich have retreated into air-conditioned sanctums behind ever higher walls. The poor – and what is left of other species – is left exposed to the ever harsher elements. Everyone is affected by rising prices, conflict, stress and depression”

“Extreme weather is the overriding concern of all but a tiny elite. It wreaks havoc everywhere, but the greatest misery is felt in poorer countries. Dhaka, Dar es Salaam and other coastal cities are hit almost every year by storm surges and other extreme sea-level incidents that used to occur only once a century. Following the lead set by Jakarta, several capitals have relocated to less-exposed regions. But floods, heatwaves, droughts and fires are increasingly catastrophic. Healthcare systems are struggling to cope. The economic costs cripple poorly prepared financial institutions. Insurance companies refuse to provide cover for natural disasters. Insecurity and desperation sweep through populations. Governments struggle to cope.”

“Hunger will rise, perhaps calamitously. The United Nations’ International Panel on Climate Change expects food production to decline by 2% to 6% in each of the coming decades because of land-degradation, droughts, floods and sea-level rise. The timing could not be worse. By 2050, the global population is projected to rise to 9.7 billion, which is more than two billion more people to feed than today.

When crops fail and starvation threatens, **people are forced to fight or flee.** Between 50 and 700 million people will be driven from their homes by mid-century as a result of soil degradationFires, floods and droughts will prompt many others to migrate within and across borders.”

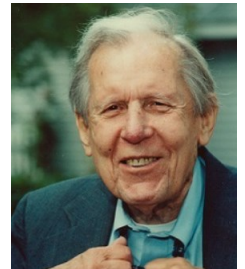
"In 2050, climate apartheid goes hand-in-hand with increasingly authoritarian politics. Three decades earlier, worried electorates voted in a generation of populist "strongmen" in the hope they could turn back the clock to a more stable world. Instead, their nationalism made a global solution even harder to achieve. They preferred to focus on the immigration consequences of global heating rather than the carbon-capital causes. When voters realised their mistake, it was too late. The thugocracy refused to give up power. They no longer deny the climate crisis; they use it to justify ever-more repressive measures and ever-wilder efforts to find a technological fix."

In spite of these dire predictions there is still hope.

"This is not an inevitable future. [While] many of the horrors above are already baked into the climate,.. our response to them – and each other – is not predetermined. When it comes to the science, the dangers can be substantially reduced if humanity shifts decisively away from business-as-usual behaviour over the next decade. When it comes to the psychology and politics, we can make our situation better immediately if we focus on hope in shared solutions, rather than fears of what we will lose as individuals."

Thomas Berry's inspiring invitation to contribute to "The Great Work"

In order to develop my own understanding of the issues relating to sustainable futures, I recently embarked on a year long online course offered by Gaia Education on the theme of "Designs for Sustainability & Regeneration". In the first module I was introduced to the thinking and writings of the pioneering eco-theologian, Catholic priest, and cultural historian Thomas Berry who has much to say on mankind's evolving relationship with the Earth and universe. His optimistic vision is for the whole of humanity to engage in what



The great work now, as we move into the new millennium, is to carry out the transition from a period of human devastation of the Earth to a period when humans would be present to the planet in a mutually beneficial way

Thomas Berry
'The Great Work'



he calls "The Great Work."² He sees human history as "governed by those overarching movements that give shape and meaning to life by relating the human venture to the larger destinies of the universe." The Great Work of a people or era is the creating of such an overarching movement and in his view the Great Work, for our generation and subsequent generations is the transformative effort to change human-Earth relations from disruptive and destructive to mutually enhancing and beneficial. With this vision and optimism we can, by our own agency enact this Great Work and this issue of our Magazine shows how we can all participate.

Sources

1 Watts, J. (2019) The environment in 2050: flooded cities, forced migration – and the Amazon turning to savannah. Published in the Guardian Mon 30 Dec 2019 Available at: <https://www.theguardian.com/environment/2019/dec/30/environment-2050-flooded-cities-forced-migration-amazon-turning-savannah>

2 Berry, T, (1999) The Great Work : Our Way into the Future Three Rivers Press New York

Norman Jackson
Senior Editor

Foreword

Daniel Christian Wahl



Daniel is one of the catalysts of the rising reGeneration and the author of *Designing Regenerative Cultures*. He works as a consultant, educator and activist with NGOs, businesses, governments and change agents. Daniel grew up in Germany, studied Biology in Scotland and California, Holistic Science at Schumacher College and wrote a PhD in Design for Human and Planetary Health in 2006. Since 2010 he lives on Majorca, Spain growing roots and deepening his practice of facilitating bioregional regeneration. His 2016 book '[Designing Regenerative Cultures](#)' has quickly gained international acclaim, his [Blog on Medium](#) is followed by over 24k people and his social media advocacy has a combined audience of over 660k people around the world.

Writing these lines at this point in our human journey has to be an exercise in humility. The core theme of this issue of *Lifewide Magazine* is “learning for sustainable futures – one story at a time,” but what would a white, middle-aged, academically over-educated male have something to say about that, given the centuries of violation this particular demographic has enacted upon the community of life, is it even appropriate to accept this invitation?

I write these lines from relative comfort at a time when many are suffering the degenerative effects of the Western narrative of separation that has objectified life, disrespected fellow humans on the basis of gender or ethnicity, and othered nature for centuries. For too long have we disregarded Earth wisdom as it has been held in custody by our elder brothers and sisters — the indigenous people of Africa, Australia, Asia, the Americas and Europe.

In response to the now strikingly evident destruction and inequality the narrative of separation has wrought, we have seen the interest in regenerative development and regenerative cultures grow rapidly in recent years. It is imperative to highlight that regeneration is an inherent pattern of life itself and that all our distant common ancestors understood life as a regenerative community of which we are members, not masters.

Our species evolved primarily through collaboration and in co-evolving mutuality within the ecosystems we inhabited. For 98% of our common journey as hominids we have lived in reciprocal custodianship within the places and bioregions we called home. From the forests of Colombia and Peru to the Pacific NorthWest and Australia, evidence is mounting that human inhabitants co-created and nurtured these peak ecosystems to higher diversity, abundance and bio-productivity over many millennia.

We are all indigenous to life as a planetary process. The central lesson of many Earth wisdom traditions is about alignment with life as a process, living in right relationship and letting life's regenerative patterns flow through us. In this way of being we understand ourselves not as owners but rather as expressions of place. The land does not belong to us, we belong to the land. The land and the sea will be there long after we return to the soil as compost for new life.

Aligning with Earth wisdom is about living in right relationship. We are relational beings. Each one of us is unique and a nexus of intimate reciprocity within life's regenerative community. To align with Earth wisdom we have to not just learn from but as nature. Janine Benyus elegantly distilled the central lesson of biomimicry to one sentence: *“Life creates conditions conducive to life.”*

As life, how do we let Earth wisdom flow through us as we set out to create conditions conducive not just for all of humanity but for all of life?

Clearly our more recent record as a species seems to suggest we have forgotten the vital significance of this question. The effects of our actions — more truthfully the actions of a relatively small proportion of humanity — have pushed all of humanity into a species level ‘rite of passage’. We are facing the real and present danger of an immature end of our species as part of the current mass extinction event. Will we step into mature membership in the community of life and become a regenerative rather than degenerative presence on Earth in time to manifest a different future?

To co-create a regenerative future based on diverse regenerative cultures as elegant expressions of the bio-cultural uniqueness of the places they inhabit we require changes in doing, being and thinking. We need a new and very ancient worldview. Our organising ideas and culturally dominant narratives have cut the process of life into individuals and species. This way of seeing has predisposed us to focus on competition, scarcity, and mortality.

Today, we can draw on both ancient indigenous wisdom and cutting edge science to understand life as a syntropic force in the universe — creating conditions conducive to life through collaborative abundance. Life is a planetary process! As Gregory Bateson put it in his 1970 essay *‘On form, substance and difference’*: *“the organism which destroys its environment destroys itself. The unit of survival is a flexible organism-in-its-environment.”*

Conscious participation in the evolutionary process of life invites us to hold the seeming paradox of existence as simultaneously part and whole. From a relational participatory perspective all being takes place in the polarity between ‘being for oneself’ and ‘being as reciprocal expression of the whole’. We are both at once. As Thích Nhất Hạnh invited us to understand by introducing the word interbeing to the West: *“To be is to interbe. You cannot be by yourself alone.”*

The Earth wisdom of the Navajo is Hózhógo Naasháa Doo or ‘walk in beauty’. Their advice: *“if you walk into the future walk in beauty”*. The way to walk in beauty is to *“witness the One-in-All and the All-in-One”*.

Living regeneratively is living as a conscious expression of and participant in the wider nested complexity in which the local, regional and global are dynamically co-present. These nested scales are united through fast and slow cycles of collapse of structures and patterns that no longer serve, transformative innovation, and temporary consolidation of new patterns into a dynamically and constantly transforming whole. As such, regeneration as a process is intimately linked with the evolutionary and developmental impulse of life itself.

Once we learn to understand health and resilience not as static states to ‘bounce back’ to, but as dynamic capacities to transform and express vitality in the face of shifting context, we can also see how working regeneratively is about systemic healing and building resilient communities capable of anticipating and transforming environmental or social change.

Regeneration is about more than just ‘net positive impact’ or ‘doing good’. It is about evolving the capacity to manifest the unique and irreplaceable gift of every person, community and place in service to the life-regenerating context in which we are all embedded.

Life is a regenerative community at nested scales: from the community of organelles that form all nucleated cells, to the ecosystems of human, bacterial and fungal cells that make up the regenerative community you and I are referring to as ‘our body’, to the communities of species that create the functional diversity of abundant and highly bio-productive ecosystems, all the way to the physiology of a living planet with marine and terrestrial ecosystems contributing to a continuously evolving life support system that regulates planetary climate patterns and atmospheric composition to make them conducive to life.

Realigning with Earth’s wisdom is about re-inhabiting this regenerative community more consciously again and humbly returning to our role as healers within that nested regenerative community of life. Our future will change depending on the degree to which each and every one of us manages to re-inhabit this community.

As the poet Gary Snyder suggested in 1976: *“Those who envision a possible future planet on which we continue [...], and where we live by the green and the sun, have no choice but to bring whatever science, imagination, strength, and political finesse they have to the support of the inhabitory people — natives and peasants of the world. In making common cause with them, we become ‘reinhabitory’.”*

Re-inhabitation in the context of the bio-geo-physical reality of the places and bioregions we inhabit is a change in doing and how we relate to the bioregions as we try to meet human needs in ways that regenerate healthy ecosystems functions, thriving communities and vibrant economies — place by place.

Re-inhabitation is also active in the terrain of consciousness, as we learn to re-perceive ourselves as processes of becoming — processes that are in themselves dynamic expressions of the places, communities and ecosystems that bring us forth. As such, to re-inhabit is a change of being. The future potential of the present moment is to come home to our bodies, our communities, our places and bioregions now — not sometime after a long ‘transition’ or a ‘great turning’.

It seems our current theory of change has us stuck in discussing strategies within a problem-solving mindset that predisposes us towards abstraction and the habit of “solving” problems in isolation from each other and from the places where we propose to implement “solutions”.

What if we focused on being differently now? What if we re-perceived who we are and identified more with life as a planetary process of interbeing? What if we aimed for being in right relationship to self, community and life? What if we focused on our individual and collective potential of being and becoming healing and nurturing expressions of place? What if we dropped the dysfunctional habit of trying to solve abstract global problems and scaling-up solutions? What if we focused instead on our potential to create conditions conducive to life in co-evolving mutuality with the places and communities that are the ground of our being?

As the participants in the lifewide learning for sustainable futures inquiry show through their stories, it is possible for all of us to begin and participate in the journey towards a being for interbeing - deeply conscious of our relationships and interconnections with everything else. We are all able to think more carefully about our relationships and interdependencies with the world around us and the people and other life forms in it. We are all able to choose the way we live our life in the natural, social and virtual environments we inhabit and we are all able to adjust our behaviours in ways that optimise our beneficial, and minimise our adverse, impacts on the world.

Introduction to Exploring the SDGs One Story at a Time

Norman Jackson

Introduction

The UN has been championing the cause of climate change through its climate change conferences (COP) since 1995 and as I write this in early November, COP26 has begun. With much fanfare, political posturing and photoshoots the political leaders of the world (well most of them) are gathered in Glasgow knowing full well that the Earth has passed a tipping point and is now accelerating towards what could easily become a catastrophe for its human and other living inhabitants. These “leaders” have the power to do something that can at least slow down the negative influence humanity is having on the climate, but as I listened to the speeches and analysis by commentators, I became increasingly alarmed at the way politics was getting in the way once again. As far as I could see, none of the political leaders seemed to take on board Queen Elisabeth’s or Sir David Attenborough’s simple message - to seize the day and grab the opportunity to rise above local politics and become statesman for a better world.

But we cannot complain about inaction at the political level if we ourselves are doing nothing to address the issue of climate change. While the scale of the task may seem overwhelming, we can still do many things to help the Earth by living a life that is mindful of the potential damage that we can inflict. We all have a moral responsibility to educate ourselves so that we are more aware of the consequences of our behaviours.

For this reason, in January 2021 Lifewide Education joined the UNESCO Institute for Lifelong Learning Futures of Education initiative³. Our first contribution was to produce a White Paper explaining how lifewide learning can support sustainable development. During the year we have continued to explore how our ideas of lifewide learning and learning ecologies might contribute to an enhanced concept of lifelong learning that will support the achievement of a more sustainable future.



As part of this initiative we undertook our second experiential inquiry between October 18 – November 22nd, 2021 to explore lifewide learning in the context of personal actions and experiments aimed at creating more sustainable futures, drawing inspiration for the UN Goals for Sustainable Development³. These goals provide a comprehensive framework to stimulate thinking and actions that are consistent with reducing human impacts on the world that are detrimental to future sustainability and enhancing impacts that are more likely to secure a sustainable future.

Concepts of Sustainability and Regeneration

To ‘sustain’ means to keep something going or provide support. Daniel Wahl has done much to explore the idea of sustainability he says that what we are trying to sustain in the context of the SDGs; is the underlying pattern of health, resilience and adaptability that maintains our planet in a condition where life as a whole can flourish. He sees the issue as not so much one of maintaining the status quo but of creating, environments, conditions or cultures for regeneration⁴. *“Regenerative practice starts and continues with [learning and] personal development. It is not a tool but a practice of conscious participation and co-creation”*⁵. This chimes with Tim Ingold’s powerful ecological assertion that we should not think of ourselves and our environments as separate things - we are indivisible bound together through an ecology of life and of living and experiencing and developing through our experiences of the world. *“‘organism plus environment’ should denote not a compound of two things, but one indivisible totality”, “this totality is not a bounded entity but a process in real time: a process, that is, of growth or development”*⁶. In other words our participation in actions that are intended to sustain and regenerate our environment are also the means by which we grow and develop.

The Most Wicked Problem of All

Sustaining anything as complex as the world and all its ecosystems and inhabitants, is the most complex and profound of all ‘wicked problems’⁷. In fact, sustaining the Earth and all the systems of life it supports is a constellation of wicked problems. Left to its own devices and given sufficient time, the Earth will adapt and regenerate regardless of the stresses and forces it is subject to. It might take millions of years but that is the time scale of planetary renewal.



Figure 1 Characteristics of a wicked problem⁷

Many decades of scientific research have shown that human behaviours have not only reshaped our world to make it more habitable for more humans, but in doing so have had a serious detrimental impact on planetary resources and systems that sustain all forms of life. It is only a matter of time before we cause irreversible damage.

“Our current global footprint is about one and half times the Earth’s total capacity to provide renewable and non-renewable resources to humanity. In 35 years, with an increasing population that could reach 9.6 billion by 2050, and if our consumption needs and production patterns remain the same, we will need almost 3 planets to sustain our ways of living. Impacts from climate change continue and intensify, biodiversity loss is still accelerating, and non-renewable resources are increasingly exploited, bringing us closer to breaching more planetary boundaries.”⁸

In the last few decades we have reached the point where the UN, the world’s strategic planner and policy shaper, and national Governments, have begun the process of engaging with this challenge which requires nothing more than societal transformation and the mobilisation of the human race. As Luksha et al⁷ point out, education and learning are at the heart of this transformational project but our approaches to education and lifelong learning will also need to be transformed if we are to succeed.

We are living in a time of accelerated, global, complex change, in which our human society faces increasing pressure to evolve our systems and processes to meet the demands of the 21st century and beyond.

Education is the most sophisticated social technology for societal transformation and intentional evolution — yet it is still a widely underutilized pathway for co-creating and contributing toward sustainable, regenerative, and thriving futures within and beyond our biosphere.....Yet our educational systems are still designed for the world of yesterday — and so they must be changed to meet the demands of the future, including increasing social, ecological, and economic complexity in all domains of human life. It is necessary to re-imagine the purpose and the design of education in the here and now; what is needed is nothing less than a renaissance of both human values and vision in action transforming human learning and leadership learn together in a way that cultivates our collective potential, we diminish prospects of the continuation of the human experiment on Earth (Extracts from ‘Educational Ecosystems for Societal Transformation’^{9 p 2}.

The lesson of Covid 19

The global pandemic disrupted the global economy and the daily lives of billions of people and shocked the world into entirely new habits and ways of living. In doing so it has shown us that we can collaborate at a global scale, mobilise necessary resources and adapt profoundly and quickly to emergent threats. It has shown us that across countries and cultures we can develop and adopt new attitudes, behaviours, practices and ways of being that are essential for survival in the covid ridden world now and in the future.

United Nations 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development

The wicked problem of our future survival is framed by the United Nations 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development³ which offers 17 Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). The political, educational and social challenge is to encourage, educate, guide and nurture at a global scale, a multitude of educational systems, cultures and societies to practically embrace the co-created vision of lifelong learning for all within a context where learning through and across life contributes positively to the UNs 17 Sustainable Development Goals.

Figure 2 UN Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs)

17 SDGs: (1) No Poverty, (2) Zero Hunger, (3) Good Health and Well-being, (4) Quality Education, (5) Gender Equality, (6) Clean Water and Sanitation, (7) Affordable and Clean Energy, (8) Decent Work and Economic Growth, (9) Industry, Innovation and Infrastructure, (10) Reducing Inequality, (11) Sustainable Cities and Communities, (12) Responsible Consumption and Production, (13) Climate Action, (14) Life Below Water, (15) Life On Land, (16) Peace, Justice, and Strong Institutions, (17) Partnerships for the Goals.



Learning For Sustainable Regenerative Futures

The fact that we are dealing with wicked problems is also liberating, because there are so many possibilities for action. They also require vision to see beyond specific problems to a future world in which these problems no longer exist. The first report of UNESCO'S Institute for Lifelong Learning, Future of Education initiative⁸ presents a future-focused vision that demands a major shift towards a culture of lifelong learning by 2050. It argues that the unprecedented challenges humanity faces, require societies to embrace and support learning throughout life and people who identify themselves as learners throughout their lives¹⁰.

This 2050 vision is of a world that has undergone a deep cultural shift based on a strong awareness of the innate potential of learning. Societies self-consciously strive to be learning societies and people identify as lifelong learners. With a continuous learning ethos pervading all spheres of life.

[Lifelong] learning [is] for oneself, for others and for the planet, it also has a key role in driving sustainability. Lifelong learning is about the sustained and sustainable freedom of individuals, linking social freedom to environmental responsibility. At an individual level, lifelong learning now contributes to a greater awareness of all the dimensions of sustainability. Individuals are empowered by lifelong learning to change behavioural patterns,^{10 p14}.

The recognition that learning and education for sustainable development is a whole of life commitment and practice means that any policy that is focused only on formal education will not achieve the 2050 vision. What is required is:

- an expanded vision of learning and action as a lifewide (every part of life at any point in time) lifelong (every point in time along the journey of life,
- and a culture that values learning in every aspect of life, and values learning as the pathway to creating better versions of ourselves and a better (more sustainable) world.

This vision and culture that reaches beyond the SDG#4 goal of *promoting lifelong learning opportunities for all*, to the idea that *"the whole of life is learning therefore education can have no ending"* first proposed by Charles Lindeman¹¹ nearly a century ago. Without learning we cannot *sustain our futures* - a deliberately ambiguous phrase to cover the multitude of futures that are possible for ourselves, our offspring and generations to come, our societies and future societies and the planet that sustains and nourishes all life. Furthermore, it is only through learning that we develop beliefs, values and attitudes that lead us to care about others and the world and not just ourselves.

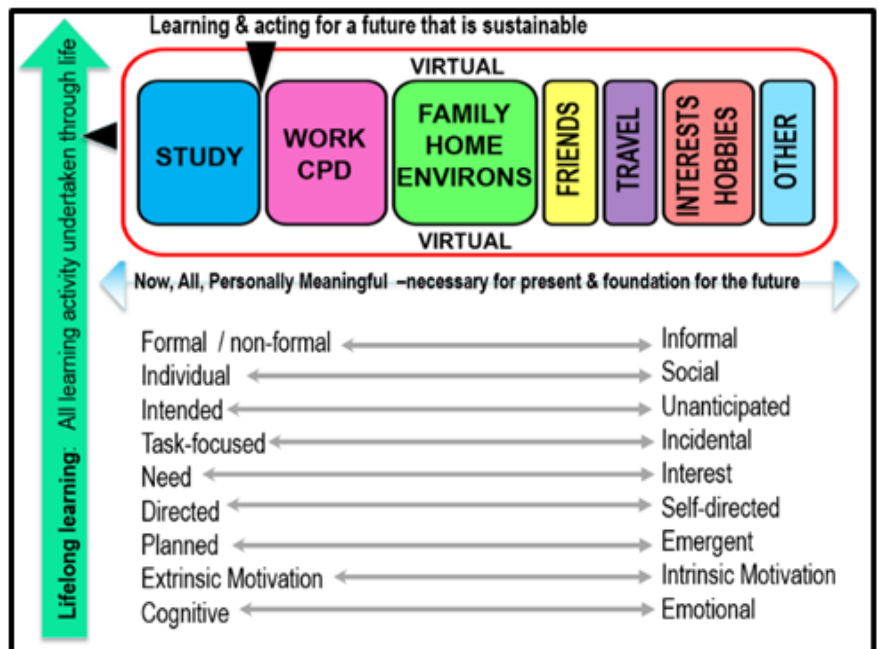
Lifewide Learning for Sustainable Futures – appreciating our ‘interbeing’

Lifewide learning adds the detail and purpose to the lifelong pattern of human development by recognising that most people, no matter what their age or circumstances, simultaneously inhabit a number of different spaces - like work or education, being a member of a family, being involved in clubs or societies, caring for others, participating in their local community, engaging in sport and other activities to keep fit, travelling, and looking after their own wellbeing mentally, physically and spiritually (Figure 3).

The concept of lifewide learning provides the most comprehensive and inclusive framework within which we can understand learning, personal development and action. Because of this lifewide learning provides the foundation for a better understanding of the nature of lifelong learning.

Figure 3 A conceptual framework for lifewide learning¹²

Figure 3 illustrates some of the spaces that typify our lives. Each space is characterised by its own rhythms and time frames, places and environments, people, activities and experiences. In these different parts of our life we think and interact with different people, have different sorts of relationships, adopt different roles and identities, experience the full range of human emotions including failure as well as success. In



these different spaces we encounter different sorts of challenges and problems, seize, create or miss opportunities. We aspire to achieve our ambitions, learn to love and ultimately experience our own demise.

It is in the lifewide dimension of our life that we come to understand the nature of our interbeing. *“Everything is interconnected. Everything affects everything else. Everything that is, is because other things are. What is happening now is part of what happened before, and is part of what will happen next.”*¹³ This is the Buddhist teaching of ‘Dependent Origination’, and it is an essential lesson for living a life for a future that is sustainable.

This doctrine teaches us that no phenomenon has independent existence. Whatever is, comes into existence because of factors and conditions created by other phenomena.

Because everything is connected, it is in the lifewide dimension of our life that we see and appreciate our positive and negative impacts on the world. – for example, when we travel, when we cultivate our garden, when we go shopping or we eat, or when we do something for others. Once we understand the nature of our interbeing - that the phenomenon we create has a consequence e.g. burning the trees we cut down involves releasing carbon into the atmosphere that contributes to global warming, we can mediate our behaviours to avoid such adverse consequences. It might be said that our inquiry is focused on our interbeing.

Our Experiential Inquiry

We all have a role to play in sustaining our own future and the futures of the people we care about. Beyond this we have a moral and ethical responsibility to help create the best conditions for future generations. This ecological project connects us and the rest of humanity in a profound way to the planet that is responsible for our very existence.

Lifewide Education is responding to the UN’s 2030 call for ‘learning for a more sustainable world’ by facilitating an experiential, experimental inquiry into the way lifewide learning and education might contribute to a paradigm of learning and action that embraces consciously and fully the lifewide dimensions of everyday life and its fundamentally ecological and formational character. Learning for a sustainable future means learning through doing things that will realise that future and reducing the things we do that diminish that future.

Learning through the experience of doing and experiencing the effects of our doings connects us to educational theorist John Dewey. For Dewey doing and the experience that emerges is always a dynamic two-way process. He referred to this process as a ‘transaction’: ‘An experience is always what it is because of a transaction taking place between the individual and, what at the time, constitutes the environment’^{14 p43}.

“When we experience something we act upon it, we do something; then we suffer or undergo the consequences. We do something to the thing and then it does something to us in return: such is the peculiar combination. The connection of these two phases of experience measures the fruitfulness of experience. Mere activity does not constitute experience.”^{15 p104}.

Dewey elaborates on this two-way process, suggesting that experience involves both ‘trying’ and ‘undergoing’^{13p104}. ‘Trying’ refers to the outward expression of intention or action. It is the purposeful engagement of the individual with their environment or in Dewey’s words, *“doing becomes trying; an experiment with the world to find out what it is like”* (ibid). Through action an attempt is made to have an impact on the world. ‘Undergoing’, the other aspect of the ‘transaction’ in experience, refers to the consequences of experience on the individual. In turn, in attempting to have an impact, the experience also impacts on us. ‘Undergoing’ refers to the consequences of the experience for us^{16 p60}. A visual representation of John Dewey’s transactional / interactional model of human experience is shown in Figure 4.



Figure 4 Visual representation of Dewey’s interactional model of experience in which the individual perceives and interacts with their everyday world. Learning, creativity and other achievements emerge through this interactive process. The important point to make here is that this is the contextual, circumstantial and situational framework within which we live our lives everyday consequently it is the world we affect through our behaviours and doings and it is these personal worlds in which they idea of sustainability takes on personal and concrete meaning. When we are conscious of how actions that have a negative impact on our world we can adjust our behaviour in ways that yield more positive outcomes

The transactional of experience involving people interacting with, using resources and impacting on and modifying their environments, provides the foundation for the ecological perspective on people inhabiting and participating in a world in formation that they are enabling to form¹⁷. Like all other forms of life, we are related and connected to our world in a profoundly ecological way – we dwell in complex ecosystems that we help to create and it is our effects in and on these ecosystems through the ecologies we create as we engage in and with the things that matter to us, that determine their health and sustainability. Our inquiry is an exercise in encouraging participants to think ecologically, to see themselves as active participants in a world in formation in which they themselves are enabling this formation and what they do has an impact on what is formed. It is an exercise in *understanding our interbeing*.

Our Ecology for Social Learning

The strength of our collaborative inquiry lies in bringing together people from across the world in a culture of participation and mutual respect to share their experiences and understandings in order to learn together.

To join our social ecology for experimentation and learning participants were expected to commit to a 5 week process during which they tried to make sense of the Sustainable Development Goals through their day to day life.

The inquiry provided an opportunity to :

- Develop collective understanding of the 17 Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs)

- Explore through reflections on past activities and experiences, and new experiments conducted during the inquiry, how we might relate some of these goals to our own life in a meaningful way

- Record our experiences and share what we learn with other participants through written vignettes/stories

- Evaluate the collaborative, self-inquiry methodology as a form of education for sustainable futures.

An outline of the process is given below.

Method of Inquiry

WEEK 1 OCTOBER 18th Developing an overview of the SDGs

Introductory Zoom meeting—An opportunity to meet other participants and discuss the process.

Personal audit of how you respond to the SDGs

The first stage of the inquiry is to familiarise yourself with the UN Sustainable Development Goals and perhaps other examples of goals that have been produced to support more sustainable futures. Table 1 summarises the 17 SDGs and the derivative Good Life Goals. By mapping your interpretations and involvement with the SDGs on the framework you are making your efforts to contribute to a more sustainable future explicit. We do not expect you to be engaging directly with all the goals or even a majority of the goals. Rather, we anticipate that you will be engaging with some of the goals and some more than others.

TASK 1 WEEK 1 Use the Personal SDG Framework provided in Table 1 to reflect on your life, habits and behaviours and what the SDGs mean to you in the different situations, circumstances and contexts that form your life. Select and highlight up to 5 SDGs that are important to you and try to create your own personal goals for these SDGs and identify ways in which you could achieve these goals if you are not already achieving them. Write a short explanation of your choices and share your map and explanation as a word document in the LinkedIn discussion space.

WEEKS 2, 3 & 4 (October 25 to Nov 14)

Experiment, Narrate & Reflect

The SDGs are a call to action but for them to work at the level of the individual an aspect of the goal must evoke an emotional response that motivates us to act. In other words the SDG must provoke, interest, inspire, scare, challenge or in some other way stimulate us to act in a different way to what we have done in the past. Without this emotional reaction it is unlikely that changes to behaviours will be sustained.

TASK 2, 3 & 4 WEEKS 2,3 & 4 Each week you are encouraged to choose a Sustainable Development Goal that provokes, interests, inspires, scares, makes you feel guilty or challenges you in some other way, and then try to do something new in any part of your life that is consistent with the goal and which is meaningful to you. You may of course be building on activities that you have undertaken before and this history might provide an important context.

At the end of each week **create a story or vignette** (Word Doc) describing and illustrate with photos, drawings, diagrams and other graphic organisers where appropriate.

- what you tried to do

- why you tried to do it (why the goal is important to you)
- reflection on what happened – what did you learn and how will this enable you to behave differently in future

Vignettes were shared with other participants in the Lifewide Research and Development Group Forum on LinkedIn.

This was our space for sharing experiences and for collaborative social learning. We encouraged participants to comment in a respectful and appreciative way on each other's posts and vignettes. Reading the vignettes shared by others and commenting on them will help bring the community alive to the possibilities of living and learning for more sustainable futures.

WEEK 5 (Nov 15 - 22)

Review, Synthesise, Consolidate and Share what you have learnt

The aim of the inquiry is to explore lifewide learning in the context of personal actions and experiments that are intended to create more sustainable futures, drawing inspiration for the UN Goals for Sustainable Development.

TASK 5 WEEK 5 In the final week of the inquiry we would like you to review, synthesize and consolidate what you have learnt about trying to live your life for a more sustainable future. Your review and synthesis should include:

- 1 Your completed Personal SDG Framework
- 2 Your three vignettes
- 3 A short reflective account describing what you have learnt.
- 4 A comment on the effectiveness of the methodology for developing awareness and understanding about how we can personalise and act on the SDGs.

The inquiry concluded with a Zoom meeting when participants could share their insights and experiences.

The hope and possibility of our inquiry

When a group of people agree to participate in an inquiry as we did, we have to allow ourselves to become connected to people who we do not know, through the sharing of ideas, experiences, stories and things about ourselves that are important and hold deep meanings for us. The hope and possibility in the affordance we are co-creating is that organically we become a *collective* – giving to and helping each other – sharing our lives, insights, empathy and wisdom and caring about the people we are interacting with feel. The generative conversations that emerge is the alchemy of social learning. That we achieved such a generative conversation is evidenced in the articles contained in this issue (see also my synthesis of reflections¹⁸).

We began the inquiry with 21 participants and 14 continued through the subsequent weeks. This small but productive group generated over 70 significant posts each containing a personal SDG statement, a vignette or a reflective commentary as an attachment. They also contributed over 360 comments on posts. This is the knowledge we co-created turning our embodied experiences into stories and through our collective reflections drawing out new wisdom which we are privileged to share with you. In this way we hope to extend the value and benefit of what we have learnt to whoever finds it.

CONTRIBUTIONS TO THE COLLECTIVE

WEEK 1 - 21 personal SDG statements

WEEK 2 - 12 written + 2 video vignettes

WEEK 3 - 13 written vignettes

WEEK 4 - 14 written + 1 video vignette

WEEK 5 - 09 written +1 video reflective commentary

70 Significant posts *SDG statements, vignettes & commentaries*

360+ Comments in discussion

Facilitation Team



International Partners



Facilitation & Appreciation

The inquiry was planned and facilitated by three members of the Lifewide Education Team - (top left to right in photo) Norman Jackson, Jenny Willis and Josefina Ramirez supported by five international partners (bottom left to right in photo) Dory Reeves (New Zealand), Zahra Bahrami (Iran), Gloria Figueroa (Colombia), Donna Rooney (Australia) and Rahul Hasijah (India). Above all, we appreciate the generosity of all participants in sharing their lives and perspectives through the inquiry.

Three principles for a Psychology for a Better World

As I was putting the magazine together in Publisher (a task that I have to admit I do not enjoy) I was sent a link by Dory Reeves (one of the inquiry participants) to a youtube presentation¹⁹ by psychologist Niki Harré based on her book 'Psychology for a Better World'²⁰. She offers three principles to support a psychology for a more sustainable world and I think they reflect well on our learning for sustainable futures: one story at a time approach.

The first principle^{20 p.6} emphasises **sustainability as a collective, social enterprise aimed at new ways of managing ourselves**. This emphasis is different from debates about sustainability that focus on "the problem". Unfortunately, the problem-based approach tends to invalidate any attempts to create a better world that see "the problem" differently.

"What it comes down to, is if you are too focused on the view that sustainability is a particular kind of problem you'll be vulnerable to the latest argument suggesting it is something else all together. The problem will continue to shift and the solutions will always be contentious..... As a sustainability advocate, your role is to take a position that says to others: "I am with those who think a better world is possible, and I am willing to take risks, including the risk of being wrong and looking naive or moralistic or well-meaning, to work alongside others in creating this world". Offsetting your carbon emissions, installing passive heating and participating in Earth Hour do not then have to work through crude cause and effect (e.g. offsetting your carbon emissions means there are 1,000 more trees than there would be otherwise). They just have to work in the sense of signalling to others that you are out there (e.g. offsetting your carbon emissions strengthens the signal to your government that many citizens want effective carbon control). In this sense, therefore, the best action is not "best" in terms of having the most dramatic effect on the physical world, it is "best" in terms of having the most dramatic effect on the social world."^{20 p7}

Our inquiry was based on the idea of a group of people coming together to share their perspectives, Stories and insights so that ultimately the wisdom of the collective prevails. By collaborating in this way, each of us was able to influence our social world.

The second principle is that **actions for sustainability work best when they are based on positive strategies that are inspiring, uplifting, engaging, fun**. Most people are 'happiness seekers' and if we can engage with sustainability in ways that make us feel good about ourselves, then we are more likely to carry on doing these things.

Sure we want to save the planet, and that is a serious task. But we've still got to get on with life as we do it. And life is about laughing and enjoying each other and feeling good. Without that, what is there to save?^{20 p8}

The vignettes shared many types of stories and not all of them happy but there was a sense that there was satisfaction, joy and fulfilment to be found in what we were trying to accomplish.

The third principle recognises that **advocates for sustainability are first and foremost ordinary people too, trying to make their way as best they can through a complex life**. Acknowledging our humanness means that we know that we do not have the answers to the questions being asked and like everyone else we will be stumbling forwards towards new understandings. While our efforts and stories may inspire others, we also need to be connected to others who can energise us and motivate us with fresh ideas, new perspectives and inspiring stories.

... because we are people too, we are subject to all the confusion, hesitation and egoism that hold back progress on this issue.....one deeply committed person can make a tremendous difference, but most of us are not that person – including me..... as people too, we need the same inspiration and support that others need to keep going. So as well as focusing on how to get and keep others with us, [we have to be mindful that we have] to keep ourselves intact.^{20 p9=10}

This sense of humanness is very apparent in the contributions to the inquiry and the ways in which stories evoked emotional responses. It is fair to say that we all gained something important through the collective contribution

Sources

- 1 UNESCO Futures of Education initiative <https://en.unesco.org/futuresofeducation/>
- 2 Enriching and Vivifying the Concept of Lifelong Learning through Lifewide Learning and Ecologies for Learning & Practice White Paper Lifewide Education Available at: <https://www.lifewideeducation.uk/white-paper.html>
- 3 UN General Assembly (2015) Resolution 70/1. Transforming our world: the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development. Available at: https://www.un.org/en/development/desa/population/migration/generalassembly/docs/globalcompact/A_RES_70_1_E.pdf
- 4 Wahl, D.C. (2016) Designing Regenerative Cultures. Triarchy Press
- 5 Wahl, D.C. (2021) Why Working Regeneratively Is (R)evolutionary. Available at: <https://sustainablebrands.com/read/walking-the-talk/why-working-regeneratively-is-r-evolutionary>
- 6 Ingold, T. (2000) Hunting and gathering as ways of perceiving the environment. The Perception of the Environment. Essays on livelihood, dwelling and skill. New York and London: Routledge, 2000.

- 7 Rittel, H and Weber, M (1973) Dilemmas in a general theory of planning Policy Sciences Vol 4 155-169
- 8 UNESCO (2018) 10YFP Sustainable Lifestyles and Education Programme. Available at: <https://www.oneplanetnetwork.org/sites/default/files/10yfp-sle-template.pdf>
- 9 Luksha, P., Cubista, J., Laszlo, A., Popovich, M., Ninenko, I (2017) Educational Ecosystems for Societal Transformation Global Education Futures. Available at: https://campfireconvention.uk/sites/default/files/GEF%20Vision%20Educational%20Ecosystems%20for%20Societal%20Transformation-ilovepdf-compressed_1.pdf
- 10 UNESCO (2020) Embracing a culture of lifelong learning: Contribution to the Futures of Education initiative Report | A transdisciplinary expert consultation UNESCO Institute for Lifelong Learning: Paris Available at: <https://www.sdg4education2030.org/embracing-culture-lifelong-learning-uil-september-2020>
- 11 Lindeman, C. (1926) The Meaning of Adult Education New York: New Republic. Republished in a new edition in 1989 by The Oklahoma Research Center for Continuing Professional and Higher Education. Available at: https://openlibrary.org/books/OL14361073M/The_meaning_of_adult_education
- 12 Jackson, N J (2011) The lifelong and lifewide dimensions of living, learning and developing. In N J Jackson (Ed) Learning for a Complex World: A lifewide concept of learning, education and personal development Authorhouse Available at: <https://www.lifewideeducation.uk/learning-for-a-complex-world.html>
- 13 O'Brien, B. (2021) "The Principle of Dependent Origination in Buddhism." Learn Religions, Sep. 15, 2021, learnreligions.com/dependent-origination-meaning-449723.
- 14 Dewey, J. (1938), (1997 edition) Experience and Education, New York: Touchstone.
- 15 Dewey, J. (1916), (2007 edition) Democracy and Education, Teddington: Echo Library
- 16 Ord, J. (2012). John Dewey and Experiential Learning: Developing the theory of youth work. Journal of Youth & Policy. 108.
- 17 Barnett, R. and Jackson, N. J. (Eds) (2020) Ecologies for Learning and Practice: Emerging ideas, sightings and possibilities. Routledge
- 18 Jackson, N.J. (2022) The Wisdom of the Collective. Lifewide Magazine #25 Available at: <https://www.lifewideeducation.uk/sustainable-futures.html>
- 19 Harré N (2012) Psychology for a Better World https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=2zExibEV_PY
- 20 Harré N (2011) Psychology for a Better World: Strategies to Inspire Sustainability Available at: <https://www.osof.org/wp-content/uploads/2021/02/7b93425b3e69b8b3afde906e119b95a4e1ab.pdf>
- 21 Futera (2018) Good Life Goals Available at: <https://www.goodlifegoals.org/>

Appendix 1 Framework for Personalising and Implementing UN's 17 Sustainable Development Goals (also includes the derivative Good Life Goals¹⁹)

The framework provided is the first step in raising awareness of some of the ways in which we are already engaging with the SDGs and identify ways in which we can do more. can do more (column 3). Completing the Framework for Personalising and Implementing Sustainable Development Goals will always be a work in progress, but it makes explicit our understandings of what the Sustainable Development Goals mean in our own everyday contexts. It also provides a framework on which to map your stories/vignettes.

1 Sustainable Development Goals	2 Good Life Goals	3 Past, Current & Near Future: Lifewide Opportunities for Learning & Action
1 No Poverty	1 Help End Poverty	
2 Zero Hunger	2. Eat Better	
3 Good Health and Well-being	3. Stay Well	
4 Quality Education	4. Learn and Teach	
5 Gender Equality	5. Treat Everyone Equal	
6 Clean Water and Sanitation	6. Save Water	
7 Affordable and Clean Energy	7. Use Clean Energy	
8 Decent Work and Economic Growth	8. Do Good Work	
9 Industry, Innovation & Infrastructure	9. Make Smart Choices	
10 Reducing Inequality	10. Be Fair	
11 Sustainable Cities and Communities	11. Love Where You Live	
12 Responsible Consumption & Production	12. Live Better	
13 Climate Action	13. Act on Climate	
14 Life Below Water	14. Clean the Seas	
15 Life On Land	15. Love Nature	
16 Peace, Justice, and Strong Institutions	16. Make Peace	
17 Partnerships for the Goals.	17. Come Together	

Engaging with the SDGs Across the Whole of Our Life: Synthesis of Personal SDG Statements

Jenny Willis, Norman Jackson & Josefina Ramirez

Introduction

The wicked problem of our future survival is framed by the United Nations' 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development (UN General Assembly Resolution 70/1) which offers 17 Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). The political, educational and social challenge is to encourage, educate, guide and nurture at a global scale, a multitude of educational systems, cultures and societies to practically embrace the co-created vision of lifelong learning for all within a context where learning through and across life contributes positively to the UN's 17 Sustainable Development Goals.

Figure 1 UN Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs)

17 SDGs: (1) No Poverty, (2) Zero Hunger, (3) Good Health and Well-being, (4) Quality Education, (5) Gender Equality, (6) Clean Water and Sanitation, (7) Affordable and Clean Energy, (8) Decent Work and Economic Growth, (9) Industry, Innovation and Infrastructure, (10) Reducing Inequality, (11) Sustainable Cities and Communities, (12) Responsible Consumption and Production, (13) Climate Action, (14) Life Below Water, (15) Life On Land, (16) Peace, Justice, and Strong Institutions, (17) Partnerships for the Goals.



Personal SDG statements

The first stage of the inquiry was to familiarise ourselves with the UN Sustainable Development Goals. Figure 2 shows the 17 SDGs and the derivative Good Life Goals (GLGs). By mapping our interpretations and involvement with the SDGs on to the framework we can begin to see the ways in which we are already engaging with the SDGs in our everyday lives. We did not expect participants to be engaging directly with all the goals or even a majority of them. Rather, we anticipated that they would be engaging with some of the goals and some more than others.

TASK 1 WEEK 1

Using the Personal SDG Framework (Figure 2) participants were invited to reflect on their life, habits and behaviours and what the SDGs meant to them in the different situations, circumstances and contexts that formed their life. They were asked to select and highlight the SDGs that were important to them and write a short explanation of their past, current and possible future involvement. They were also encouraged to share their map and explanation in the LinkedIn discussion space, and to comment on each other's posts.

Figure 2 Framework for Personalising and Implementing UN's 17 Sustainable Development & Good Life Goals

1 UN Sustainable Development Goals	2 Good Life Goals	3 Past, Current & Near Future Opportunities for Learning & Actions
(1) No Poverty	1 Help End Poverty	
(2) Zero Hunger	2. Eat Better	
(3) Good Health and Well-being	3. Stay Well	
(4) Quality Education	4. Learn and Teach	
(5) Gender Equality	5. Treat Everyone Equal	
(6) Clean Water and Sanitation	6. Save Water	
(7) Affordable and Clean Energy	7. Use Clean Energy	
(8) Decent Work and Economic Growth	8. Do Good Work	
(9) Industry, Innovation and Infrastructure	9. Make Smart Choices	
(10) Reducing Inequality	10. Be Fair	
(11) Sustainable Cities and Communities	11. Love Where You Live	
(12) Responsible Consumption and Production	12. Live Better	
(13) Climate Action	13. Act on Climate	
(14) Life Below Water	14. Clean the Seas	
(15) Life On Land	15. Love Nature	
(16) Peace, Justice, and Strong Institutions	16. Make Peace	
(17) Partnerships for the Goals	17. Come Together – get involved	

Analysing personal SDG statements

SDGs were clustered into 6 groups each containing SDGs that seemed to be related (Figure 3). Responses to each SDG were compiled using a template before producing a synthesis statement which is reproduced in this article.

The analysis recognised that engagements with an SDG could be at three different levels:

- 1 (micro) what you do in your personal/work life that impacts only on you and those immediately around you;
- 2 (meso) what you do in your personal/work life that impacts on your neighbourhood or your local environment;
- 3 (macro) what you do in your personal/work life that impacts regionally, nationally or internationally.

SDG gp	Sustainable Development Goals
A	(1) No Poverty, (2) Zero Hunger
B	(3) Good Health and Well-being (12) Responsible Consumption (6) Clean Water and Sanitation (7) Affordable and Clean Energy
C	(4) Quality Education (5) Gender Equality (10) Reducing Inequality (16) Peace, Justice, and Strong Institutions
D	(8) Decent Work & Economic Growth, (9) Industry, Innovation and Infrastructure (11) Sustainable Cities and Communities, (12) Responsible Production
E	(13) Climate Action (14) Life Below Water, (15) Life On Land
F	(17) Partnerships for [Sustainable Development] Goals

Figure 3 SDG clusters

SDG GROUP A, PERSONAL/LIFESTYLE CHOICES

Group A contains the related goals of SDG #1 No poverty and SDG #2 Zero hunger.

SDG #1 No Poverty / GLG Help end poverty

13/21 participants provided examples of how they had engaged with SDG#1. The scale of poverty in the world is overwhelming, intimidating and humbling. One honest respondent commented, *I cannot think of anything I have done or currently do in order to help end poverty. There were occasions where I have given beggars some coins, I wouldn't consider this as help to end poverty though. I think it is very difficult to help end poverty as a private person with low or average income.*

Strategies for addressing poverty at the micro level (things that affect only us or family) include buying fair trade goods when we shop or buying goods made locally when we travel abroad. Some of us give to and buy from charity shops knowing that these agents are helping others who may well be less fortunate than we are. The idea of educating ourself and also our children so that we and they are aware of inequalities and understand the value is expressed: *I teach my kids simple financial literacy and guide their regard of the material and immaterial in terms of value (i.e. intrinsic vs extrinsic) and not price/cost.*

There are always people on our doorstep less well-off than we are. So quite a lot of activity is focused at the meso level (things we do that impact on your neighbourhood or your local environment). Several participants donate to or support local groups, or have raised money for charities in the past: *I try to share/donate to local groups that work with people in vulnerable situations whenever I can.* Several others work directly with poor people through the schools that they work in: *I educate socially deprived communities to enable social mobility.*

At the macro level (things we do that impact regionally, nationally or internationally), several participants donate to charities and NGOs that are working to relieve poverty: *I make small but regular donations to 'Practical Action' (NGO working for a better world for all) and I contribute to various charities that are helping in countries impacted by conflict, Covid-19, drought and famine. I make regular donations to WaterAid and British Red Cross.*

One respondent highlighted the fact that one of the ways we can influence at a national level is to vote for a Government whose policies attend to the less well-off members of society: *I exercise my civic duty and vote for a government that takes this issue seriously – especially when it comes to our Pacific neighbours.*

One participant had engaged in voluntary work in less developed countries: *I've contributed voluntary work in Malawi and South Africa – experiencing quite different forms of poverty there.*

SDG #2 Zero Hunger / GLG Eating better

18/21 participants provided examples of how they had engaged with SDG#2 and there is much overlap with participants' responses to SDG#1 No Poverty and Responsible Consumption, part of SDG#3

At the micro level, the focus is on becoming more conscious of healthy eating habits, responsible consumption – buying less and trying not to waste food, and teaching our children or, if we are a teacher – teaching our students the value of a healthy diet. Some

typical comments are: *I am more keenly aware of buying locally sourced foods and seasonal foods. I think about where the carbon footprint of the foods that we have become used to (wherever we are in the world).*

I need to be more conscious of what I am buying and eating and try not to waste food.

[I] buy seasonal and local produce (that hasn't accumulated hundreds of air miles) as far as possible. I put all food waste into a garden composter.

Some participants describe changes they have made: *As an experiment, in 2016 we attempted to eat only UK produce. It was eye-opening and there were unexpected trade-offs to be made! One adds, Last year I consulted a nutritionist to get some guidance on how to eat better and help my migraine situation which was getting worse. This helped me a lot and made myself much more conscious regarding my diet and my health.*

Vegetarian and vegan diets are mentioned: *I am a vegetarian and always ensure when asked why to answer in terms of health and scientific research findings.*

I eat mostly plant based, buy more organic food (if I can afford it) and try to eat diverse. I care much more about what I eat than I did before and try to eat healthy. With the time I get more knowledge about healthy food and try to implement this often in my routine.

As parents we have a role to play in teaching our children the value of food and of healthy eating e.g. *[I] teach my kids about good nutrition and not to waste food.*

Some participants grow some of their own food: *We have a salad patch & chickens and ducks but we want to grow more of our own food.*

One participant noted the connection to food security concerns for which had motivated her research: *I think this SDG also relates to food security, not just eating better. Being from the Caribbean I am aware of how susceptible regions like small island developing states can be. Food security is linked there to food importation due to inability to produce food at a scale which is sustainable. This was one of the motivations for my doctorate.*

At the meso level, where what we do influences our immediate neighbourhood, community or environment, a number of participants are supporting local foodbanks for people who struggle to buy the food they need with their income: *I make regular food contributions to my local foodbank TESCO Express (which provides food to the local community)*

[I] donated to food bank via the supermarket collection Future: donate more regularly i.e. monthly to the foodbank at the supermarket

Teachers highlight the way in which their work as educators can involve their communities: *My school shares food and helps some communities that need help every year. Those communities help immigrants, vulnerable mothers and young people.*

[I] educate socially deprived communities to enable social mobility

Campaigning at school to be careful about not wasting food. Promote knowledge about the different types of food, those that have many sugars and those that are more natural and healthy for our body.

One participant had worked with a community to grow food for the town: *I've worked with permaculture principles, supported the founding of an 'incredible edible' town and recognise the need for diverse, local growing networks. We hope to buy and steward some land soon and have more options for growing.*

At the macro level one person highlighted the importance of exercising their democratic right to vote for a Government that had policies that were sympathetic to this issue: *I exercise my civic duty and vote for a government that takes this issue seriously – especially when it comes to our Pacific neighbours.*

SDG GROUP B, SOCIAL/ECONOMIC

Group B comprises 4 distinct, but interrelated, SDGs: #3 Good Health and Wellbeing, #6 Clean Water and Sanitation, #7 Affordable and Clean Energy and #12 Responsible Consumption (responsible production is dealt with in Group D). Action towards the SDGs

which comprise this group are, by definition, focused on the micro level. There is common practice around the globe on the forms of activity respondents are engaged in, and heightened awareness of environmental issues is also evident. There is a recurrent sense of failure to do enough, sometimes due to inaction but also for practical reasons, where environmental choices are financially or practically impossible. A small number of respondents are taking steps to extend their action to the local community or workplace.

Overall, attitudes are positive and personal actions promise collective impact.

SDG #3 Good Health and Wellbeing / GLG Stay healthy

18/21 personal statements comment on SDG #3, with some linking it to others, e.g. SDG #1 (No poverty) and #2 (Zero Hunger). Action to address health is predominantly micro and focuses on keeping physically healthy through regular practice of yoga, walking, gardening and various other activities, and being mindful and attending to mental health and a healthy diet, with positive efforts to reduce the consumption of meat and dairy food. This is summarised by one person as SANE: *4 components of everyday lifestyle: Sleep, Attitude, Nutrition, Exercise.*

There is, nevertheless, a widespread sense of having to force such action, and reference to guilt: *As I read more about the SDGs I felt a sense of guilt or failure: I fail regularly; I know I can do better.* One person does record success in achieving change: *I have happily changed the way I live as an individual over the last two years.*

It is not only personal health that features in these responses: there is a deep concern with that of loved ones of all generations, and one person observes that *the government's inadequacy made me think more about the importance of community.*

This moves towards the meso level, where some respondents are also active. For instance, they are promoting healthy eating at school and working in charitable enterprises to improve personal wellbeing: *I have been working with one of my students on a project about food poverty and malnutrition in the UK. Food poverty and malnutrition is generally not thought about much in relation to countries like the UK, EU and US, but it applies to all parts of the world.*

One respondent is heavily engaged in trying to reduce substance abuse in their country because *In the Czech Republic, alcohol is very cheap, it is easy to see 'fallen-drunken' bodies in parts of the major cities.*

SDG #6 Clean Water and Sanitation / GLG Save water

Again, 18/21 personal statements included comment on this SDG, and these are mostly actions at the micro level. There are positive attempts to save water e.g. by recycling, collecting rain, or limiting the amount used for a shower. For instance, one person explains: *I have a good habit: I always have my sand clock when I take a shower, it runs just 4 minutes, so as soon as it ends, I finish my shower. I also collect the water that falls while the tub heats up to reuse it.*

Some respondents have learnt from an early age to value this resource since they live in parts of the world where water is scarce: *This is an important one for me. Australia is essentially a desert and water is scarce. Yet on average, we use far too much water per household. I have learned to hate the sound of people cleaning their teeth (with tap running) and try to find ways for more thoughtful use of water at home. I am looking forward to experimenting more.*

Many, though, express guilt: *Could do better; Guilty of not saving enough water; We need to work harder in this ODS,* and chastise themselves for indulging in showers or bubble baths: *Guilty of not saving enough water as we let the kids indulge in a bubble bath once a week.*

Straddling the micro and meso levels is the reference to donation to bodies such as WaterAid and Oxfam: *WaterAid is an essential source of help for those in need. It is a scandal that so many suffer from lack of clean drinking water, so I regularly donate. I grew up in a city where water couldn't be taken for granted and am in the habit of conserving it as a precious resource. I never use the bathtub. Quick showers and efficient use all round.* There are links made here to SDGs #9, #11 and #12.

Other actions include changing school practice through use of water bottles and engagement in research for policy-making: *One of the most important activities in our classroom is the water bottle. They fill their water bottles and don't leave the water faucet*

running. They have also given up the habit of drinking water by hands. If the water is not drinkable, they pour water into a container. Then we use it for washing and other things that do not require drinking water.

SDG #7 Affordable and Clean Energy / GLG Use clean energy

16/21 personal statements have comments on SDG #7, predominantly on the micro scale. Actions range from turning off lights, seeking alternative sources and suppliers of power, replacing petrol cars to being more aware of consumption e.g. *Be more conscious about the ways we are consuming energy and try to reduce demand Turn off lights left on and electrical plugs at wall (a battleground with my family); look into feasibility of alternative energy supply - perhaps solar panels*

There are personal, financial and institutional obstacles to achieving aspirations, as expressed in remarks such as *Guilty of not using clean energy as we are unable to install solar panels (...) in Singapore; The costs are pretty high for clean energy and my income is not; Conflict – I am miserable if cold, so keep temperatures up and I find the technical details of Energy hard to handle.*

A few actions are occurring at the meso level, such as using solar energy at school and encouraging car- pooling for staff. The Czech Republic is quoted as an example of nuclear power: *In the Czech Republic, nuclear power is a significant producer of electricity. This causes me some long-term concern but back in the 1960s we were told that thanks to nuclear energy we would be paying very, very little for electricity. Solar power is also possible here and wind rotor fields are emerging.*

Meanwhile Iceland illustrates how geothermal energy can be harnessed: *I visited Iceland in 2019 and was amazed at how they use their geothermal energy and the respect for the environment.*

One person has conducted some scoping work which has progressed to formal research.

SDG #12 Responsible Consumption / GLG Live better

Of the 21 personal statements, 17 refer to SDG #12, which is also explicitly linked to others, including those in Group A. Micro actions are shared by most: renewing and recycling, purchasing clothing judiciously, avoiding waste of food by buying only what is necessary, avoiding packaged goods and making informed choices. Typically, *Currently I recycle just about everything (am perhaps a bit of too proud to say I've been doing this for 40 years). I want to take stock of what I have and need. I want to experiment here by playing closer attention to, and learning about, my purchasing habits with a view to make more considered choices, and Encourage and buy slow fashion products, give clothes another chance, make garage sales, use less plastic, and know the way of production used by the companies that make the things we buy.*

One person is growing their own herbs: *Planted some herbs and spices this summer. Will make a concerted effort with those around me to uphold the goals that I have set and become part of a more sustainable society. Will continue to plant what I could for consumption and freezing for the winters. Curb unnecessary spending. Eat less – live better, whilst another does not possess many gadgets: I don't own many gadgets or tech tools, and don't upgrade my phone unless I have to (ie it doesn't work!). I cook only what I know will be eaten, and don't overstock to avoid spoilage and waste.*

Still, there persists a sense of inadequacy: *feel it's having little impact beyond our household; I would like to make better use of my practical abilities to make and repair more of my own items, and help others do the same.*

The limited amount of action at the meso level relates to school campaigns to raise awareness of buying options when choosing clothes, and to supporting local businesses e.g. *I try to support local businesses as much as I can. I've noticed that I have also reduced my consumption on clothing, trying to make better use of what I already have.*

Actions can be summarised as:

- Being conscious of our buying habits and buying less.
- Trying to buy local produce to support the local economy
- Buying things that have already been used and owned
- Avoiding products with large amounts of packaging
- Eating less and being less wasteful
- Reuse and recycling
- Being resourceful

- Giving something up
- Sharing and gifting things to others

SDG GROUP C, ENVIRONMENTAL/POLITICAL

Group C comprises 4 distinct, but interrelated, SDGs: #4 Quality Education, #5 Gender Equality, #10 Reducing Inequality and #16 Peace, Justice and Strong Institutions. The overwhelming response to the SDGs in cluster C is one of respecting and supporting the objectives, but feeling that more could, and should, be done. There is some failure among participants to appreciate how much they, as individuals, are actually doing. This activity is largely personal and professional, with few having opportunities to take action at the macro level. Where this *is* happening, it tends to be voluntary work. This all suggests that there is much good will that could be harnessed, and that individuals need to be encouraged to appreciate the efforts they are already making to address these SDGs.

SDG #4 Quality Education / GLG Learn and teach

Given the background of most participants, it is not surprising that 18/21 statements addressed this SDG. The majority of activities were at the meso level, consistent with professional roles, but a few were personal and family-oriented. The importance of being a role model for younger generations is apparent e.g. *As a parent, I try to role model the leadership traits I wish to impart to my children.*

A recurrent theme is the need to *work hard* to keep abreast of the SDGs: *working hard to keep up with COP26 and the areas in which I have some expertise and learning about the Emissions Reduction Framework for NZ.* Conversely, one participant observes: *This is the area in which I've made the greatest impact – in the past and now.* This is partly due to being employed in education, which links to the meso level.

At this professional level, there is a broad range of action, including teaching, being a school governor, university lecturer, head teacher and lifewide learner. For example, *I think one of the solutions to end poverty is education. I work directly with very low-income people and find that the cause of many of their financial poverty is a lack of skills and abilities. Through education programs, we could support them to develop skills and abilities. For example, they can be more efficient in managing their financial problems by helping them develop skills such as financial literacy.*

Several respondents say that this has been their life's work, the thing they are most proud of, and they give examples of the dimensions to which they are contributing, e.g. students' mental health, gender equality and social mobility: *this is integrated in to my professional life as a HE manager and teacher. There are values here that I will actively promote in my work with my team and with my students. Future: I have recently taught a taster session on mentoring and coaching for a more diverse audience than the normal 'education professionals.'* *One of my plans is to offer more such free two hour tasters on a number of themes as the people found it really valuable.*

A few respondents are able to extend their actions to the macro level by working outside their immediate environment with overseas agencies such as UNESCO and other universities: *member Pestalozzi programme of European Council, teaching re human rights.*

(I) have been highlighting and talking about Education for Sustainable Development from a QAA perspective with colleagues and working with another colleague to develop UN Academic Impact activities focused on the SDGs across subject areas.

This work appears to be voluntary.

SDG #5 Gender Equality / GLG Treat everyone equal

Some responses acknowledge that SDG #5 is integrated with others e.g. SDG #10, Reducing Inequality, but all 21 statements include evidence of action here. As with education, most activities in this domain are at the meso level, though some recognise it as *part of my entire life.* Work includes encouraging women into traditionally male careers, e.g. engineering, management, finance: *(I work as a) researcher, teacher, mentor on leadership to ensure women's full participation.*

Funding is sought for some initiatives: *(I am) putting together a Lottery bid to create a self-assessment tool for gender equality working with Women in Urbanism. Linked to SDG4 keep up to speed with gender equality campaigns. Mentor and support young women profs were possible.*

The difference between cultural contexts presents unique challenges, but there is a clear determination to confront these: *I'm raising a generation that could act stronger than me.*

At Marymount, the School I work at, we believe in women leadership and empowerment, we give them all the tools and opportunities for them to believe in themselves and be agents of transformation in their communities.

At the personal level, some respondents again express difficulty in keeping abreast of change, using acceptable language and needing to do more. One respondent confesses *I try, and sometimes fail, to practise compassion towards all living things; to see God in all things. I hope I am failing forward daily.* Another is hesitant: *On a personal and professional level, I believe this is something I do. However, I know it is an area where I am continually learning through the stories of others.*

Some, though, are more positive, for example one person says, *I find it difficult not to engage in conversations with family and friends about gender equality (...) I find it hugely important to call out "micro-machismos".*

There is some indication of working towards the macro level, extending what has been successful locally to broader fields, e.g. UN women in leadership. This is still described as being a *potential* area of action by one respondent, whilst another advises that we should *address individual person, not group.*

SDG #10 Reducing Inequality / GLG Be fair

19/21 statements show action related to SDG #10, mostly clustered at the meso level. Respondents cross-reference their views and actions with SDGs #3 and #4.

Once again, there is a sense of being inadequate: *I try and sometimes fail; this is another area I'm interested to learn more about.* One person describes their action as *constant in a pathetically small range of impact.* Conversely, another respondent states, *I am fortunate to have learned what it is to grow up in a colourful society. I don't ever remember thinking about race or religion negatively.*

Professional (meso) activity includes teaching individuals according to their own needs, promoting fairness, conducting research and training staff to understand differences (cultural, intellectual and so on). Some examples are: *Continue to promote Te Whaihanga training to better equip professionals to work with Māori values.*

Carnival is one of those events that reminds me of that history... the sad part is that new generations don't know this history well enough and carnival has become a street party... for me keeping traditional knowledge and traditions alive is important. Oral histories are important.

One respondent has used their experience of being victimised to write about it, informing others, whilst another explains some of the forms of discrimination still extant in their part of the world: *We generate decent or formal jobs for the people who work for us in a context that doesn't do that, with good salaries, respecting schedules, with respectful treatment and wellbeing conditions. In Colombia 94% of the people in domestic jobs don't have legal conditions.*

Yet another person describes how they work with their team to ensure parity: *promote fairness in work and home, review agreements.*

There is a small, tentative, step towards the macro level, through working with UNESCO.

SDG #16 Peace, Justice and Strong Institutions / GLG Make peace

The pattern of responses to SDG #16 is different: only 12/21 people included evidence here, and most comments were at the micro level. The repetition of the verb 'try' is striking, with efforts to establish personal, inner peace, interact positively with their family, show compassion and create environments conducive to peace and justice. Some typical responses are:

On a personal level I try to be diplomatic, look after my family (as best I can through distance), and have tried to keep the peace in different ways. I think this SDG is linked to fairness and equality. It is another one I need to consider more closely for the future.

I think listening is a key part of this. I know that I have been looking again at Nancy Kline's Thinking Environment space and thinking (I'm afraid) that there are things I sometimes need to work on. I rush myself at times, I am rushed, I rush other people. (I also interrupt at times too). Future: to introduce thinking environment spaces within my teaching of education professionals.

My current tools are meditation and a course in nonviolent communication. In the future I also would like to help others have more compassion, when I help building communities.

There is a repeated aspiration to keep abreast of issues in order to be more proactive e.g. Inner peace is a strong foundation for outer peace. Work in progress...

Professional actions include acting as role models and educating explicitly about ethical and political issues, advocacy, such as being a harassment advisor. Comments include: I actively and mindfully try to give the best example I can to my students, nieces, nephews on how to communicate with empathy and respect. I also try to educate myself on these topics.

Lead with ethics, reflect about politics, with a critical point of view. support peace initiatives, where violence won't finish with more violence. We encourage our students and do ourselves to act correctly, with honesty and safeguarding the weaker ones.

Professional work has led one respondent towards a macro level advising on policy, management and staff development in an overseas university: working as advisor to UoC on policy and staff development. As before, such work is voluntary and unpaid.

SDG GROUP D, ECONOMIC/SOCIAL/POLITICAL

Group D is comprised of SDGs #8 Decent Work & Economic Growth, #9 Industry, Innovation and Infrastructure, #11 Sustainable Cities and Communities and #12 Responsible Production.

SDG #08 Decent Work and Economic Growth / GLG Do good work

17/21 participants responded to this prompt. One participant tried to explore what this might mean at a personal level: We need some interpretation here: what is 'good/ decent' work? I perceive it as work with a strong moral purpose that doesn't harm others or the environment and is beneficial in some way.

Implicit in the prompt is the development proposition that economic growth is a good thing. Given that our obsession with economic growth in the last 50 years is what has brought us to the brink of planetary collapse there is an inherent tension that was expressed by one participant in these words: Regarding economic growth, I don't believe we should or can have infinite economic growth based on our planet's finite resources. In the affluent world we think of luxuries as necessities. I am against mindless consumerism, waste and sending things to landfill as all this is harming our environment and causing climate change

Some participants personalised this SDG in terms of the work they were doing or would like to do e.g. occasional free taxi for elderly folk;

Provide opportunities for voluntary work

Do my best as co-worker and as leader to help my team and co-workers have the best place and ethos to thrive through meaningful jobs

I will over the coming years continue to try to find ways to work more in partnership with colleagues in schools and colleges, possibly on a voluntary basis

One participant felt that there was a mismatch between the work they did and the aspiration for good work contained in the prompts: This is a challenge for me as I'm not working completely in-line with my values. In the short-term, it' can be difficult to have this misalignment between my profession and my values. I'm very interested in our perceptions of and relationships with the working world – I think this can be transformed radically for social and environmental good: where work is positive and a pursuit of passion per se.

Some participants interpreted this SDG to mean what they could do to support or provide for others: *Provide more opportunities for my grandchildren to learn the value of work.*

Pledged to subcontract at above the living wage and provide opportunities for growth.

Promote healthy working relations through charring meetings – modelling, sharing, mentoring the next generation of leaders

At Marymount [school] we are responsible and completely legal with our workers, giving them all the benefits we can, to make

Educators highlighted their role in supporting the employability of young people: *indirectly contribute through educating young people, preparing them for their future working lives*

I mentor and coach my students to achieve their academic and professional goals, in order that they can then go out and do good work themselves.

Being in teacher education and working a lot on courses that are focused on continuing professional development... I am supporting people who have an impact on students and on the sector in which they work.

Through my day job leading in employability I seek to impact on the lives of others, specifically students in Higher Education.

In role modelling this for students I talk about the carbon footprint of food and fashion choices.

I am currently involved in research concerned with opening up meaningful employment opportunities for young people with intellectual disabilities.

These actions all related to the micro and meso levels. At the macro level, one participant highlighted their involvement politically: *Involvement in local and national campaigns that are fighting for the rights of casual workers.*

SDG #09 Industry Innovation and Infrastructure / GLG Make smart choices

13/21 participants responded to #09. Most people identified with the Good Life Goal of making smart choices – smart being connected to their understanding of sustainability. One participant signalled we have to be careful in assuming that what seems smart may actually turn out to be not so smart and that we may not have the ability to make a smart choice if we cannot afford it: *Today's smart choices may be tomorrow's bad ones e.g. buying diesel cars. Financial constraints also dictate some 'choices.'*

On the whole, participants feel they know enough to be able to make informed and principled choice that takes into consideration the social and environmental consequences e.g. *Beginning to be more discerning in what we subscribe to and buy;*

Make good buy choices (ecological respectful with the environment and with the people that make the products) and promote industries that do so. Check at least the food origins weekly to make sure we are vouching for good industries (may be more expensive but necessary).

I am in a share club so all the decisions we make as a group are made taking into account social and environmental and governance considerations

Make well calculated choices about products, the businesses that promote fair trade, and uphold high economic principles

To make smart choices requires knowledge to make decisions and some participants are more cautious about the knowledge they have on which to base their decisions:

I think about these things, but I don't think I engage more than that. I am learning more about circular economy and everyday can see that industries are making efforts to transform their supply chain, their products and innovation to reduce waste. Learning more about these things makes me more mindful for the choices I make.

[I] make ethical decisions about what I buy. I buy vegan products i.e. shoes but whether that is 'better' I am not sure. I look at the origin of products. I try to buy mostly from local greengrocers

Educators also have a role to play in developing learners' awareness of the choices they can make: *We study innovation and participate with Medellin's industry, solving with the students the challenges they have, to create opportunities and bring the industry closer to education.*

In developing student employability and career learning I encourage students to ask questions about the ethical values and actions of any sectors and employers they aspire to work in.

At the political (macro) level one participant highlighted the role of brokers and agents who can influence policy, writing *Through Greenpeace I petition government and industry.*

SDG #11 Sustainable Cities / GLG Love where you live

13/21 participants explicitly addressed SDG#11. It is understandable why the emphasis of this SDG is on cities where most people live but to be inclusive it could usefully offer a broader concept of where people live which could include towns, villages, neighbourhoods and communities. This was hinted at in some of the responses.

The essential things people do to contribute to this SDG is maintain their own property and garden and participate in recycling schemes as their rubbish is collected: *[I] take personal responsibility for how I treat the local environment and maintain my own property.*

Unsaid, but also true, is the idea that we contribute to the maintenance and improvement of our local environment and the services it provides through the local taxes we pay. In this respect, the votes we cast in local elections can be used to support politicians who support a sustainability agenda. One respondent observes: *We have a coming election, and I will review the candidates' written proposals and programmes.*

Several participants engaged in this SDG through their professional or voluntary work e.g. *In the run up to WUF11 in Poland in 2022, aim to collect examples of how researchers working in academia and outside are delivering on SDG11 in particular with their cities.*

Continue to work with Waka Kotahi on their innovating streets programme as opportunities arise to promote cities4all (link with SDG13 and SDG5

[I am] part of the chamber of commerce for better community development.

I am embedded in the local community as a volunteer and supporter of causes such as St Albans Climate Action Network.

Teaching brings me into close contact with the families of our students, so strong community links.

Teachers also contribute to the development of their students' knowledge about their city, town and region. One example is: *At School one of our projects is to get to know our city and country, with its history, social situations, natural resources and community, to promote awareness among students of our country and city reality, to take care of it and be part of the solution.*

This is clearly an aspect of the SDGs where many participants feel they could do more: *I need to get more involved in our local community; I want to try to get out more and know more about my environment; I don't think I do enough on this.*

SDG #12 Responsible production / GLG Live better

16/21 participants explicitly addressed SDG#12, Responsible production (Responsible consumption is dealt with in Group B, above). Activities are overwhelmingly at the personal micro level. There is a sense of growing awareness of the importance of being more mindful of our habits of consumption in order, where possible, to reduce it: *I want to take stock of what I have and need. I want to experiment here by playing closer attention to, and learning about, my purchasing habits with a view to make more considered choices.*

Linked to this, with increasing knowledge of the way goods and services are produced, some participants are seeking out businesses that are trying to be more sustainable: *Make informed choices and actively engage with companies re sustainability, building on my learning from the sustainable fashion project in 2020.*

I did not pay attention before to how products were produced. Now I do much more. I buy more natural and sustainable products, like natural cosmetics and sustainable packaging and when I have a bit more income I would like to buy mostly sustainable products. I am optimistic that there will be more choice in the future.

Another aspect of responsible production is what we are able to produce ourselves through our own efforts and resources, as we noted in Group B: *Planted some herbs and spices this summer. Will continue to plant what I could for consumption and freezing for the winters.*

As in all the SDGs, education has an important role to play in societal change, hence: *We have campaigns at school to think twice when buying new clothes or thinking if we really need what we want to buy.*

I am against mindless consumerism, waste and sending things to landfill as all this is harming our environment and causing climate change. And surveys show that happiness and general wellbeing (GWB) are not equated with GDP. When we humans have enough to sustain ourselves well, beyond that we might actually be unhappy and suffer from surplus. In role modelling this for students I talk about the carbon footprint of food and fashion choices.

As one participant pointed out, we can also call for and demand that business pay more attention to the effects of its practices: *Through Greenpeace I petition government and industry.*

SDG GROUP E, SOCIAL/CULTURAL/POLITICAL

This group contains the environmental SDGs #13 Climate Action, #14 Life Below Water and #15 Life On Land.

SDG #13 Climate Action / GLG Act on climate

12/21 participants explicitly addressed SDG#13 implying that it is one of the more challenging goals to address at a personal level. Perhaps one participant captured what many thought: *My concern and engagement with environmental and climate change issues dates back a long way, however, perhaps I doubted that I could directly affect and contribute and switched my efforts towards more immediately accessible causes and goals through the organisations I was employed within.*

One person suggested that *if we are doing our part to look after the planet we are in some way contributing to climate action. A similar thought was expressed by another participant: [I] view this SD Goal as the culmination of all the actions across the other Goals.*

At the micro level, individuals offered a range of personal solutions – eat less meat and dairy, drive less, fly less, offset carbon footprints if needing to fly, planting more trees, increasing use of solar and alternative energy, undertaking a household carbon footprint assessment, cycling and walking more.

At the macro level, a small number of participants indicated their support for groups that championed the cause of the environment and climate change e.g. *Have been supporting FoE and Greenpeace since uni days.* One participant drew attention to the responsibility we have as a citizen: *One of the best this I can do here is exercise my civic duty and vote for a government that takes this issue seriously – especially when it comes to our Pacific neighbours. I still enjoy a good protest march too, and rally when I am passionate about change.* Another participant was working professionally with a Government agency that was developing new transportation systems that indirectly tackled climate change.

Overall, there is a sense that we can and should do more and that we needed to think more about how we might make a difference in this SDG domain.

SDG #14 Life Below Water / GLG Clean the seas

14/21 participants explicitly addressed SDG #14 but there is a sense in the responses that this is also difficult to act upon. We suspect that all participants would agree with this participant: *Wholeheartedly support the aim but feel little I can do personally.* The sense of helplessness featured in several responses: *Aside from not buying fish and not supporting trawling etc., I feel quite helpless in addressing this goal at the personal level.* Another participant got to the heart of the challenge posed by the way the things we buy are packaged; *I find this hard as so many things seem to be wrapped up in so much packaging. I reduce where I can i.e. I don't buy plastic food bags, I use brown paper bags and food covers.*

At the micro level personal solutions included not eating/buying fish or other sea food, wherever possible buying fish that was sustainably harvested, helping to clear litter from the beach, and avoiding plastics.

At the macro level one respondent makes donations to organisations that care for the seas and another buys clothes from a company that promises to look after the seas.

SDG #15 Life On Land / GLG Love nature

13/21 participants explicitly addressed SDG #15. There is a great sense of appreciation and valuing of nature expressed in terms of words like respect, wonder, joy and love as the following examples demonstrate:

I did not appreciate nature when I was younger. Now I see so much more beauty in it and love being surrounded by it. I love hiking. Nature is for me even more beautiful when I see wildlife. I find it so fascinating and it just makes me feel happy, relaxed and appreciated for this life.

[I] travel around the world experiencing its natural wonders, to create respect, awareness and astonishment towards natural resources, landscapes, ecosystems and living things.

I love being outdoors and taking walks in natural landscapes.

I certainly love nature! I find it a hard Goal to contribute to at the individual level (beyond loving and experiencing nature as much as possible.

There is also a thirst for more knowledge, for example, *I'm interested to learn more about the re-wilding and reforestation initiatives" and "I want to try to get out more and know more about my environment.*

Some participants invest time and energy in their gardens or the places they care for: *I have a little garden where I grow some herbs and microgreens. That is my oasis.*

[We] cultivate our own food... Promote and create places filled with nature.

Respect and care for the land I am responsible for. Help nature thrive...dig more ponds and plant more trees.

There is a sense that the way we interact with the natural world is an important element of our wellbeing: *I have really focused on my garden during these times as I wanted to make it a beautiful space in all weathers.*

Things that people do include walking and travelling through nature, digging ponds and planting trees, growing food, creating places filled with nature, building a retirement home, socialising – meeting people outside going for walks together.

SDG GROUP F, SOCIAL/EDUCATIONAL/POLITICAL

SDG #17 Partnerships for Sustainable Development Goals / GLG Come together, get involved

SDG #17 highlights the importance of partnerships and collaborations to deliver the SDGs: *Without partnership, it is impossible to achieve any other SDG*

14/21 participants explicitly addressed SDG#17 indicating that it is one of the more challenging goals but most of the participants did not acknowledge that their involvement in this inquiry – to develop our individual and collective understandings of what the SDGs mean in everyday life – was a form of collaboration for the SDGs. One participant shared a thought that probably many of us think:

On some days, I believe that the only world worth saving is the one you go home to. On other days, I believe I can play a meaningful role in a circle of thought leadership to make a tangible difference to the world. Today is such a day and this is such a circle.

At the micro level two participants indicated their readiness and willingness to get involved in partnerships for action but recognised that there were often impediments: *Yes, ready to do that, but...; I think you can be agentic but we are all reliant on wider systems and industries than ourselves.*

Another participant made the point that we can form influential partnerships within our own familial network: *I actively and mindfully try to give the best example I can to my students, nieces, nephews on how to communicate with empathy and respect. I also try to educate myself on these topics.*

At the meso level participants form partnerships that can directly or indirectly engage with the SDGs. For example, a teacher with her pupils helping vulnerable members of their communities: *My school shares food and helps some communities that need help every year. Those communities help immigrants, vulnerable mothers and young people*

One educator has designed opportunities for students to engage in project work that specifically engages with the SDGs:

As an educator, I include a capstone project for students to use digital technologies and platforms to carry out a largescale international project with the SDGs framing the project's research: what are students in other countries learning and doing? What is being done in their country to create sustainable development business models and social enterprises?

A number of participants are involved in projects, groups and networks that encourage the sharing of knowledge and practice that directly or indirectly engage with SDGs:

[I] continue to build and support Lifewide Education & Creative Academic Communities, Facilitate the development of knowledge about how people engage with the SDGs.

[I] assist a colleague in project on loneliness and tracking what has been done in other cities in particular amongst LGBTQ+ groups.

[I] established 2 organisations and work as advisor to charitable bodies and to University of Colombo.

I contribute to knowledge sharing for science, technology and innovation

Some participants are keen to get involved in partnerships and are actively searching for communities they can join: *I am very interested in being in communities who want to make changes. I will look for several projects where I can be part of in order to support the UN sustainable goals. I will expand connections to build a bigger network.*

Discussion

Areas of action in support of SDGs/GLGs

An interesting discovery is that most of the participants in the inquiry were able to interpret and relate to many of the 17 areas covered by the SDGs/GLGs. However, most participants expressed some hesitancy to make claims in some areas of the SDGs. The reasons for this include limited knowledge about an area, competing values e.g. principles may have to be compromised through factors such as limited financial resources, and, often, a misplaced guilt that they are not doing as much as they feel they should be.

To illustrate the scale and extent of personal action, Table 2 collates the number of participants who report activity in respect of each of the 17 SDGs (each out of a total of 21 potential respondents). This enables us to identify at a glance the degree to which they feel able to address each goal.

Table 2 Summary of actions by SDG for 21 SDG statements

1 UN Sustainable Development Goals	2 Good Life Goals	Actions n=21
(1) No Poverty	1 Help End Poverty	13
(2) Zero Hunger	2. Eat Better	18
(3) Good Health and Well-being	3. Stay Well	18
(4) Quality Education	4. Learn and Teach	18
(5) Gender Equality	5. Treat Everyone Equal	21
(6) Clean Water and Sanitation	6. Save Water	18
(7) Affordable and Clean Energy	7. Use Clean Energy	16
(8) Decent Work & Economic Growth	8. Do Good Work	17
(9) Industry, Innovation & Infrastructure	9. Make Smart Choices	13
(10) Reducing Inequality	10. Be Fair	19
(11) Sustainable Cities and Communities	11. Love Where You Live	13
(12) Responsible Consumption & Production	12. Live Better	17/16
(13) Climate Action	13. Act on Climate	12
(14) Life Below Water	14. Clean the Seas	14
(15) Life On Land	15. Love Nature	13
(16) Peace, Justice, and Strong Institutions	16. Make Peace	12
(17) Partnerships for the Goals.	17. Come Together – get involved	14

The first observation is that treating people equally, irrespective of gender (SDG#5) or any other form of discrimination (SDG#10) is the goal that most people are actively involved in (scoring 21 and 19 respectively). This is significant as participants come from numerous countries, in each hemisphere, indicating that respect for others is widespread. One caveat must be noted, though: participants are all highly educated individuals, so not representative of societies as a whole. Nonetheless, it is clear that social interaction, whether at home or in the workplace, is an area over which they feel they have control and can take positive steps towards these SDGs.

When we consider the level of action in this respect, it is taking place at both micro and meso levels, with a small number of participants moving towards the macro level.

There is a large number of SDGs that score between 16 and 18, again suggesting that most people can make claims to be acting in ways that are consistent with their interpretation of the SDG. They focus on personal issues such as health and domestic consumption, but are also extended from the micro to the meso level through work and charitable donation. They rely on making conscious, informed decisions, and these are areas where information appears to be assisting action by the individual.

































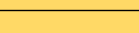
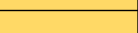














In contrast, there are two SDGs which score 12 (#13, Climate action and #16, Peace and justice). These are followed closely by #9 (Industry), #11 (Sustainable cities), #15 (Life on land), #14 (Life below water) and #17 (Partnerships for the goals). We can infer from these scores that participants feel these objectives are remote to their immediate lives, belonging to the macro level, and that they, as individuals, are limited in the contribution they can make and the impact they can have. This is a misapprehension which can be challenged by reading the examples of micro and meso action that are provided in responses.

Levels of action

The analysis grouped responses according to the level of individual actions: micro (personal), meso (work and local community or environment) or macro (wider community – national or international). Table 3 compares the levels of action for each of the SDGs. The turquoise shading indicates significant actions are cited; the yellow shading represents some action (though this is variable across SDGs), and the bland boxes are levels where no relevant action was shown. The colour coding confirms that most action is occurring at the micro level, is the level at which participants are most likely to be active.

Table 2 Levels of action towards the SDGs

Legend  significant action  some action  no action

1 UN Sustainable Development Goals	2 Good Life Goals	Micro	Meso	Macro
(1) No Poverty	1 Help End Poverty			
(2) Zero Hunger	2. Eat Better			
(3) Good Health and Well-being	3. Stay Well			
(4) Quality Education	4. Learn and Teach			
(5) Gender Equality	5. Treat Everyone Equal			
(6) Clean Water and Sanitation	6. Save Water			
(7) Affordable and Clean Energy	7. Use Clean Energy			
(8) Decent Work & Economic Growth	8. Do Good Work			
(9) Industry, Innovation & Infrastructure	9. Make Smart Choices			
(10) Reducing Inequality	10. Be Fair			
(11) Sustainable Cities and Communities	11. Love Where You Live			
(12) Responsible Consumption & Production	12. Live Better			
(13) Climate Action	13. Act on Climate			
(14) Life Below Water	14. Clean the Seas			
(15) Life On Land	15. Love Nature			
(16) Peace, Justice, and Strong Institutions	16. Make Peace			
(17) Partnerships for the Goals.	17. Come Together – get involved			

This analysis is unable to show the number of comments recorded in each cell, hence it is merely indicative of the emergent trends. This being the case, it does provide an immediate indicator of the areas where participants are inactive. These are predominantly at the macro level, but interestingly SDGs#14 and #15 have activity at the macro level but not at the interim, meso level. This may reflect a belief that action can be taken individually and beyond this, it requires the force of a wider, meso, structure.

When viewed from this perspective, SDG#1, Poverty, alone emerges as the area where participants feel they are taking action equally across all levels.

Positive action

The following are points of action which participants are taking, and which may serve as models for us. Some of the SDG(s) each addresses are shown in brackets.

- Use solar energy (7, 9, 11, 14, 15)
- Turn off lights (7, 12)
- Limit water usage (6, 7, 12)
- Buy less food (3, 12)
- Eat plant-based food (3, 12, 15)
- Avoid packaged goods (3, 12)
- Donate to foodbanks and charities (1, 2, 10)
- Buy locally (8, 9, 11, 12)
- Make informed choices of manufacturer (8, 10, 12)
- Buy fewer clothes (12)
- Re-cycle (12)
- Act as role model (5, 10, 16)
- Challenge prejudice (4, 5, 10)
- Environmental projects at school (4, 11, 16, 17)
- Working/volunteering in the community (11, 17)
- Educate for political awareness and participation (4, 16, 17)

Sites for thinking and action in support of SDGs

SDG affordances – opportunities for activities and actions that support a particular Sustainable Development Goal can be found in every aspect of life – it can be a lifewide enterprise. Table 3 identifies the common sites described in the SDG personal statements.

Table 3 Potential sites for engaging with the SDGs in a person's life – the lifewide dimension

Sites for SDG-related activity	MICRO	MESO	MACRO
Work/professional life & practice community			
Voluntary work of a professional nature			
Formal study /CPD/ Training			
Self-education/informal learning			
Research			
Family & <u>friends</u> social activities like parenting, eating, playing			
Home & garden			
Local environs <u>eg</u> shopping, walking, doing things in the local community or natural environment, socialising			
Hobbies, interests, leisure activities and pursuits			
Travel - experiencing other cultures			
Donor support for local charities and international organisations (<u>eg</u> NGOs) who help people in need			
Working in partnership with others including local, <u>national</u> and international organisations and agencies			
Exercising democratic right to vote / political activism			

We tested whether the patterns of sites varied according to the SDG and Figure 4 summarises the most important sites for activity relating to SDG#1 No Poverty, #4 Quality education #12 Responsible consumption and #15 Life on Earth. Within this group of SDGs and the group of 21 participants the number of activity sites varied between 4 and 8.

Figure 4 Different patterns in the sites for activity relating to 4 SDGs – SDG#1 No Poverty, #4 Quality education #12 Responsible consumption and #15 Life on Earth

SDG #1 Sites for activity relating to SDG	MICRO	MESO	MACRO
Work/professional life & practice community		4	1
Formal study /CPD			
Self-education/informal learning	1		
Research		1	
Family & friends social activities like teaching, eating, playing ----	1		
Home, garden,			
Local environs eg shopping, walking, doing things in the local community or natural environment, socialising	4	2	
Hobbies, interests, leisure activities and pursuits			
Travel, experiencing other cultures			
Donations & gifts – support for local charities and international organisations who help people in need		6	3
Working in partnership with others		1	1
Exercising voting rights or political activism			1

SDG #4 Sites for activity relating to SDG	MICRO	MESO	MACRO
Work/professional life & practice community		11	1
Voluntary professional work		1	
Formal study /CPD/ Training		3	
Self-education/informal learning	3		
Research		1	
Family & friends social activities like teaching, eating, playing ----	1		
Home, garden,			
Local environs eg shopping, walking, doing things in the local community or natural environment, socialising		2	
Hobbies, interests, leisure activities and pursuits			
Travel, experiencing other cultures			
Donations & gifts – support for local charities and international organisations who help people in need			
Working in partnership with others including local, national and international organisations and agencies			4
Exercising voting rights or political activism			

SDG #12 Sites for activity relating to SDG	MICRO	MESO	MACRO
Work/professional life & practice community	1	1	
Formal study /CPD			
Self-education/informal learning			
Research			
Family & friends (social activities like teaching, eating, playing ----	3		
Home, garden, allotment	6		
Local environs eg shopping, walking, doing things in the local community or natural environment, socialising	10		
Hobbies, interests, leisure activities and pursuits			
Travel, experiencing other cultures			
Donations & gifts – support for local charities and international organisations who help people in need	1		
Working in partnership with others			
Exercising democratic voting right / involvement in activism			

SDG #15 Sites for activity relating to SDG	MICRO	MESO	MACRO
Work/professional life & practice community	1		
Formal study /CPD			
Self-education/informal learning	1		
Research			
Family & friends (social activities like teaching, eating, playing ----	1		
Home, garden, allotment	4		
Local environs eg shopping, walking, doing things in the local community or natural environment, socialising	4		
Hobbies, interests, leisure activities and pursuits			
Travel, experiencing other cultures	2		
Donations & gifts – support for local charities and international organisations who help people in need			1
Working in partnership with others			
Exercising voting rights or political activism			

Concluding thoughts

The use of a simple tool to help people reflect on the ways in which they interpreted and acted upon the SDGs has been a useful exercise. We could extend the exploration further by inviting participants to select a single SDG and over time framework in Table 4 mapping how it was interpreted and acted upon across all the affordances in the individual's life.

Acknowledgements

We are very grateful to the 21 members of the lifewide learning research and development group who participated in the inquiry. This is a preliminary analysis of the synthesis of personal SDG statements prepared for the final meeting of the inquiry on November 22nd. We will undertake further analysis and we welcome comments and suggestions for improving it. Please email jjenny@blueyonder.co.uk if you wish to add any.

Editor

A recent report by the International Commission on the Futures of Education, acknowledges the power of education to bring about profound change. It says, “

We face a dual challenge of making good on the unfulfilled promise to ensure the right to quality education for every child, youth and adult and fully realizing the transformational potential of education as a route for sustainable collective futures. To do this, we need a new social contract for education that can repair injustices while transforming the future. This new social contract must be grounded in human rights and based on principles of non-discrimination, social justice, respect for life, human dignity and cultural diversity. It must encompass an ethic of care, reciprocity, and solidarity. It must strengthen education as a public endeavour and a common good.”¹

Respect for human rights and concern for education as a common good must become the central threads that stitch together our shared world and interconnected future..... These two universal principles must become foundational in education everywhere. The right to quality education everywhere and learning that builds the capabilities of individuals to work together for shared benefit provide the foundation for flourishing, diverse futures of education. With consistent commitment to human rights and the common good, we will be able to sustain and benefit from the rich tapestry of different ways of knowing and being in the world that humanity’s cultures and societies bring to formal and informal learning, and to the knowledge we are able to share and assemble together.”^{1pvii}

In this article Catalina Caicedo, a participant in our inquiry, explains her work as an educator and school leader in engaging with key SDGs.

Source

1 International Commission on the Futures of Education (2021) Reimagining our futures together: a new social contract for education. UNESCO Available at: <https://unesdoc.unesco.org/ark:/48223/pf0000379707>

The Important Role of Education and Schools in Societal Change to Support Achievement of the SDGs

Catalina Caicedo



Catalina is High School Principal at Marymount School, in the Medellin district of Colombia- South America. She has been working at Marymount for the past 14 years and is also an alumna from the same school. Catalina is passionate about education and believes in the power it has to change the world and make it sustainable. That is way, her life purpose is connected to Marymount’s one and it is: to be committed to serve by transforming lives through education. She is a Psychologist with postgraduate studies in creativity and a master’s degree in High School Education.

Introduction

In my role as a teacher and school leader and administrator, my professional life is deeply entangled with Sustainable Development Goal (SDG) #4 Quality Education. In this article I share some of the ways that we have, as a school community, been directly Involved in the implementation of some of the SDGs. I will give some context about Marymount School Medellin.

Marymount is a catholic, independent XXI Century learning community of the city of Medellin, with a commitment to service. We contribute to the transformation and innovation of education from participating in the holistic processes that allow its members to develop their abilities and competencies to their full potential. With a visionary leadership that promotes investigation, innovation, regional, national, and international strategic partnerships, and the implementation of a state-of-the art pedagogical model.



As a School we set an example delivering to society happy, ethical, socially aware human beings, with the necessary tools to transform the society and face the challenges of the changing world.



In 2024, we will be recognized as a XXI Century Learning Community, comprised of critical, autonomous, global citizens, responsible and ethical human beings. With strong partnerships, international cooperation, innovation, and investigation projects with different institutions. We will be models in educational innovation around the world. Our clients will sense us as a close and respectful community that easily adapts to a changing and uncertain environment, able to generate an atmosphere of constant reflection to strengthen and implement ideas, interdisciplinary work opportunities, collaboration, and investigation. An empowered workforce, with a holistic view of humankind, a systemic approach as educational organization and a clear perspective of the challenges the education and society offer.

We inspire, empower, and accompany our community

As the High School principal at Marymount, I work every day to foster innovation to develop XXI century skills in our students, using XXI century methodologies that ensure this growth in the students. These competences are strongly related to the SDGs, since they are: creativity, communication, collaboration, critical thinking, social emotional learning, and social and environmental awareness. So, my aim as a Principal is to empower the faculty to be XXI century teachers, this way the students will be XXI century learners and this way, be global and local citizens aware of the importance of sustainability and SDGs.

SDG 1 No Poverty, SDG 4 Quality Education and SDG 17 Partnerships for the goals

Many people are living in extreme poverty in Columbia and the situation has been exacerbated by the pandemic and social and economic issues. Data given by the Departamento Administrativo Nacional de Estadística suggests that 42% of people are living in poverty, while the Ministry of Education estimates that more than 100.000 children are not enrolled in school. As a privileged school, Marymount started thinking about this and was determined to act. The school started forming and reinforcing alliances with local public schools, to build with them best practices regarding XXI century learning, making sure that institutions have the knowledge to engage students with the learning process. We have alliances with the Alcaldía and Gobernación, in which we do mentoring for some public schools in Medellín and Antioquia, collaborating as a learning community to be responsible for the change.

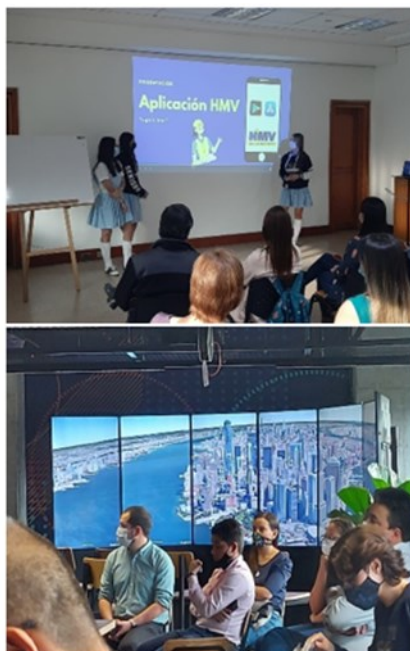


Marymount also acknowledges the importance of promoting social awareness and action in our students, so we have different programs where they are mentors and lead English teaching and projects regarding life projects and SDGs, with students from Medellín, Antioquia, Bolivia, Ecuador and Perú. These programs are lead in alliance with some nonprofit organizations such as: Global Change Makers, Marina Orth, Juan María Céspedes, Consejo de la Estrella among others. To develop lifelong learning, we



work with some local companies and public and private schools' students, with innovative methodologies, where the students solve different challenges the companies have, this Project is called Jóvenes 4.0. Participants pitch their ideas, and the company chooses the best solution to implement. In conclusion, as a school we aim for quality and innovative education for our students and the students from the public schools we work with. Giving all of them, the same opportunities and contributing to end poverty through education, that is the real way to transform mindsets and society.

Seeing the Learning for Sustainable Futures inquiry as a learning opportunity and as a way of fostering engagement with the SDGs, as High School Principal I decided to teach a course to the 11th graders in March 2022. The intention is to promote reflection and personal action towards sustainability, this way we'll be impacting not only on the students but also on their families.



SDG 12 Responsible Consumption, SDG 13 Climate Action & SDG 15 Protect, restore, and promote sustainable use of terrestrial ecosystems

Colombia currently represents about 0.6% of the gas emission that cause global warming, but we are one of the 20 countries around the world that are more threatened because of the atmospheric effects of CO₂. Because of this, during COP26, our government shared the plan that considers long and short terms goals, such as having more than 500 companies at the end of 2021 merged in the program for Neutral Carbon and planting more than 180 million trees and aiming to have 30% of Colombia's territory as protected area.

But living through the pandemic and observing its effects on consumption and one-off use of many things, concerns me a lot. I think the environment benefitted from less cars, but industry and the production and use of plastic didn't stop. Then came the production and use of disposable face masks and medical gloves, the safety protocols that resulted in triple plastic packaging for restaurants and deliveries. Restaurants and supermarkets are using more than double or triple packaging which became waste material. The clothes need to be washed much more than before to avoid the virus, the water that we need to wash our hands is much more than before, the use of plastic for alcohol and disinfecting gels in an addition to the plastic use. In conclusion, because of the pandemic water consumption and plastic use have increased in our daily life and will directly impact the planet.

Observing this situation as school has caused us as a community to reflect on how these things adversely affect the environment, and the importance that education has in creating awareness and action, in the students that will impact on their families and

community. Also, as an organization we are transforming our practices to make them more friendly with the environment. With our Sustainable Marymount Project and its different work themes we aim to educate and act in an environmentally responsible manner. In terms of the school as an organization we have some ecofriendly policies such as: recycle, reuse, and reduce, less paper use, no single-use plates or cups, trash separation, no balloons use, solar energy (in progress), carpooling, taking care of our native forest and its species, among others.



With the students we undertake research. We have some ecological groups that investigate the forest, grow our vegetable plot and work as environmental awareness leaders with the rest of the school. On the other hand, students make “botellitas de amor” that are pet bottles that keep plastic to be reused in social causes, such as parks, desks, chairs for people that don’t have access to buy them. Also, every month we have a Zero-waste day, where the trash cans are removed from the school, and students try to produce the least amount of waste possible. Environmental awareness has become a culture in our daily live at Marymount and makes part of our scope and sequence, we believe that doing small things in a systematic way, we can have big impacts.

SDG 5 Gender Equality and SDG 10 Reducing Inequality

As an only girls’ school Marymount has within its philosophy the mission to educate and empower, well rounded women. Colombia is a country that has been led by men since its beginning. Government, companies, and boards are mostly composed of men. Also, women are in some communities expected to stay at home, taking care of the kids, and not allowed by men, to work, study or undertake personal projects. This has been changing over the past years, but it is still common. So, Marymount for the past 65 years has had the objective of educating global leaders, able to make important decisions for society, aware of the needs of others and the environment. Based on scientific evidence, the school takes advantage single sex education, to empower students, develop their leadership skills, foster their self-esteem and the trust in themselves. At school, they have the opportunity to learn how to lead projects in and out of school, with a local or global view, they feel important for society and with the power to transform it. Once they graduate, a significant number of alumni prepare themselves for important positions, or lead nonprofit organizations to make a better Colombia, and be responsible for social sustainability. They are also involved in creating woman associations to empower young women around the country, they are Techos Invisibles, Inspiring Girls and Mujeres TIC. This is how Marymount works hard to change mindsets regarding women’s place in society, and through education contribute to reduce inequality.



What I learnt through the learning for sustainable futures inquiry

I learnt that understanding the SDGs and reflecting upon them makes us more sensitive human beings and more likely to act towards building a better future for the next generations. Being conscious about our actions and what we can do in our family, house, workplace, mobility will certainly change the world if each of us implements actions. Understanding the possibilities, we have and the different realities in the world, makes us responsible and empathetic. Each of us must analyze each SDG in the context of our own life in order to decide how to take action, regarding the different topics that will finally promote sustainability. After deep analysis, I have concluded that education is the key to change mindsets and to develop consciousness in the community.

Inquiries like the sustainable futures inquiry, are an effective way to understand and get to know different points of view, to open our minds to new ideas, actions, reflections, and possibilities. Going from the general self-reflection to the specific reflection, encourage us to really act, and be conscious of what we do daily to have a better world. The methodology we used is applicable to other contexts, and is relevant to lifelong learning, since the times between productions are enough to think about it, reflect and be creative. The instructions and feedback were very clear and motivated the participants to keep interacting and producing material for the investigation. It was a way to develop XXI century skills such as critical thinking, communication, creativity and collaboration, global citizenship, a true XXI century experience.

I am grateful for the opportunity to participate in the inquiry. It made me take the time to reflect on the SDGs and evaluate myself and my school's involvement in their achievement. I experienced a true learning community and I hope I can continue to be part of this great social learning project.

In Search of Personal Growth and Living a Life For a More Sustainable Future

Elisa Daka



I have been travelling for the last 3 years (mostly in Australia) and explored so many beautiful natural places with beautiful animals and insects. During my first year of travel I knew that I wanted to play an active role in protecting this beautiful planet and its species but I was not very sure how. Now I am temporary back living in Germany and I would like to focus on holistic approaches for sustainable community development as I think, in order to protect this planet the work needs to start with humans first. I am undertaking an online course offered by Gaia Education aimed at developing my understanding of how we might create designs for more sustainable communities and environments. I joined the Learning for Sustainable Futures inquiry to develop my understanding of the Sustainable Development Goals and what they meant to me in my everyday life.

Introduction

When I was a child, I subconsciously knew that I wanted to help other people in the future. I think this instinct is in every human. Growing up in a low-income family, my parents directed me to learn something related to economics in order to have a well-paid office job and not to have to worry about money. So even though I was not interested in economics I decided to study business law at university against my instinct. After graduating I had a well-paid office job in an investment company, with a great manager and colleagues. I did not have to worry about money, and yet I did not feel fulfilled, and I often thought that what I was doing was pointless. I wanted to do something that was more meaningful.

In 2018 I had an emotionally tough year and needed a change. I decided to make my dream come true and travel around the world. I had not saved as much money as I wanted to, however I did not want to wait any longer. I quit my job and my apartment, bought a large backpack and left Germany knowing that I would have to start at the beginning when I came back. Feeling a little insecure, a little fear and a great desire for new and different kinds of experiences, I began my adventure when I was 28 years old. It lasted nearly three and, after a few months break, I will continue it in a different way.

Expanding my horizons

They say that travel broadens the mind and I can vouch for this. All the new experiences, the impressions I gained and the challenges I faced during that time, have helped me expand my perspectives and attitudes to people, nature and life in general. Some things I tried to do did not work out as I had hoped or planned, but other opportunities appeared that I did not expect. Living this way taught me to be much more flexible and accept and enjoy situations even when they were not the way I wanted them to be. I realised that making detailed plans was not useful, and it was better to have ideas of how to achieve my desires and make my decisions spontaneously, as opportunities arose.

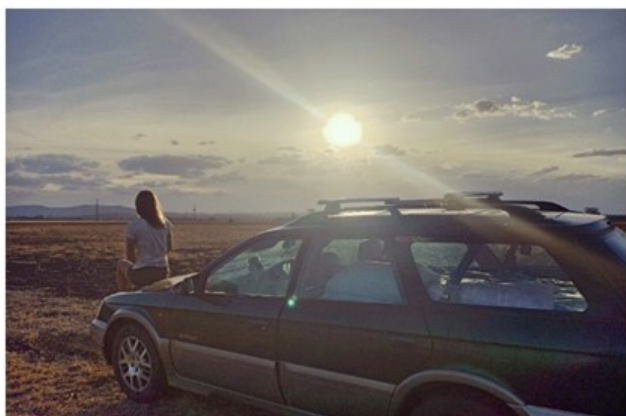


People with different nationalities, cultures, backgrounds, personalities and social status showed me how to see life from their perspectives. Some of them inspired me so much that I changed my view. Before my big journey I was already fairly open minded but meeting so many different people from Asia, Oceania, Africa, Europe, South and North America, has helped me to be much less

judgmental. All of us, no matter where we live, want the same in life: to feel safe, to be healthy and to be happy and feel fulfilled. I now know that this is one of the most important goals of the SDGs.

Discovering and feeling connected to the natural world

One of the lessons of the Sustainable Development Goals is that we are all connected to each other and to living and non-living things and that if we are to care about the world beyond ourselves we have to feel these connections. My deeper appreciation of nature and its wildlife grew out of my travelling experiences and it was the biggest life-changing influence on me. In the past, I did not spend much time in nature. I enjoyed being at the beach and in parks but I did not enjoy being in forests and I thought that hiking was an activity for older people. I grew up in the countryside and therefore felt more attracted to the exciting city life for about 15 years. Through travelling I discovered that hiking in forests, on mountains and along coasts is one of my favorite activities now and I still consider myself as being very young! Australia and New Zealand, which have an enormous amount of diverse nature influenced my connection with nature significantly. The more time I spent in nature, the more I connected with it. I was and still am fascinated about the capability of nature to regenerate and protect itself.



During my travels, I lived for 7 months either in a car or in a minivan. I was surprised to not have the feeling of being homeless just because I didn't have a proper roof over my head. On the contrary, I felt that wherever I am is my home. I realized that having only a car/van, some clothes, food and money gave me the possibility of a freedom I had never experienced before. I could choose where I wanted to go, to sleep and to wake up. I learned that I can be happy with only fulfilling my very basic needs. During that time, I spent most of my day outside, in forests, on mountains, at beaches and sometimes in little towns, which helped me feel connected to nature enormously. I now understand why I felt so disconnected before. I have spent most of my time in buildings, either at home or at school, university and work, and even most of my leisure activities were inside, like cinema, restaurants and gym. I am not surprised that most people don't feel very connected or not at all to nature, as most people barely spend time in it. The result of this disconnection is that nature and wildlife is being harmed without any feeling of guilt.

What fascinates me even more than nature itself are animals living with nature. The forests, mountains, deserts, seas are their home, their protection and their nourishment. They know that they are part of nature and not the other way around. They take only what they need and don't exploit and damage it. When I now see wildlife living in their natural environment, it doesn't matter if they are kangaroos, lizards, birds, dragonflies etc., I feel so much happiness. I feel so in love. They are giving nature the life it has given to them. They live in harmony together and I feel sad that we humans often don't feel this way anymore. I also feel sad that many animals are being killed by people, either on purpose or by accident. I was shocked to see how

many, kangaroos, possums etc., are being killed on streets by cars in Australia. We take their home, make it to ours and kill them. What is even worse though is to kill them on purpose in order to make profit out of them, like with elephant tusks or crocodile leather.

Another big issue I see is the animal exploitation for food. I feel heartbroken when I see how badly animals are treated on many farms. While backpacking in Australia I worked on fruit and vegetable farms. One of the neighbouring farms was a dairy farm. I sometimes had a bit of spare time and went closer to the cows to observe them. Then I started talking and playing with them. I enjoyed it so much that I felt sorry to continue eating them. I had the same sensation as eating a dog or a cat. After this surprisingly strong connection I decided to stop eating beef and shortly afterwards any other kind of meat as I realized that if I could connect to

cows, I can also connect to any other animal if I am open to it. Two years later I also stopped eating fish and seafood after talking and playing with fish in a pond. I also stopped because of the way fish and sea food is caught but the major reason why I don't eat them anymore is my connection. I now eat plant-based food as much as possible and try to buy more organic food if my pocket money allows.

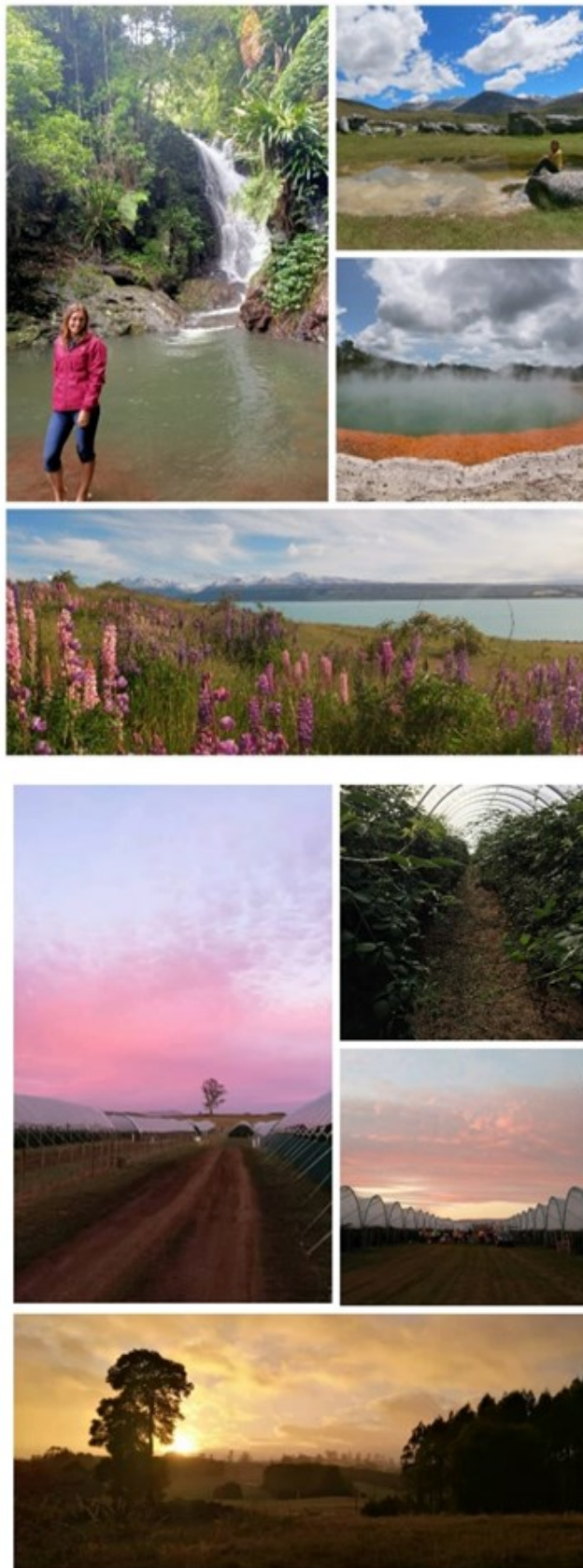
Connection is the key to our willingness to change

After deepening my connection to nature and wildlife, I was wondering if I want to work for an animal welfare or an environmental organization or any similar organization which tries to protect and conserve biodiversity. Somehow, I struggled seeing myself again in a fulltime office job, as many of the positions in these organizations are performed through offices. Working as an ecologist or similar required studying ecology, which I wasn't willing to do neither as I did not want to go back to university and loose my flexible lifestyle. I was thinking for many months which profession to learn. During that time, I was also asking myself with which profession I could achieve the best result of conserving and protecting the biodiversity. I had watched documentaries about nature, wildlife, food, housing, etc. and informed myself about several different kind of organizations. I realized that whatever issue there is, humans are the answer. Some of the issues, like climate warming, wildlife endangering, forest destruction because of housing, agriculture, production, etc. have been caused by humans and can only be recovered by them. Some of the ongoing issues we are facing is to do with population growth, which means that even more forests would be destroyed and even more animals and insects would loose their home and die.

During a rebirthing session, a breathing technique therapy I experienced, I had vision a few months ago. I saw myself helping children and adults connecting to nature and to each other. I taught them how to use natural resources and how to produce sustainable natural products. Instinctively, the title "community developer" popped up in my head. I feel very connected to this idea and role and it gives a lot of meaning to my life. Based on my personal experience and current knowledge, I now think the best way for a change is an education that develops awareness and connection. Many people are not aware of what is happening on this planet. They are not aware of how and under which environmental costs things are being produced. Most people live in cities where no nature is reflected. I think we need to make nature more visible to the people in towns and cities, so they have the possibility to connect more with it.

When one journey ends a new one begins

Looking back over the last few years, I can see that I have learnt so much from experiences of travelling and living in other countries and cultures and what I have discovered has prepared me for my next journey. I want to know more about how to live a life that is in harmony with the natural world so a few months ago, I started an online course in "Design for Sustainability and Regeneration" offered by Gaia Education.





At the same time as starting my course I joined the Lifewide Learning for Sustainable Futures inquiry. I was grateful to hear about this project where I could learn about the SDGs and explore my life through these goals. In addition, I have been inspired by the other participants with their reflections. Their ideas and experiences have given me hope for achieving a more sustainable future. With help of this project, I am more aware of possible supportive ways in everyday life as an individual. There are goals I find easy/easier to support, like buying products with less or no packaging, recycle waste, use less water, energy and fuel, buy more local products, eat less or no animal products and eat organic products. There are goals I find more difficult to support as an individual, like help end poverty. For me it is easiest to achieve the goals when the implementation feels (almost) effortless, affordable and/or even enjoyable in my everyday life. The Sustainable Development Goals that I feel most connected to are (2) Zero Hunger, (3) Good Health and Well-Being, (4) Quality Education, (5) Gender Equality, (10) Reduced Inequalities, (7) Affordable and Clean Energy, (11) Sustainable Cities and Communities, (12) Responsible Consumption and Production, (14) Life Below Water, (15) Life on Land, (16) Peace, Justice and Strong Institutions and (17) Partnerships for the Goals.

The inquiry encouraged me to reflect on my life and realise how closely my the life I am trying to lead is aligned to many of the SDGs. My personal goal is to contribute to the regeneration of communities and raise bioregional awareness. I would like to help create harmonic communities as this is the essential basis for advancing society. For me, harmony means to raise acceptance and inclusion of any kind of diversity, and the generation of equity and compassionate attitudes. I wish to transform unsustainable monocultures for growing food into sustainable organic agriculture in order to create a healthy soil, support biodiversity and provide local food all year long. This would mean less hunger, more local nutrition variety all year long and more potential job opportunities. Another step would be transforming fossil energy into renewable energy as much as possible to stop exploiting natural resources and help mitigate the climate change that we are causing.

I am just at the beginning my new path and I am already looking forward to all the experiences and insights I will gain as more and more I realise that every kind of life, be it plants, insects, animals or humans, helps me grow as a person.



Stories that Connect Us with the World and with Each Other

Zahra Bahrani

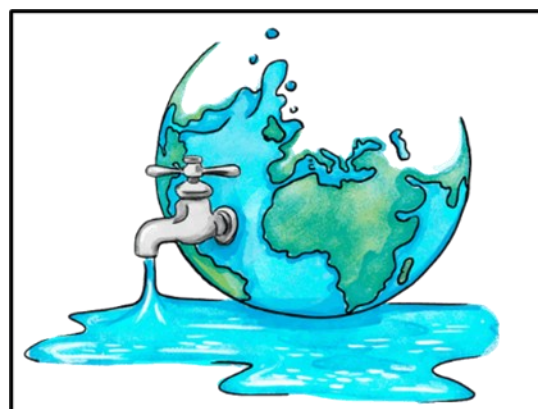


Zahra is an elementary school teacher in Hamedan, Iran. She has a Bachelor in Educational Technology and is studying for an MA Educational Technology in preparation for doctoral study abroad. She is a founding member of Lifewide Education's 'lifewide learning research and development group'.

When I joined the Lifewide Learning for Sustainable Futures inquiry, I had a general understanding of the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) but it was difficult for me to find areas in my life where I could act on the SDGs. After participating in the inquiry and reading other participants' stories, I gained a more specific and practical understanding of the SDGs and realized that the simple stories of our life could be an important context for turning these goals into actions that make our life more meaningful. We need to take notice of the problems and issues in our life but we also need to be aware of the problems and issues in the world of which we are apart. The inquiry helped me find opportunities for actions in my role as a teacher and in my personal life.

Raising my awareness of SDGs made me appreciate what I care about and my first story about concerning and caring shows my first engagement with them. In my first vignette, I reflected on SDG 6 (Clean Water and Sanitation) and the importance of feeling concerned and caring about water consumption. My first step to move forward doing something new to support the goal of clean water and sanitation for everyone would be to provoke people to feel concerned about wasting water and to care enough to do something about it. I took the first step in my class. I asked my students to care about water wasting and to do something real in their homes or neighborhood. They had to do something that they could continue because showing concern and caring about something needs time and effort.

I started to search my own life and discover affordances – opportunities where I could change what I was doing or do something new, that would help me support the SDGs. This searching process included reading other participants' stories. In their stories I discovered new ideas for action. I learned that the little actions we take and the simple stories we tell, could inspire us as well as those around us. Telling our stories to each other of how we have supported the SDGs is what will eventually bring about cultural change, and the classroom is a good place to start.



In my second vignette, I engaged directly with SDG 4 (Quality Education). As a school teacher this is the most important goal to me and everyday I try to create better opportunities for educating students from poorer backgrounds. After the Corona outbreak, some of my students couldn't attend online classes because they did not have access to a smartphone. I tried to take some steps to increase their access. We started with a friend of mine who had an old smartphone at home, which was donated it to one of the students. As more people heard about our campaign the number of people who were willing to donate an old phone increased around me. With the help of the school administrator, we were able to provide second-hand smartphones to the students. Some people made donations and that allowed us to buy new tablets for some students. Our program will continue in the coming year and I welcome further donations of tablets to help more students.

Knowing that other participants like me reflect on their lives and we share a common concern, has prompted and encouraged me to act with more courage and find some ideas for action. The interesting point in some stories was the problem or challenge that people were engaged with that provoked them to look for affordances in their context, as it happened to me. When I accepted the challenge and confronted my students' lack of access to smartphones, I started to look for

affordances and opportunities to deal with the problem. As I noticed in most of the stories I read, when we care about something the obstacles and challenges we encounter encourage us to seek and find solutions that help us move forward with SDGs.

*My experience of increasing students access made me see and understand this problem very closely. The first time I encountered this problem, I thought I could do nothing, but now that I have been able to help students. I hope to take more steps to increase student access and create equal educational conditions for them. Addressing SDGs depends on our context and our circumstances, we encounter those goals closely and, it challenges us to act. **Extract from my vignette***

My third vignette was about reducing inequality [SDG10]. After reading some vignettes in the group, the idea of writing this story crossed my mind. In this story, I illustrated how “Cultural restrictions” provoke me to show all the girls around me that we should fight for our independence and not give up on our dreams. I left home in 2011, went to university, got a job, and started a new, independent life in a new city, alone. I have always tried to help all the girls who are in the same situation and need help and guidance. I fully understand them because I have had a similar experience and faced similar obstacles. There are many girls with big dreams and I always felt I could not let them down because many people supported, motivated and guided me. I'm glad that some girl calls me after a year to let me know they have been accepted by a university or they have found a job.

Reflecting on my own experience.... created a lens for me to understand this SDG [10] well. During these last years, I tried to make the girls around me aware of the many opportunities they have to grow. I tried to study, become independent and find a job despite the opposition. So I think if I study and become independent but remain silent in my patriarchal culture and do not make women aware of their rights, what will be the result of all this effort? I remind the girls who meet me how strong they are, and their power to make the world a better place to live.

Extract from my vignette

In this vignette, I realized that I have for many years been a role model, friend, teacher, and mentor working with girls who may be suffering from gender inequalities. By reflecting on my life story, I realize that many of them need to be aware of their rights and not be afraid. The story made me more determined to consciously engage with SDG 10 in my everyday actions and activities.

I now realise that my life story—the journey that I began in 2011, covers all my stories. After writing this story I realized how much I love the life that I have been able to create for myself to try to make it better than before. I consider my life story as the background for the emerging sustainability themes that I create.

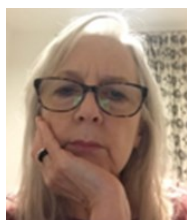
Experiencing this inquiry, raised my awareness so that it is now hard for me to ignore significant opportunities for action. Now I will move forward with more optimism, confidence and knowledge of the SDGs and be more conscious of my actions. I also realize that people in my culture often conceal their actions in support of some SDGs. For example, my colleague mentioned that to prevent a student from dropping out (due to having to travel long distances from another village to school), he provided a bicycle for that student with the help of several benefactors. Then he pointed out that I should not have told you this. But I told him actions that provoke others to think or care about such issues are one of the most significant consequences of his action. Through our actions we inspire and encourage others to support the SDG goals.

Before participating in the inquiry, I was faced with some challenges that made me believe that engaging with the SDGs would be impossible and personal action in this area wouldn't be helpful. Now, after this inquiry, I trust in my actions more than before. I also believe I can support some of the SDGs by making some small changes. Now I believe that some of these changes can turn into significant movements. Five weeks of engaging in the inquiry taught me how to move consciously toward a more sustainable future. I also learned that for some people in particular situations, some actions would not be possible.

The method we used in the inquiry encouraged us to think about how we could contribute to a more sustainable future by reflecting on our own lives and stories. When we look for affordances in our own life to find opportunities where we can act, it helps us think deeply about our behaviors and movements where we can make important changes. Being amongst people with different backgrounds who are willing to share their stories about their engagement with SDGs and their contexts encouraged me to share my own stories and made me feel good about participating. I also appreciated the positive and supportive comments from the people who read and connected with me through my stories of my life. Our stories are our medium for connecting with the SDGs in our everyday world and also for connecting with each other.

Developing More Hope for the Future

Melissa Shaw






Melissa is a career coach and mentor. She has been a Volunteer Trainer for the National Trust since 2017, and she has a particular interest in the role of volunteering for purpose, employability, and learning, bringing benefits for individuals and organisations. With a background of working in HE, she led organisational development, educational development and technology enhanced learning functions. She was an Institutional Correspondent, then Trustee and then Deputy Director of the CRA. She is currently exploring life-writing.

As a founding member of the Lifewide Learning R&D Group, I participated in the first inquiry early in 2021. I found the experience enjoyable, but intense and the process of documenting and sharing my thinking and learning to be demanding but rewarding. I also found the online support and interest expressed by others in the Group to be valuable and encouraging. So, I looked forward to collaborating on an inquiry that focused on the imperative of addressing climate change and other global issues, with the support and friendly exchanges, and exploration of ideas and approaches that I anticipated. This short piece draws together some of the themes, incidents and realisations that emerged for me over the five weeks of the Inquiry.

I was aware of the United Nations Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) before the Inquiry, but I took time at the start of the process to look closely at all 17 SDGs. I was impressed by their range and scope, encompassing subjects that I had not viewed before as components of action to address climate change and build a more sustainable future. I also began to see the interconnectedness of many of the Goals. I found this realisation encouraging and motivating, since my concerns about trying to live more sustainably was related to the daunting scale and range of changes I need to make, coupled with the necessary speed of making these changes. Seeing the inter-relatedness of some of the SDGs, I felt hopeful that my efforts might have a synergistic effect in more than one area of action. I chose to focus my attention on three SDGs which most resonated with my personal concerns and interest to live more sustainably and I highlighted these in my personal statement of how I was engaging with the SDGs or how I had engaged with them in the past (Figure 1).

Figure 1 Excerpt from my personal audit of engaging with the SDGs

UN SDG	My Sustainable Future Goals	Opportunities to work towards this Goal	Vignette
 12 RESPONSIBLE CONSUMPTION AND PRODUCTION	Seek out sustainable goods and services	Make informed choices and actively engage with companies regarding sustainability, building on my learning from the sustainable fashion project I was involved in 2020, during Lockdown.	1
 3 GOOD HEALTH AND WELL-BEING	Broaden the range, increase, and sustain the number of plants in our diet: target of 30 per week.	During the month of November 2021, monitor and record the number and range of plants we eat per week, and act upon this to build a future strategy.	2
 5 GENDER EQUALITY	Make a continuing contribution to improved gender equality.	Actively keep abreast of current gender equality issues, via my network of family and colleagues. Explore the idea of allyship, acting as an ally where possible.	3

Over the few first days of the Inquiry, I read posts offering differing ideas and perspectives on how other contributors planned to address their chosen SDGs. Some participants' posts, like my own, seemed most focused on personal and local actions, while some focused on wider impacts, through teaching or political activity, for instance. I began to hope that we might have many opportunities to both adjust our behaviours and help others to make choices to achieve a more sustainable future.

Early in the Inquiry, I identified an *“unstated theme across my SDG audit.....to initiate and take opportunities for conversations with friends, family and even strangers, about dilemmas, problems and concerns about climate change and sustainability”*. This interest was further fuelled when, prompted to learn more through my involvement in the Inquiry, I had joined a webinar on *“Averting Climate Catastrophe”*¹. In the webinar discussions, reference was made to research examining what had influenced leaders’ views about addressing climate change². These unpublished (at the time) findings were outlined, suggesting that corporate leaders who had worked with the UN in the development of the SDGs attributed influences on their views as being *“direct experience of others suffering from the effect of climate change; someone speaking to their conscience/truth telling; being challenged by people they love; and through their being part of a network where they can talk openly about this issue”*. These factors resonated with my own thoughts about the impact of online conversations during the Inquiry, but also the potential of my own conversations to influence and lead to action to increase sustainability. I wrote *“I’m considering how I might play a role within my immediate circle of friends, family etc. to discuss truths, to gently challenge and to talk openly about our personal role in averting catastrophe.”*

In the middle week of the Inquiry, I was focused on the SDG: Good Health and Wellbeing. I wrote *“I am now deliberately broaching this link between diet and the state of the environment in my discussions, to join with other family and friends to think together, and to learn from and share suggestions, ideas, and experiences to help us all to change”*. My comfort in discussing personal actions to address global goals, was in part fostered by the experience of exchanges in the Inquiry. I mentioned my participation in the Inquiry to family and friends.

In the fourth week of the Inquiry, I reflected on recent conversations about climate change and sustainable living: *“People do seem interested but have not yet considered what changes they might soon need to make in their lives, in the light of the SDGs; they have looked for changes to be initiated or mandated through government intervention”*. My experience echoes the situation described in the 2018 report published by the Green Alliance, which suggested that *“Social norms and everyday life work against, instead of in support of, discussing and participating in low-carbon lifestyles. The public do not feel connected to the climate challenge. Consequently, behaviour change is limited and Government and MPs do not have a sense of having a mandate from voters to champion, or act on, climate issues.”*³ More positively, I felt that, in 2021, there was some change as *“my conversations reveal that current campaigns of some car manufacturers, supermarkets, clothing retailers etc. seem to be impacting my family and friends’ awareness, and perhaps even affecting their choices. However, the complexity (as we have mentioned in our vignettes and discussions) of making appropriate decisions to help to address climate change, does seem to be daunting and leaves individuals feeling thwarted or frustrated in their hope to do the right thing”*.

By the final week of the Inquiry, I noticed that I had feelings of solidarity and a greater sense of agency. These feelings were engendered by the experience of being a contributor to the Inquiry, knowing that others were thinking through the same issues but in varying circumstances; being conscious of *“multiple, and widespread references to climate change, sustainability etc. in news stories and features surrounding COP26”*; and as a result of conversations I had begun within my network, family and friends, which I hope will continue and will inform our future decisions and actions.

Looking back at the development of my thinking during the period of the Sustainable Futures Inquiry, I wonder if the Inquiry, which coincided with COP26, together with the context of the global pandemic and the anxieties and learning this has prompted, gave me the motivation and opportunity to take stock, in the helpful company of others, and to see a way forward. I find that sustainability has become a key focus for my choices and planning and informs my daily interactions. I am enticed by the idea of collectively imagining new possibilities, as this powerful quotation by Arundhati Roy suggests.

*“Historically, pandemics have forced humans to break with the past and imagine their world anew. This one is no different. It is a portal, a gateway between one world and the next. We can choose to walk through it, dragging the carcasses of our prejudice and hatred, our avarice, our data banks and dead ideas, our dead rivers and smoky skies behind us. Or we can walk through lightly, with little luggage, ready to imagine another world. And ready to fight for it.”*⁴

I seem to feel less defeated by the enormity of the challenge for us in tackling climate change, its causes and consequences, and more engaged with others across the globe in a common cause, and a little more optimistic, and hopeful about making a difference.

References

- 1 *“Averting Climate Catastrophe: Collaboration, Care & COP26”*, led by University of the West of England’s Bristol Leadership and Change Centre, 9th November 2021 <https://blogs.uwe.ac.uk/leadership-and-change/averting-climate-catastrophe-collaboration-care-cop26/>
- 2 Gitsham, M. Nayak, A. Gosling, J. *“Here’s how to convince CEOs to support government climate action at the expense of their own profits”* The Conversation. Creative Commons. November 11th, 2021 <https://theconversation.com/heres-how-to-convince-ceos-to-support-government-climate-action-at-the-expense-of-their-own-profits-170292>
- 3 Willis, R. (2018). *Building the political mandate for climate action*. Green Alliance cited in Carmichael, R. (2018) Behaviour change, public engagement and Net Zero. A report for the Committee on Climate Change. Imperial College. London https://greenalliance.org.uk/resources/Building_a_political_mandate_for_climate_action.pdf
- 4 Arundhati Roy, Financial Times, 3 April 2021 <https://www.big-change.org/insights/blogs/listening-to-the-voices-of-the-school-system/accesse>

Reflection on the Lifewide Learning for Sustainable Futures Experiential Inquiry

Dory Reeves



Dory is Principal of Reeves and Associates in Auckland, New Zealand. She was a former Professor of Planning, in School of Architecture and Planning, Faculty of Creative Arts and Industries, at the University of Auckland and has a long-standing interest and commitment to designing and planning for sustainable futures.

"I freelance with Reeves and Associates providing a range of independent research and capacity building services, grounded in the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), to ensure that cities work for everyone."



In September 2021 I participated in the 10 day 'experiential inquiry' designed to create a unique opportunity for participants to think about the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) as a mega context and how we can use our creativity and imagination to deliver the sustainable future we need. Following on from this, I engaged in an extended five-week experiential inquiry invited participants to look at what more individuals can do, to contribute to delivering the SDGs, using the Lifewide learning ecology. In this short article I draw together some reflections on my experience and what I learnt.



The concept of the Lifewide learning ecology (LWLe), challenges us to think about learning as a series of activities and happenings that take place in every facet of our lives. The link with Lifelong learning helps create an elongated, rich and constantly evolving ecology of learning, which can be depicted in all kinds of ways, an elongated mesh, a never ending excel sheet.

Although there are common aspects, each person's LWLe is also deeply personal, as it relies completely on the ecology of our lives, where we live, our household and personal circumstances, how we earn our living and put food on the table, the activities we take part in, our political beliefs and personal motivators. The inquiries took place at the intersections of our everyday lives with thinking and actions stimulated by the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs).

Although the SDGs became international commitments in 2015, following on from the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs), and we are in the final decade of the 2030 Agenda for change, there is still so much awareness raising to be done. Pandemics were flagged in Agenda 2030 and the New Urban Agenda. COVID-19 has dominated national and global efforts since the start of 2020; pandemics result from the way we live on earth, and the SDGs and the New Urban Agenda are designed to create a pathway towards sustainable urbanisation which is much more resilient.

Participants were challenged for 3 of the 5 weeks to experiment, narrate and reflect on something new they had done in relation to any of the SDGs. The focus on experiential meant a focus on **doing**. This often started with reflection, then doing and reflection. It also involved doing then reflecting. What I meant here was that in sometimes we skip the initial reflection and dive into action and the reflection comes after. In the first instance, the action actually derives from reflection or contemplation.

So, what are some of the outcomes of this 5-week experiential inquiry? I chose to experiment with a number of things: 1) applying the SDG assessment tool 2) ways of engaging with international colleagues in the research community; 3) my relationship with my very old car; and much more.

Key learnings:

The 5-week activity showed how Lifewide Learning ecologies can help individuals see and understand how we contribute to the global goals, through every facet of our lives, and how much more we can do.

- 1 The 17 SDGs can seem daunting. They are daunting because the 2030 Agenda is huge. By using tools like the SDG Assessment tool,¹ it is possible to systematically reflect on what we have been spending our energies on. Used as a planning tool, it can help shape our activities so that we can gain the maximum benefits.

A useful next step might be to design a LWLe review tool to help anyone take stock of how they live their lives and how they contribute to the SDGs. As a complement to the Goodlife Goals² the tool could focus more on the **how** than the what and provide those who want, a space to record how people achieve what the goals mean to them.

- 2 The Research and Academic Partner Constituent Group (RAPCG) of the General Assembly of Partners³ was originally set up in 2014 by partners of the World Urban Campaign. It mirrors the UN General Assembly. I took over as a co-chair of the RAPCG after Habitat III⁴. It's like a sleeping giant, that stirs into action on the run up to each World Urban Forum.⁵ The LWLe experiential inquiry provided me with the opportunity to try different ways of connecting more regularly with the group.
- 3 Finally, the car, I purchased from a colleague in 2009 when she went back to the UK. Rather than using it as the main mode of transport, the trusty Platz is more of a backup. Even for inter-city travel, I prefer to take the bus rather than the car; for local activities, walking and the bike and for travel within the city where ever possible public transport buses and trains. As part of the experiential inquiry, I experienced life without the car; I could see that when I need to use a car, the City Hoprent by the hour cars would be suitable and my life would be enhanced rather than diminished. So, watch this space.

Links

- 1 SDG Assessment Tool
- 2 Goodlife Goals <https://www.goodlifegoals.org/>
- 3 The General Assembly of Partners (GAP) <https://habitat3.org/engagement/general-assembly-of-partners/>
- 4 Research and Academia PCG (RAPCG) <https://generalassemblyofpartners.com/research-and-academia>
- 5 World Urban Forum <https://wuf.unhabitat.org/>

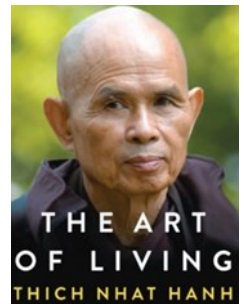
EDITOR

Emerging from our experiences of trying to implement some of the SDGs in our own lives, is the realisation that we are connected to so many things – people, places, situations, roles and identities, families, culture – the list is endless. In fact it is more profound than we can ever imagine. In the words of Thich Nhat Hanh *“Everything relies on everything else in the cosmos in order to manifest—whether a star, a cloud, a flower, a tree, or you and me.”*

The Buddhist teaching of ‘Dependent Origination’ is an essential lesson for living a life for a future that is sustainable. *“Everything is interconnected. Everything affects everything else. Everything that is, is because other things are. What is happening now is part of what happened before, and is part of what will happen next.”*¹

Thich Nhat Hanh invented a new word to describe this connected state of being – he called it interbeing.

***“To be” is to inter-be. We cannot just be by ourselves alone.
We have to inter-be with every other thing.
This sheet of paper is, because everything else is.***² p.96



It is in the lifewide dimension of everyday learning that we can observe, feel and appreciate our state of interbeing. And it is this state of interbeing that facilitates thinking and feelings that lead to action when we engage with the SDGs. In this article Rahul Hasijah, who participated in our inquiry, recounts his own stories and shares his perspectives on the idea of interbeing.

Sources

- 1 O'Brien, B. (2021) "The Principle of Dependent Origination in Buddhism." Learn Religions, Sep. 15, 2021, <https://learnreligions.com/dependent-origination-meaning-449723>
- 2 Hanh, T.N. (1992). Peace is Every Step: The Path of Mindfulness in Everyday Life. New York: Bantam Books
- 3 Hanh T N (2017) The Insight of Interbeing: Everything relies on everything else in order to manifest. Garrison Institute Available at <https://www.garrisoninstitute.org/blog/insight-of-interbeing/>

Experiencing the Gift of Inter-Being

Rahul Hasijah



Rahul is a co-learner and educational facilitator living in Rajasthan, NW India. He is passionate about stories and loves to create safe spaces and processes for learners to connect to their own stories and stories of others. He has been hosting modules on self-awareness, listening, self-designed learning, unlearning, team-building, cooperative games, circular dances, reconnecting with the ancestral roots, rethinking development and connecting with nature. To read more of his writings, expressions and explorations, read his blog:

<http://thefreedomwalker.wordpress.com>

It was four in the evening and I was returning to my home and work place in Udaipur after a month-long break. I live in a room located in an Ashram campus surrounded by the Aravalli hill ranges. As soon as I entered my room, I was welcomed by a swarm of wasps hovering and building a hive in my room. Although I wanted to co-exist, as it was a very small room, I felt a little threatened and requested a member of the farm staff to evacuate the wasps from my room. Villagers usually do this by bringing some smoke below the hive which makes the wasps fly away. What he said next shook me from within. He said, “Dusk is approaching and if I chase them away now, they will not get chance to rebuild their home or find one by night time, let us do this tomorrow morning.” Deeply touched, I moved my bags and spent the night at another place.

I am trekking on a difficult terrain where I have to climb a really steep hill. I am tired, struggling to keep my peace and calm. I start losing hope. A co-traveller and nature admirer, Mihir brought comfort and peace to my mind inviting me not to resist falling. He put his hands on the hill, asked me to do the same and said, “Trust this hill; he has been here for ages. Surrender yourself, he won’t let you fall. You will be taken care of.”

A shaman (traditional healer), Koitso Salil from Sikkim, in his interaction mentioned a very fascinating practice of the tribal societies he has been part of and witness to. These communities, he said, would never go trekking on mountains and hills. They don’t feel the need to. The only time they do is while grazing their livestock and that too, not without seeking permission from the mountains to do so. The purpose is never to trek, climb or conquer a hill. I realised that I too had never seen any villagers walking aimlessly or going for a trek in the hills I live close to. They revere the hills as an elder, someone as mighty as God. The whole idea of conquering Everest or any other mountain range or crossing the English Channel became meaningless to me. How can I climb on to or conquer someone who is a relative, an elder, a friend or a fatherly figure?

Experiencing our inter-connectedness with water

Incidents like these have changed the way I perceived nature and have brought richness to my relationship with her. Thich Nhat That, a spiritual philosopher, very beautifully puts it across. He says, “What do you see in a piece of paper? If you are a poet, you will see clearly a cloud floating in this sheet of paper. Without a cloud, there will be no rain and thus no trees and no paper. The cloud is essential for the paper to exist, and if we look deeper into the paper, we see sunshine, the logger who cuts the tree, his parents, etc. So we can say that all of them are interconnected. They are inter-beings. When we look in this way we see that without all of these things, this sheet of paper cannot exist.” Inviting this idea of inter-connectedness into my conscience itself has been a humbling experience. Unfortunately there’s something that causes a separation – a wall that hinders me from seeing that what I do to this piece of paper or to any possible inter-being, I do to myself.



There are two prominent relations human society has with nature: First, we see her as something to be fearful of. In the campus I live on in the Aravallis, I have seen people packing their bags and running away overnight from the fear of lizards and snakes. I have myself killed some mosquitoes, ants, crickets, cockroaches, rats and a few other small creatures and I’ve realised it was nothing but fear on my part to do so. While living in Bangalore, my room was one night occupied by ants – the roof, floor, walls, and every

other possible corner. I was taken aback and killed some in haste. Early next morning, there was no sign of them. They'd come and gone. I felt sorry for the ants I'd killed. They were sort of my guests for the night. The more I become accustomed to the urban concrete life, the more is the fear within and less is the feeling of co-existence. My niece resists jumping into the soil; she feels that would dirty her.

In our second relationship with nature, we see her as a resource to be used. We have been taught in our schools to differentiate between living and non-living things, we have been taught how different places are rich in different mineral and metal resources. The English language too reserves the pronoun 'who' for humans and uses 'that' for non-humans. Sadly, the moment we turn our relatives into an object it becomes so easy to perpetuate violence on them because they are no more seen as living beings. Indicators of our personal and national progress - the Gross Domestic Product also measures dead over living entities.

The Wall Between. Illustration: Devika Bedi



If you sit and relax under a tree with contentment, it won't add to GDP, but cutting and selling it would. If you walk on a hill with your friends, it won't add to the GDP but blasting the whole living hill and selling the ore beneath him would. We rever mother Earth saying 'Bharat Mata ki Jai' and then insist on buying and selling the same land. Our fascination and supremacist attitude towards human life and our contempt for other lives as lowly or lower births also adds to this hierarchy and violence.

Over the last 7 years, I have been trying to dismantle these dangerous perceptions within me, with the youth I work with at Swaraj University as well as outside that. My pursuit is the healing of our relations with the Earth and shifting from an Earth-dominating to an Earth-honouring lifestyle. Apart from reducing our consumption, some of the ways to do this include: Spending a couple of hours observing a living organism (other than humans and the other large mammals we usually see), spending long silent time on the mountains with no agenda and no gadgets – just being there like any other piece of rock, rolling over the soil, smelling and listening to the Earth, walking across a stream or river barefoot and experiencing water and the wisdom it carries. The intention is not to study nature or have an adventure, but to acknowledge her sacredness, respect her presence and get in touch with the abundance she holds. And then, when we visit extraction and mining sites or dumping yards, we also witness the separation that is the result of our lifestyle.

Open pit mining



The next step for me and the community I live in towards imbibing inter-connectedness, is to invite all beings into our decision-making – inviting someone who speaks for the rock, someone who speaks for the jackals, and someone who speaks for the grasshopper to be able to peacefully co-exist with our extended family and to realise that we do not own the Earth, the Earth owns us.

Acknowledgement

This article was provided as a contribution to the sustainable futures inquiry by the author. It was originally published in Eartha March 2017 Available at: <http://www.earthamag.org/stories/2017/3/14/experiencing-gift-inter-being>
Eartha is an online magazine about issues of environment, development, and sustainability.

Working with the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) Tricia Tikasingh



Tricia is a Senior Lecturer and Academic Quality Lead in the School of Human and Social Sciences at the University of West London. She has a background in medicinal plant research in the Caribbean and has worked with various organisations internationally in this field, including the United Nations Industrial Development Organisation. Areas of specialist interest include - Medicinal Plants, Traditional Foods, Herbs and Spices, Mind-Body Medicine, Stress Management. Her doctoral research explored how learning, knowledge sharing and transfer can aid in the management of wicked problems which persist in grassroot communities. My awareness of the SDGs has extended over many years. It began with its predecessor, the Millenium Development Goals (MDGs), which were launched in 2000 and transitioned to the SDGs in 2015¹. Prior to this, circa 1992, there was a considerable focus on the impact of development on the environment and particularly on degradation of biodiversity with the destruction of the Amazon.

*"In 1987, the World Commission on Environment and Development (the Brundtland Commission) concluded that economic development must become less ecologically destructive. In its landmark report, Our Common Future, it said that: "Humanity has the ability to make development sustainable-to ensure that it meets needs of the present without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs". It also called for "a new era of environmentally sound economic development". "*²

Unfortunately, nearly 40 years on progress towards 'sound economic development' at the highest levels of global power is still slow. With an interest in traditional knowledge preservation (across many areas such as health, ecosystems, arts, spirituality) I have always felt that traditional communities (largely indigenous and non-white) across the world have been calling for environmentally sound development for centuries, but Ritchie³ confirms this has largely been ignored and silenced. These traditional communities are the original custodians of the planet and our natural resources and have valuable knowledge that can contribute to forming new directions of sustainable development, referred to within the literature as 'traditional ecological knowledge' (TEK).

*"TEK is not just a theoretical concept, or warm fuzzy words; it is applied knowledge... It does emphasize the interdependence of all things, but also that these are knowledge systems based on long, long observation... TEK refers to the four R's: **Relationality**, in which people see themselves in a kinship relationship to the earth and everything on it; **Reciprocity** between humans and their environment; **Respect** not only for other humans but for the land itself; **Responsibility** which flows from recognizing the other three."*⁴

I believe the role of indigenous, traditional and rural communities in achieving sustainable development should be central to decision making and should be represented at the highest global levels as a real and tangible acknowledgement of equality, diversity and inclusion. At a personal level, I recognise can act with intention to embrace the four R's. The inter-connectedness of our continued and harmonious existence with each other and the planet is core to working towards the SDGs.

Alongside, the recognition of TEK, there are also important links to the importance of inter-generational knowledge sharing and transfer. There is a young generation of activists who are empowering themselves to find solutions to the wicked problems within their communities and environment, and they have been informed by their traditions and histories which have survived through storytelling and other artforms. This is viewed as critical to achieving the SDGs.

"To achieve the SDGs... there is a need to harness both the energy and the ingenuity of the youth and the knowledge and experience of the old." UN General Assembly (UNGA) President Peter Thomson⁵

Furthermore, this creates opportunities for expansive transformation of knowledge which can re-empower and create sustainable change at the local level within communities⁶. The route to this space is through education within formal, informal and non-formal learning spaces.

To achieve these goals education must take a central role, and education for sustainable development (ESD) recognises that consideration must be given to adult education and training as part of the lifelong learning opportunities which can enable communities to be resilient to current and future global development challenges⁷. Such lifelong learning occurs in those community and collaborative spaces and should continue to expand our awareness and engagement of our interconnectedness with the planet and its natural finite resources. However, tangible transformative action towards the SDGs also needs to acknowledge that the equitable achievement of these goals relies on new/different ways of viewing growth, productivity, economic structures, the purpose of institutions, the differing levels of or access to resources to enable sustainability and the value of every society. This is where education (formal, informal and non-formal) plays a critical role in further promoting inter-disciplinarity and collaboration⁸. 'Change makers' are individuals but they emerge from and engage within their communities to create transformative action.

The discussion around 'activism' and being a 'micro-activist' brought me back to my doctoral research and the emerging focus on transformative transgressive learning (or T-Learning) and the use of T-Labs^{9,10}. This has emerged from the work of Freire's liberatory pedagogy¹¹ and Bell Hooks engaged pedagogy¹². The following quote is from a participant in one of the T-Labs and for me emphasises the importance of small individual action (at the micro level) which can contribute to creating change at the higher levels of power:

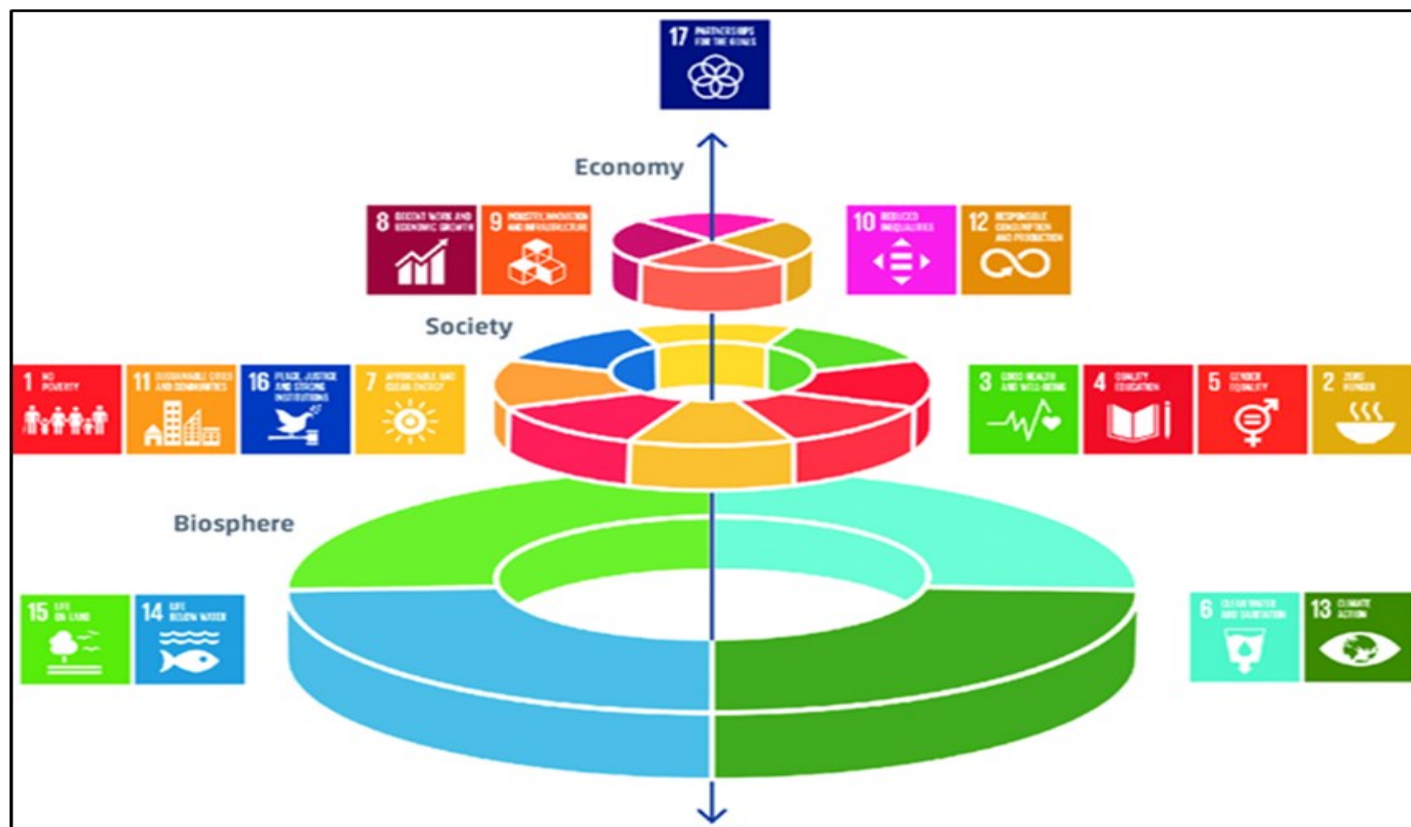
*"I think one of the biggest learnings that everyone can take from here is that the power is really in the peoples' hands and we don't have to wait for anyone sitting in a bureaucratic position to make a change for us. The power to change is really in everyone's hand. I think with the combination of a lot of small changes there will inevitably be a big change. And that will have come from the ground up, instead of from top-down. And I believe that would be the most powerful and lasting change".*¹³

Based on my reflections, I would conceptualise the SDGs differently. The image below (Figure 1) is the structure I would apply ie. 'Wedding cake' layers. However, I would layer it slightly differently. At the foundation base layer I would start with SDG17 Partnership for the goals, the second layer I would suggest is SDG4 Quality Education, and then keep the layers of Biosphere, Society (without repeating SDG4) and Economy as in the graphic. This emphasises the importance of and potential impact of collaborative work/actions at the micro (base) layer which can provide a strong foundation, influence and build to the top.

The sustainable futures inquiry provided an accessible and online global community space to promote critical reflection and an understanding of how, as individuals, we can live more sustainably and promote the principles of the SDGs within our personal and professional environments. For me it constitutes part of the foundational base layer of my proposed model which relates to creating partnerships and collaborations. The method of the inquiry promoted a way of engaging participants in a non-formal lifelong learning activity which relates to my proposed second layer of quality education. The participant contributions covered

many other SDGs and certainly encouraged consideration of the goals in their entirety. The contributions recognised the diversity within the group and the approach was open and inclusive. It has also developed my own thinking further of the SDGs and my role, and how I might work with them in the future.

Figure 1 Wedding Cake structure for the SDGs **Source:** Azote Images for Stockholm Resilience Centre, Stockholm University¹⁴



Sources

- 1 Sachs, J (2012). From Millennium Development Goals to Sustainable Development Goals. *Lancet*, 379: 2206–11.
- 2 Convention on Biological Diversity (2009). Sustaining life on earth: How the Convention on Biological Diversity promotes nature and human well-being. Available at <https://www.cbd.int/convention/guide/?id=action> [Last accessed 15th December 2021].
- 3 Ritchie, J (2021). Movement from the margins to global recognition: climate change activism by young people and in particular indigenous youth. *International Studies in Sociology of Education*, 30:1-2, 53-72.
- 4 Gilio-Whitaker, D. (2021). Valuing Indigenous Voices on the Environment. East West Centre Available at <https://www.eastwestcenter.org/news-center/east-west-wire/valuing-indigenous-voices-the-environment> [Last accessed 15th December 2021]
- 5 IISD (2017). Intergenerational Dialogue Highlights Youth, Older Persons' Role in SDGs. International Institute for Sustainable Development. Available at <https://sdg.iisd.org/news/intergenerational-dialogue-highlights-youth-older-persons-role-in-sdgs/> [Last accessed 15th December 2021]
- 6 Botha, L. (2011). Mixing Methods as a process towards indigenous methodologies. *International Journal of Social Research Methodology*. Vol. 14, No. 4. p313-325
- 7 Wals, A.E.J., Mochizuki, Y. & Leicht, A. (2017). Critical case-studies of non-formal and community learning for sustainable development. *International Review of Education*. 63: 783.
- 8 Owens, T (2017). Higher education in the sustainable development goals framework. *European Journal of Education*, 52:414–420.
- 9 Lotz-Sisitka H, Wals A, Kronlid D and McGarry, Dylan. (2015). Transformative, transgressive social learning: Rethinking higher education pedagogy in times of systemic global dysfunction. *Current Opinion in Environmental Sustainability*. 73-80.
- 10 Lotz-Sisitka H, Ali MB, Mphepo G, Chaves M, Macintyre T, Pesanayi T, Wals A, Mukute M, Kronlid D, Tran DT, Joon D, and McGarry D. (2016). Co-designing research on transgressive learning in times of climate change. *Current Opinion in Environmental Sustainability*, Volume 20, p50-55
- 11 Freire, P. (1970). *Pedagogy of the Oppressed*. New York: Seabury Press.
- 12 Hooks, B (1994). *Teaching to Transgress: Education as the Practice of Freedom*. New York: Routledge.
- 13 Macintyre T, Tassone VC, Wals AEJ. (2020) Capturing Transgressive Learning in Communities Spiraling towards Sustainability. *Sustainability*. 12 (12):4873
- 14 Swiss Academy of Sciences (2021) Swiss Academy Factsheets. Vol 16 No. 1.

A Brush with Sustainability Glynn Kirkham



Glynn is a Consultant in Education, Leadership and Management in Education, Professional Development and Mentoring. Born and educated in Cheshire, UK, Glynn began teaching in the late 1960s. His career includes headships, inspection, university teaching to doctoral supervision and management roles in several universities, and external examiner. Author of texts and conference presenter on mentoring and educational leadership, collaboration, teachers' professional learning and digital technology. He is still actively involved in national, European and international organisations, networks and projects, including advising on teacher and leadership competences. A citizen of the world, he is currently based in the Czech Republic and mentor guide.

During the 5 weeks of the lifewide learning for sustainable futures inquiry, it was not possible for each individual to address all seventeen of the sustainable development goals (SDGs) and certainly not do more than acknowledge the detail in the one hundred and sixty-nine elements of the goals¹. It was however, realistic, though sometimes challenging, to address with a degree of justice three or four of the SDGs and selected targets within a vignette per week. I chose SDGs: 3, 3.5; 4, 4.7 & 2; 9 as they had particular relevance to my analysis of my personal circumstances, professional interests and my perspective on life.

A first reflection: the SDGs highlight areas for action and not merely academic contemplation. They represent a current (and maybe still incomplete) view of issues and action needed to manage these more effectively. They require each of us to think about our own role(s) and our collective responsibility as co-beings on this planet.

As a career-long educator and lifelong, inquisitive learner, my major focus relates to SDG 4, 4.7 *"By 2030, ensure that all learners acquire the knowledge and skills needed to promote sustainable development, including, among others, through education for sustainable development and sustainable lifestyles, human rights, gender equality, promotion of a culture of peace and non-violence, global citizenship, and appreciation of cultural diversity and of culture's contribution to sustainable development."*

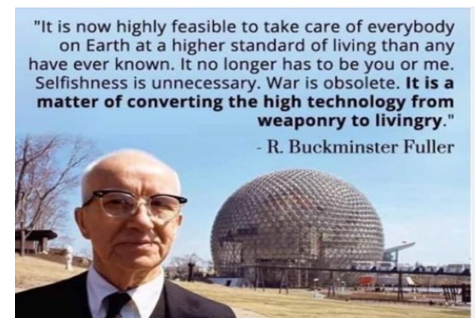
My interpretation of SDG 4 related also to SDG 2 relating to zero hunger since sustainable development requires that people know and understand where food comes from and the importance of knowledge of which food is safe to eat.

The pictured quote², which features the American architect, systems theorist, author, designer, inventor, and futurist, Richard Buckminster Fuller (1895 – July 1, 1983), is one which I came across, quite by chance, during the Lifewide SDG project but, as Louis Pasteur the 19th-century bacteriologist, declared, *"The more prepared or knowledgeable you are, the more likely"* [it is] *"you will be able to make the most of chance opportunities and observations."*

Following Fuller's stance, it is the responsibility, nay duty, of all educators to ensure that they do not simply deliver the state or national curriculum, but that they do it in such a way that they ensure that their students (at all ages) learn how to investigate rigorously - and without prejudice - all arguments presented, equipping them to see the flaws and false premisses and enabling them to recognise propaganda, giving them the strength and resilience to adopt and cohere to a set of values which incorporate freedom, social justice, respect for the rule of just law, and democracy.

While the world may well be reducible to zeroes and ones, not everything is (as is often presented) binary. The present, which is always where we exist, demands critical thinking skills, communication, compassion, collaboration. We need to make smart choices. While my initial contribution related directly to the tenets of this SDG the concept of 'making smart choices' is one which does not necessarily include information technology. "Smart" can also mean "intelligent" (as well as "well-dressed/of good appearance") and did so, generally, prior to its being 'culturally acquired' by the IT industry.

Winter in the Czech Republic usually includes experiencing varying degrees of icy and snowy conditions and, if one wishes to venture out of the house by car equipped with the compulsory winter tyres (November to March), it is often necessary to clear the drive and sometimes part of the street. To carry out this task a snow shovel and a strong yard brush are needed to make the surface safe on which to walk to and from the car. For a number of years, I have had a reliable, wooden-shafted/-handled snow shovel with a shaped metal scoop for lifting and clearing the snow and ice but the yard brush, which had a hollow, metal handle had suffered metal fatigue and, under pressure, had broken in not one but two places. A replacement was essential, so accompanied by a nineteen-year-old member of the household, I drove to the large, international DIY (do-it-yourself) supermarket nearby. Being sustainability-conscious, I decided to return to my personal preference for the sort of yard brush that I remembered from my childhood and which had served my grandparents and parents well, and the sort which I had used elsewhere at different times in my life. It was to be wooden handled/shafted and the wooden brush-head would contain natural bristles. En route, I explained to my young companion what I was looking for and why in the hope that he would recognise the rationale and learn



more about the importance of using sustainable and natural materials. Wood is a sustainable commodity, if managed well. It is warmer to the touch than metal or plastic, more formable, and easy to replace. He understood.

Having arrived at the store and dutifully sought out the brush display, we searched for our goal, in vain. All the yard brushes (and all but one of the smaller brushes) had plastic bristles and many of them had also plastic handles or plastic connectors. I still remember my own grandfather showing me how to replace the yard brush shaft, shaping the end of the new wooden shaft with his always very sharp knife so that it would fit in the round hole in the top of the brush head and, only when necessary, using a single screw to secure it.



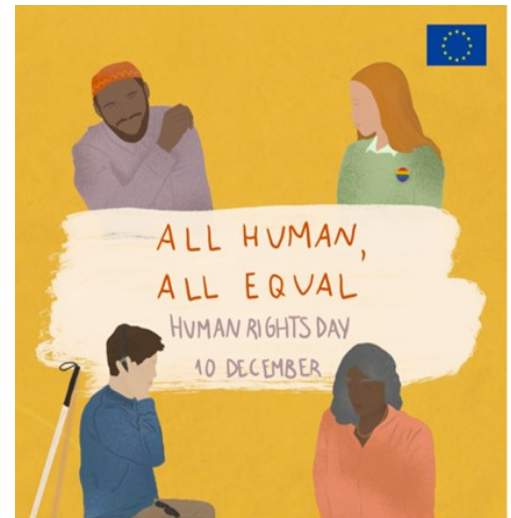
The purchase we made was wood-shafted, with a wooden brush-head with plastic bristles. We needed a good yard brush then and we had to be pragmatic. I explained my reluctance to purchase to the young man, who said we have to have one: he did not want to search elsewhere. I replied that it was not just for my convictions but also for his generation and future generations that I was seeking the natural and sustainable product. I reminded him of the picture that we had both seen online of the unedifying eddy of oceanic plastic and the particulates now being found in the bodies of the fish being trawled for human consumption.

On our return, we made use of the new broom. It functioned well but I knew I would remain unhappy each time that I have to use it. Knowing this, a few days later, I went online to seek my natural bristled yard brush further afield. I managed to secure a brush to my liking from Amazon. I feel much happier now and it showed me how when I am thwarted in my attempts to live a more sustainable life, it affects how I feel in a negative way.

Since childhood (when I first encountered native North American thinking about mankind's relationship with the world), I have been interested in alternative understanding, philosophies and cultural practices across the world. I cite here from an insightful article from Ladha and Kirk³ *"Many spiritual traditions, including Buddhism, Sufism (the mystical branch of Islam), Taoism, Gnosticism, as well as many Indigenous cultures, have long understood the mind-based nature of creation. These worldviews have at their core a recognition of the power of thought-forms to determine the course of physical events."* They give later a reference to and explore the spirit, 'Wetiko'. I would heartily recommend full reading of the article.

As a final reflection what has emerged for me is that we need to revise our views categorising humans as being separate from nature to a recognition that humankind is a part of nature. We are elemental beings composed of materials of the land, the air and the sea and we are co-dependent/interdependent upon the rest of this planet's life.

The project has strengthened even further the belief system with which I grew up - there is only one human race. I understand the intermingling of groups of hominids from which homo sapiens finally emerged but, while ethnicity may differ, man-devised forms of discrimination create a false premiss. Thus, arguments about race are false, divisive structures. I came across this image that sums up this belief via the website of the Council of the European Commission.



My conclusion, unsurprisingly given my professional experience, is that sustainability can come about through education and action by educators and teacher educators. I recommend, to those who have not yet read these very accessible books - Carl Rogers' 'Freedom to Learn'⁴; Paulo Freire's 'Pedagogy of the Oppressed'⁵; Mia Kellmer-Pringle's 'The Needs of Children'⁶; due to be available in 2022, Ken Robinson's and Kate Robinson's 'Imagine if... Creating A Future For Us All'⁷). It is through education that ignorance is overcome, and awareness and understanding of how to take individual and collective action are learned. Enabling individuals to participate democratically is a significant duty of educators. It is, however, essential that teachers - both in preparation and in-service - continue to educate themselves in order to carry out their role in enabling young people to recognise their political (in a non-party-political sense) power as co-citizens of the countries in which they live and of the world.

Sources

- 1 UN General Assembly Resolution 70/1. Transforming our world: the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development Retrieved from https://www.un.org/en/development/desa/population/migration/generalassembly/docs/globalcompact/A_RES_70_1_E.pdf
- 2 <https://quotesgram.com/img/r-buckminster-fuller-quotes-weaponry-to-livingry/5867032/>
- 3 Ladha, Alnoor and Kirk, Martin, "Seeing Wetiko: on Capitalism, Mind Viruses, and Antidotes for a World in Transition", *kosmosjournal.org* / May 16, 2016 (<https://www.filmsforaction.org/articles/seeing-wetiko-on-capitalism-mind-viruses-and-antidotes-for-a-world-in-transition/> & see also by the same authors <https://www.filmsforaction.org/articles/five-dangerous-thoughts-about-capitalism/>)
- 4 Rogers, Carl. (1969). *Freedom to Learn: A View of What Education Might Become*. (1st ed.) Columbus, Ohio: Charles Merill
- 5 Freire, P. (1970). *Pedagogy of the oppressed*, New York: Continuum.
- 6 Pringle, M. Kellmer (1975). *The Needs of Children*. (London: Hutchinson, New York: Schocken
- 7 Robinson, Sir Ken PhD & Robinson, Kate (March 2022) *Imagine if... Creating A Future For Us All*, London: Penguin Books

Developing ‘sustainable employability’ in congruence with the UN’s Sustainable Development Goals

Arti Kumar



Arti is a UK National Teaching Fellow and an Education and Employability Consultant, author, trainer and mentor. She is the former Associate Director of the Centre for Excellence in Teaching and Learning (CETL) at the University of Bedfordshire, UK and author of “Personal, Social, Academic and Career Development in Higher Education – SOARING to Success”. In 2008 Arti was awarded an MBE for her services to education.

Lifewide Education – learning for sustainable futures collaborative inquiry – provided me with another opportunity to think about the ways in which I engage with the UN’s Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) in my everyday life. I am aware that my lifetime carbon footprint is heavy from having worked on long-haul flights as cabin crew, and from travelling extensively for work and leisure in the past – largely due to ignorance. Now the 17 SDGs give me explicit ways to look beyond myself in relation to global issues that affect us all. The SDGs embody the transition we need to make, personally and collectively, to shape a better world with a shared moral purpose. My personal and educational goals have become closely aligned over the past decade with the aims of the SDGs. In my capacity as an educator, the pedagogy I developed and authored (extensively used as ‘the **SOAR** model’) has much to offer. For **SOAR** to achieve its full potential, educators and students should ideally work in partnership to change their behaviours and lifestyles, to align their self-actualisation with the actualisation of the SDGs. This underpinning concept is a connecting thread in my current writing for publication – it is where I feel my transformational education tools and techniques can make the greatest impact.

My **SOARING to Success** approach evolved through working at the interface between students, staff and employers, and was first published in 2007¹ to provide conceptual and practical ways of integrating the Personal Development Planning, employability and entrepreneurship agendas with career development learning and academic curricula in UK higher education institutions. **SOAR** animates the dynamic inter-relationships between **Self**, **Opportunity**, **Aspirations** and **Results**: four essential, mutually supportive and dynamically related elements within this framework. I use the **SOAR** acronym hereafter as shorthand to represent the pedagogy that motivates and enables educators and students in partnership to appreciate how their inner world of **Self** engages with and is influenced by the outer world of **Opportunity** and Others. The dynamics between **Self-awareness** and **Opportunity awareness** generate, modify and clarify **Aspirations** and the **Results** we need to achieve. This is a universal *and* personal process of person-environment adaptation inherent in career construction theory.

SOAR has been used and evaluated in the UK and abroad as an empowering process of realistic, holistic, personalised learning and development, leading to transferable graduate-level skills and attributes. A key definer of this pedagogy is that it motivates and enables individuals to construct their personal life-career journey in alignment with the results they want and need to achieve. Traditionally, higher education tends to focus on results in terms of learning outcomes, individual achievements, and personal development. **SOAR** presents **Results** (the R of SOAR) to students as generic developmental goals in terms of becoming more effective and capable in learning, work and life generally, while also becoming more ‘response-able’ global citizens – with the uniquely human ability and self-efficacy to critically appreciate and choose appropriate responses to complex global issues as well. SOAR can congruently act as a conduit to raise awareness of these issues and encourage all students, regardless of their background, programme and level of study, to align their values, interests, capabilities and life-career goals with the SDGs. As the inquiry demonstrated, before we can internalise the goals we have to interpret what they mean in our own lives. As such, the second edition of my book (to be published early in 2022) emphasizes that creating a better personal future (self-actualisation) must be congruent with the actualisation of the SDGs for a better world (Figure 1).

The SDGs provide excellent reference and action points against which we can plan and set our own lifegoals. The concept of using such points of reference against which to undertake a personal audit is already a key learning method in the SOAR approach. Self-assessment questionnaires (SAQs) are expressed as the ideal effective behavioural competencies required and recruited by employers. They serve as diagnostic tools that enable each student to appreciate their current and potential behaviours in a comprehensive range of skills and attributes. Follow up activities require students to identify opportunities and use resources to practice those behaviours. Students can later revisit their audit at intervals to use it as an evaluative tool and record their progress. Critical self-reflection is linked with action, interaction, collaboration, research, analysis and synthesis within a constructively aligned SOAR process. The second edition integrates skillsets, mindsets and heartsets to develop wellbeing, resilience, emotional and social competencies, adaptivity, business decision-making and creative problem-solving – all needed as never before for regeneration in the post-pandemic world where we must congruently ‘save people and planet’.

Figure 1: Constructively aligning personal and professional development with global goals



In practice however, I see that students are daunted when faced with 17 goals. In this respect, **educators can help learners appreciate the recursive interconnections within and between the 17 SDGs** and work in these interrelated spaces. We cannot separate the progress of *Self* from the protection of the human species and the planet. For example, five decades ago Mahatma Gandhi talked about the holistic concept that social and environmental justice are two sides of the same coin. He is famously quoted as

saying 'The world has enough for everyone's need but not enough for everyone's greed'; and 'Be the change you want to see in the world.'

Educators are in a powerful position to effect a change agenda, using the SDGs as important and useful reference points for concurrent social, cultural, economic and environmental change. This type of multi-dimensional change needs to be understood as a huge global problem that requires solutions at all levels of society and at many levels of granularity. Working in tandem with students, educators should role model and lead the way. This is important because students are quick to spot any divergence between what I say and what I do. I share examples of both positive actions I am taking and failures to do the right thing. I am personally drawn to 'climate action', which I see as front and centre for everything environmental, so it closely links with reducing waste: repairing, recycling and upgrading before sending goods to landfill, avoiding mindless consumption; reducing and/or eliminating pollution in the air, in water sources and in natural plant and wildlife ecologies. My car still runs on petrol, so I started going to work on the bus 14 years ago. If we all drive only where necessary there will be less congestion on the roads, less harmful emissions and better health from walking or cycling, preferably also in the countryside where we can appreciate nature. I contribute to relevant charities and support climate action networks. Students can see how many small personal actions can add up to big differences that affect not only their future but the future of others.

In academia we typically value academic abilities and intellectual skills within a subject domain. But students also need to identify the significance and relevance of strengths (and development needs) that arise from their motivations and personal styles of interaction with others and with different environments. A central concept in SOAR (with several associated student activities) is that of building a *Self-MAP* (see Figure 2) for the journey of life.

Our lives are driven by a personal MAP that defines who are friends and lovers are, which opportunities we engage with, what we aspire to and how we achieve results in learning, work and life in general. Yet most of us don't critically appreciate, use and develop this MAP in order to live with a greater sense of purpose, and to find directions and destinations in our life-career journey. For example, a card sort game prompts students to identify three key values, and to consider the implications of their personal priorities in relation to job-choice and also in terms of environmental conservation, creating a green economy and dealing with climate change. In this way learners can connect more deeply with the moral purpose of the SDGs and see their own development as a human being in relationship to the SDGs

Becoming aware deeply and authentically of my composite MAP helps me to understand and collaborate with others. Students begin to value diversity. They invite and foster the contributions of others who bring different MAPs and experiences to complex decision-making and problem-solving. Rebuilding the economy on green principles with different business development models and social enterprise will need everyone to make complex collaborative decisions and be(come) part of the solutions rather than part of the problem of climate heating. It is imperative that students, graduates and young professionals can adapt, believe in themselves, see challenge as opportunity and proactively create the world in which they will have to implement the decisions they

make now. Career resilience, innovation, positive and creative thinking, entrepreneurship, and the ability to pivot according to demand will be needed as never before – and SOAR can help to develop genuine commitment and action with its broad and inclusive approach.

Figure 2: Using one's *Self-MAP* in diverse contexts to find direction and destinations



There is one chapter in my book about ‘understanding and creating the changing world’. Here I ask students to envisage a world where everyone breathes clean air, drinks clean water, has sufficient nutrition to sustain health and wellbeing; where refugees are not fleeing from hotspots of poverty, conflict or famine; where human rights, respect for the environment, responsible consumption, education and health services are integral values. An impossible utopia? There are signs that traditional economic values are changing. The growth doctrine is being opposed even in parts of the corporate world and in mainstream economics. In *Good Economics for Hard Times*, Abhijit Banerjee and Esther Duflo^a (who jointly won the 2019 Nobel Prize in Economics) report findings from their research on the type of policy interventions that support wellbeing in poor communities: ‘Nothing in either our theory or the data proves the highest GDP per capita is generally desirable,’ they write, and they deduce that pursuing a larger Gross Domestic Product does not equate with GWB (general wellbeing) – it can be counterproductive if it widens socioeconomic inequalities. They advise that governments should focus on providing benefits such as equitable access to healthcare, education and social advancement rather than chasing ‘the growth mirage.’

Although we cannot immediately eliminate all the socioeconomic and cultural problems that beset us, we must believe in our power to make a difference. I include guidelines for a transdisciplinary capstone project requiring students to undertake collaborative research (preferably involving international students and working across national boundaries) to create critical appreciation and reflection around the challenges and problems inherent in the SDGs from various perspectives. They will need to present and share the outcomes of this research with the aim of co-creating solutions and planning both personal and collective actions to achieve this vision of a better world.

Graduates are entering a world where they may not be able to implement their chosen aspirations – whole industry sectors and specific jobs have been affected by the pandemic (and Brexit in the UK) – so elements of compromise are almost inevitable, but they must also ask questions about the ethical values and actions of any sectors and employers they aspire to work in. SOAR can play its part but there is no doubt that the education sector as a whole must prepare students for transition into a world where work, life and employment conditions are changing, career concepts have changed, and students themselves have changed. Can we afford not to try?

Sources

- 1 Kumar, A. (2008; 2022 in press) [Personal, Social, Academic and Career Development in Higher Education – SOARing to Success](#) London and New York: Routledge Taylor and Francis
- 2 Kumar, A (2015) *Enabling all learners to SOAR for employability: an inclusive, integrative pedagogy* Innovative pedagogies series York, UK: Higher Education Academy

a) Banerjee and Duflo are a husband-and-wife team who teach at MIT, USA

Lifewide Perspectives and Motivations for Engaging with the Sustainable Development Goals

Norman Jackson & Jenny Willis



Norman is the Founder of 'Lifewide Education' and Senior Editor of Lifewide Magazine. He is an active member of the Lifewide Learning Research & Development Group and a major contributor to theory and practice relating to lifewide learning and learning ecologies



Jenny is a founding member of Lifewide Education and an active member of the Lifewide Learning Research & Development Group contributing many analyses and syntheses of lifewide learning activity.

Introduction

One of the aims of the Learning for Sustainable Regenerative Futures inquiry was to try to understand the extent to which we draw upon our whole life in our engagements with the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) in the belief that there is affordance to engage with the SDGs in every aspect of our life. With this aim in mind we developed a simple mapping tool (Figure 1) showing the potential environments and sites for thinking and action related to the SDGs across our life at three 'levels' of engagement:

Micro - what we do in our personal/work life that impacts on ourselves and those immediately around us and our immediate environment.

Meso - what we do in our personal/work life that impacts or has potential to impact on our local neighbourhood, community or environment.

Macro - what we do in our personal/work life that impacts or has potential to impact on the world beyond our immediate and local environment - regionally, nationally or internationally.

In this article we report the results of a small-scale study in which we used the tool to analyse the eight vignettes we produced to show some of the ways in which we have tried to engage with the SDGs in our own lives. In addition, we explore our motivations for engaging with the SDGs from a "needs" perspective using Alderfer's ERG theory.

Figure 1 Tool to map SDG-related activity across the lifewide dimensions of life.

Potential Environments & Sites for SDG-related Activity	MICRO	MESO	MACRO
Work/professional life & practice community/networks			
Formal study /CPD			
Self-education/informal learning individual (micro) & social (meso)			
Research – finding out about things (academic & non-academic)			
Virtual world – email, internet searches and sites, forums			
Family & friends – conversations and other social interactions, doing things together, parenting, eating, playing,			
Home & garden, allotment – doing things like fixing, making, growing, experimenting			
Local environs – doing things like shopping, walking and exercising, interactions with community or natural environment, meetings with a purpose, socialising			
Hobbies & interests - leisure activities and pursuits, entertainment			
Travel - experiencing other cultures, supporting indigenous people			
Providing donations, gifts and other forms of support - for local, national or international organisations who help people in need (or non-human life).			
Working in partnership with others			
Political and/or environmental activism – including using democratic right to vote and to campaign for social and environmental justice			

Engaging with the SDGs One Story at a Time—Sample of 8 Vignettes

Vignette NJ1

SDG#13 Action to Combat Climate Change

SDG#15 Restore Terrestrial Ecosystems

SDG# 3 Good Health and Well-being

Forced to change

With COP26 looming I have thought a lot about action for climate change. In May this year, I was invited to contribute to a conference being organised by Qinghai Normal University (July 20-22) in the beautiful high plateau region of western China. One of the significant and pleasurable experiences in my life is being able to travel to new places to share my ideas with other people but Covid restrictions meant I could not travel. On this occasion I spent my time sitting at my desk in my own home preparing my presentation and imagining what it would have been like. When it was finished I presented to myself on Zoom and recorded it. I then uploaded the recording to Dropbox and YouTube so that the conference organisers could use it.



Actions, intentions and reflections

This change to my usual behaviour was forced on me because of the pandemic but it made me think about the damage I inflict on the environment every time I attend a conference in a far-away place. Delivering presentations to conferences in distant places using the technology that is available to me is a no brainer when set against the damage that travelling does to the environment and climate. Ironically, my presentation was on the theme of policy support for education and learning for sustainable futures. As I was preparing my speech I reflected on the enormous negative impact on the environment and the consumption of resources I would have made, had I given my presentation in person at the conference. I used a carbon offset calculator for the first time to work out that the air miles would have produced 2.84 tons of CO₂. The calculator also told me that I could have donated £24 to a carbon reduction project to mitigate the impact on atmospheric pollution.

My next thought was, “why wait to travel to contribute to the problem of reducing atmospheric carbon? I knew I could do more to support carbon capture as I am responsible for maintaining a small woodland adjoining my garden. It’s dominated by mature ash trees. It provides a living lesson in sustainability in so far as it was cultivated several centuries ago and actively managed to provide a source of wood for fuel,

construction and other uses for hundreds of years. The hazel coppice or under-wood was cut back to ground level when it was between 7 and 15 years old and the poles used on the land. The timber trees (mainly ash) were known as standards. They would be felled in their prime when they were between 70 and 150 years old. A substantial number of trees in the wood must be of this age.



Trees identified in a 1994 survey include Ash (dominant), Field Maple, Oak and Sessile Oak, Sycamore, Wild Cherry, and Willow. Shrubs include: Hazel, Elder, Blackthorn, Dogwood, Buckthorn and Buddleia.

Over the 16 years I have lived here my efforts have been to maintain pathways, cutback the brambles that periodically take over, and create new habitats for insects and small mammals by creating log piles. I have felled trees that were diseased or in danger of falling down, but I am ashamed to say that I have not planted new trees. We now have a severe problem of Ash dieback – a fungal disease that is devastating Ash trees and there are plenty of signs of it in our woodland so we have an urgent need to try to mediate the damage caused by the disease.



After reading several articles about the value of trees in carbon capture, I decided to embark on planting new trees and follow the Tree Council's advice of planting similar species to what were already established in the woodland (with the exception of ash which is under threat from a viral disease called ash die back). I purchased 45 saplings – a mix of Maple, Sessile Oak and Beech, from the Woodland Trust and planted them with my daughter in small clusters throughout the woods. I asked her to come back in 50 years to see the results.

Trying to do something to help this woodland area with my daughter gave me a sense of purpose and fulfilment. If the planting is successful, I will plant more saplings next year. These changes to my thinking about my role in the stewardship of the woods and my efforts to replenish the stock of trees, stemmed directly from the situation I described in the opening paragraph and my recent awareness of the need to take action to help mediate climate change.

This week I added a new piece to this jigsaw puzzle of a story. I collected 'conkers' – the seeds of the horse chestnut tree, with one of grandchildren and encouraged him to plant them in a pot to grow while explaining why it was important to grow trees to combat climate change. I brought a bag of nuts home with a view to planting them in the woods.

My future habits and actions will be informed by my new consciousness of the issues arising from travel especially long distance air travel in respect of climate change. There will be times when I will need to travel by air, for example when I visit my elderly mother in Australia, but at least I now know that I should try to offset some of the damaging effects by either contributing to a carbon sequestration scheme or better still undertaking my own carbon capture by planting more trees. In this small way I hope to mitigate some of the adverse effects my family and I have on the planet and contribute to a more sustainable future.

Figure 2 Tries to draw out of my story the environments and sites for thinking and action in my story. The map is annotated to show how different parts of my life held affordances. Most of my activity was at the micro level affecting only me and my family and home environment but the activity was framed within the larger context of contributing to an international conference in China.

Figure 2 A map of activity described in vignette 1 relating to SDG#13, #15 and #3 coloured cells show the focus and level of activity

Potential Environments & Sites for SDG-related Activity	MICRO	MESO	MACRO
Work/professional life & practice community/networks			
Formal study /CPD			
Self-education/informal learning <i>The whole process provided an opportunity for developing awareness. The production of the vignette was part of the reflective process</i>			
Research – finding out about things (academic & non-academic) <i>Research into SDGs and education for SDGs.</i>			
Virtual world – email, internet searches and sites, forums & social media <i>Use of zoom recording for conference</i>			
Family & friends – conversations and other social interactions, doing things together, parenting, eating, playing, <i>Involvement of daughter in planting trees, grandson in collecting nuts</i>			
Home & garden, allotment – doing things like fixing, making, growing, experimenting <i>Planting trees in woods, I prepared and recorded my talk at home and Planted trees in the woods adjacent to my garden</i>			
Local environs – doing things like shopping, <u>walking</u> and exercising, interactions with community or natural environment, meetings with a purpose, socialising			
Hobbies & interests - leisure activities and pursuits, entertainment <i>Making and posting movies on <u>youtube</u> and garden notes blog</i>			
Travel - experiencing other cultures, supporting indigenous people <i>Avoided international travel because of COVID 19</i>			
Providing donations, gifts and other forms of support - for local, national or international organisations who help people (or non-human life) in need. <i>Purchasing saplings from the Woodlands Trust</i>			
Working in partnership with others <i>Collaboration with Beijing Normal University</i>			
Political and/or environmental activism – including using democratic right to vote and to campaign for social and environmental justice			

Vignette NJ2

SDG#15 Restore Terrestrial Ecosystems, SDG # Good Health and Wellbeing

Giving nature a helping hand

SDG #15 Calls on people, communities, organisations, societies and Governments to 'Protect, restore and promote sustainable use of terrestrial ecosystems, sustainably manage forests, combat desertification, and halt and reverse land degradation and halt loss of biodiversity. During the inquiry I posted a link to a short documentary film about Hugh Wilson which I have watched many times¹ Hugh is a New Zealand botanist who has spent his life caring for the landscape around his home. He shows us by example what we can do if we have the motivation and resources to help nature regenerate. There is no doubt that I am inspired by his work and my vignette describes my own attempt to work with nature to increase the biodiversity of my garden.

I like to conduct experiments in my garden and one of my experiments this year was simply to let the grass grow. Normally I cut the grass about 10 times a year. It looks neat and tidy but it eliminates the biodiversity that I know must be there if given a chance to grow. This year I let the grass grow over a significant part of my garden. By early June the 30cm tall oxeye daisies formed a dense beautiful blanket together with many wild flowers – buttercup, dandelion, clover, cowslip, yellow rattle and the most beautiful magenta pyramid orchids to name but a few. For over two months they created a wonderful and uplifting spectacle for me and my family but more importantly they supported a thriving community of insects – bees, wasps, beetles, butterflies and more. To see the meadow was a delight – it was the stuff poetry and the whole family celebrated its presence. I caught my wife on several occasions sitting on a chair amongst the flowers reading or on her phone.

By late July most of the flowers had withered so I mowed the wildflower meadow in order to scatter the seeds so that the wildflower meadow will regenerate itself next year. I noticed that there were patches of bare earth in the grass I had cut so I scattered wildflower seeds I had purchased together with oxeye seeds from this year's crop so hopefully next year they will germinate and flower. Last week I bought and planted some bulbs for early spring (April & May) plants like crocus, hyacinth, snowdrops and for-get-me-nots to increase even more the biodiversity of this patch of fertile land.



What I learnt

Sometimes all nature needs is a helping hand. Stopping what I normally do - cutting the grass for a few months, enabled the plant life that was in the soil to flourish. In doing so I also enabled the creation of an environment that supported a diverse population of insects and the birds and animals that the ecology supported. I was effectively restoring an ecosystem that this patch of land had previously supported. Oxeye daisies self-seed so presumably at some time in the past the oxeye daisies were allowed to flourish and that is why they have spread so prolifically. I know that my garden was once an orchard (only two old apple trees remain) so perhaps this was the previous ecosystem which I inadvertently restored. After doing a bit of online research I discovered that wild flowers were cultivated in orchards or fields adjacent to orchards to attract insects that would then help pollinate the apple trees. Flowers were an integral part of the orchard ecosystem and once established they would sustain themselves by self-seeding.



Through my experiment I am convinced that I helped restore an orchard ecosystem.

The apple tree adjacent to the field that became a wildflower meadow

My experiment with nature has changed my perception of my garden and changed my future practice. Next year, and forever more, I will leave even more of the grass to grow. I will do something differently at a large scale because I have experimented and experienced something at a small scale and learnt through the process. Perhaps a lot of trying to change practice in

response to the SDGs will involve small scale experiments that we learn from, followed by more significant actions when we are convinced of the value of what we are doing.

We are the privileged agent in the ecosystem with knowledge and capability thanks to our technological aids, to intervene in ways that will inhibit, destroy or help regenerate the natural ecosystem. We have to change our perspective to see ourselves as agents working with and for nature rather than agents working for ourselves often against nature.

By regularly cutting the grass and weeding the lawn I work for myself rather than nature to create a lawn that looks good, because I have become enculturated into believing that a nice lawn is a good thing. Perhaps it gives me a sense of control over my environment. But I have worked against nature by cultivating something that is biologically impoverished. Not only that I probably killed thousands of insects as I cut the grass. With greater wisdom and adjusting my behaviour so that I work with nature, I can let the grass grow and facilitate the production of a beautiful, biologically diverse wild flower meadow full of insect life: insects that will also help pollinate my apple trees and roses. It's a win-win situation!

Figure 3 documents the environments and sites for thinking and action in my story. The map is annotated to show how different parts of my life held

affordances. Most of my activity was at the micro level affecting only me and my family and home environment but as a result of this and other experiments in and around my garden, I recently embarked on a year-long course organised by Gaia Education aimed at developing my understanding of designing for regenerative ecosystems. I also shared my experience with whoever is interested through my garden notes blog², through a video on YouTube and in this magazine article.

Figure 3 A map of activity described in vignette 2 relating to SDG#15 and SDG#3. Coloured cells show the focus and level of activity

Potential Environments & Sites for SDG-related Activity	MICRO	MESO	MACRO
Work/professional life & practice community/networks			
Formal study /CPD <i>I am undertaking a course at GAIA Education aimed at developing my understanding of design for regenerative ecosystems. My study group is international and I interact through an e-platform.</i>			
Self-education/informal learning – individual (micro) & social (meso) <i>This experience taught me important lessons</i>			
Research – finding out about things (academic & non-academic) <i>I tried to find out more about orchard ecosystems</i>			
Virtual world – email, internet searches and sites, forums & social media <i>I documented my experiment in photos and video and I conducted searches to identify plants and to understand orchard ecosystems. I posted a movie in my blog and on youtube to give pleasure to others</i>			
Family & friends – conversations and other social interactions, doing things together, parenting, eating, playing. <i>While my family were not directly involved in the experiment they were involved in experiencing and appreciating the results. Their positive feedback encourages me to expand the experiment in future</i>			
Home & garden, allotment – doing things like fixing, making, growing. My experiment that led to the wildflower meadow took place in my garden			
Local environs – doing things like shopping, walking and exercising, interactions with community or natural environment, meetings with a purpose, socialising			
Hobbies & interests - leisure activities and pursuits, entertainment <i>Making and posting movies on youtube and garden notes blog</i>			
Travel - experiencing other cultures, supporting indigenous people			
Providing donations, gifts and other forms of support - for local, national or international organisations who help people (or non-human life) in need.			
Working in partnership with others			
Political and/or environmental activism – including using democratic right to vote and to campaign for social and environmental justice			

Vignette NJ3

SDG #4 Ensure inclusive & equitable quality education & lifelong learning opportunities for all
SDG#17 Partnerships for Goals

Education has been my lifework

I didn't know it at the time but for most of my adult life I have been working with and for SDG#4 in some way. Education is therefore the strand of my life that is most deeply entangled in the Sustainable Development Goals although I have never viewed it this way before. Growing up in the 1960's and early 1970s I was the beneficiary of an inclusive and equitable quality education provided by the state. I had the opportunity to attend a grammar school and I was supported by the state to attend a good university. By 21 I had a good foundation to pursue a career as a geologist and I chose to continue studying for a doctorate. Studying the Earth was my passion and I was attracted to academia so I could continue my research and teach others. For 13 years I taught geology in universities and polytechnics and supervised postgrad students before moving into education as my primary disciplinary field of study. For the next 20 odd years I did not teach, but my work as system researcher, policy maker, broker and

educational developer was related to trying to understand and enhance the quality of education. As a broker working for several national agencies and more recently through Lifewide Education and Creative Academic I have tried to connect and collaborate with people (#SDG17) across the higher education system and facilitate sharing of experiences and knowledge for practice believing that this is an important means of regenerating the system. I have shared my learning through reports, articles and books.

Figure 4 My lifelong involvement with education

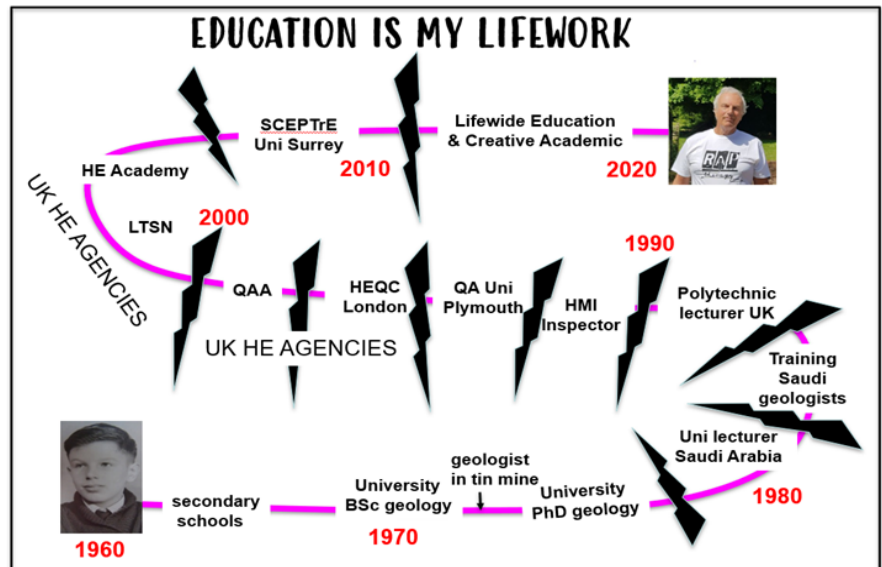
For the past 14 years I have been developing and applying the idea of lifewide learning in higher education. I felt higher education held too narrow a view of learning and did not value the learning and development students' gained outside the academic curriculum. I believe that by recognising a learners' lifewide learning, universities are helping learners prepare themselves for a lifetime of learning in a messy, complex and turbulent world, and they are helping to develop a culture of lifewide learning.

Recent past: A significant part of my work this year has been to engage UNESCO Institute for Lifelong Learning and draw attention to the important role of lifewide learning in achieving their vision for a culture of lifelong learning. I have participated in a number of actions aimed at developing thinking on how lifewide learning can contribute to an enriched concept of lifelong learning that values learning as a lifewide enterprise.

Present: This history of unfolding involvement with SDG#4 provides a context and foundation for my current work - to bring people together in collaborative inquiries to explore and learn how individuals relate to and implement the Sustainable Development Goals. During the discussion I have been conscious that education has been one of the consistent themes – not surprisingly given that quite a lot of participants are involved in education.

But we also need to carry on learning if we are to continue to develop and make a contribution. So in early October I put myself back into an educational environment to engage with others, in a year long on-line programme offered by Gaia Education, an international NGO aimed at learning how to design social, natural and economic environments that are sustainable. There were several points in the inquiry where I could relate what I was learning in my course to the emergent conversations in the inquiry.

Figure 5 A map of activity described in vignette 3 relating to SDG#4 and SDG#17. Coloured cells show the focus and level of activity



Potential Environments & Sites for SDG-related Activity	MICRO	MESO	MACRO
Work/professional life & practice community/networks <i>After family, my educational work in the form of thinking, writing, giving presentations, facilitating inquiries and leading Lifewide Education and Creative Academic is and has been the most important aspect of my life. This year I contributed to an international conference and facilitated educational inquiries within the lifewide education and creative academic communities</i>			
Formal study /CPD <i>I am undertaking a course at GAIA Education aimed at developing my understanding of design for regenerative ecosystems. My study group is international and I interact with them through an e-platform.</i>			
Self-education/informal learning – individual (micro) & social (meso) <i>The learning for sustainable futures inquiry I designed and facilitated provided me with considerable opportunity for self-education and informal learning.</i>			
Research – finding out about things (academic & non-academic) <i>I spend considerable time engaged in research and scholarship. This article and the inquiry are manifestations of the research.</i>			
Virtual world – email, internet searches and sites, forums – the inquiry is being conducted on the Linked In platform. The article will be published in an open access online magazine and be part of the well accessed resources on the Lifewide Education website.			
Family & friends – conversations and other social interactions, doing things together, parenting, eating, playing. I often engage my family in conversations about my own ideas and I draw on <u>their</u> experiences and perspectives.			
Home & garden, allotment – doing things like fixing, making, growing, experimenting. In recent years I have learnt a lot about the ecology of life which I apply to education.			
Local environs – doing things like shopping, <u>walking</u> and exercising, interactions with community or natural environment, meetings with a purpose, socialising			
Hobbies & interests - leisure activities and pursuits, entertainment			
Travel - experiencing other cultures, supporting indigenous people. Before Covid 19 I travelled perhaps once or twice a year to participate in conferences but not in the recent past.			
Providing donations, gifts and other forms of support - for local, national or international organisations who help people (or non-human life) in need. This year I have gifted a Working Paper and the Learning for Sustainable Futures issue of Lifewide Magazine to UNESCO Inst for Lifelong Learning Futures of Education Initiative. I am preparing a chapter drawing on my learning, for the next edition of Springers Handbook for Lifelong Learning			
Working in partnership with others <i>I have worked with Beijing Normal University to deliver a presentation at an international conference and facilitated an inquiry for an international group of participants. I have prepared a Working Paper for UNESCO Futures of Education Initiative and was invited to facilitate a UNESCO capacity-building workshop.</i>			
Political and/or environmental activism – including using democratic right to vote and to campaign for social and environmental justice			

Figure 5 documents the environments and sites for thinking and action described in my story. The map is annotated to show how different parts of my life held affordances during the inquiry and the recent past. Most of my activity is at the micro level affecting only me. In the last few months I have participated in an international conference and an on-line international course offered by Gaia Education aimed at developing my understanding of designing for regenerative ecosystems. I have also facilitated the Learning for Sustainable Futures inquiry for an international group of participants and produced a magazine for open access publication.

Vignette NJ4

SDG#7 Affordable and Clean Energy

SDG#13 Action to Combat Climate Change

Towards the end of the inquiry I realised that there were no stories about SDG#7 which encourages us to reduce our energy consumption and use energy sources that do not rely on fossil fuels so there is a direct link to SDG#13 Action to Combat Climate Change. SDG #7 affects us everyday: I am sipping my tea and writing this using my computer – I could achieve this without the electricity to boil the water and drive my computer.

I know that the intention underlying this SDG is a good thing to try to do but it is one of the SDGs that is, for many people, difficult and expensive to achieve. A friend recently told me that he had switched to an energy provider in the UK called 'Bulb' that mainly used renewable sources for its energy. I thought this was a good idea and read widely on the subject of green energy suppliers. But the price comparison/switching sites advised me not to switch at this time due to the record high costs of energy at the moment.

In the run up to COP26, the UK Government announced it was going to introduce grants to help people replace existing gas boilers with heat pumps. I did some online research and was put off by the costs of installing heat pumps and a number of reviews by people who were quite disparaging about the technology. I spent time looking at solar panels, storage batteries, wind turbines and biomass boilers. All are expensive to install and living in a green belt area we are unlikely to get permission to install some of them.

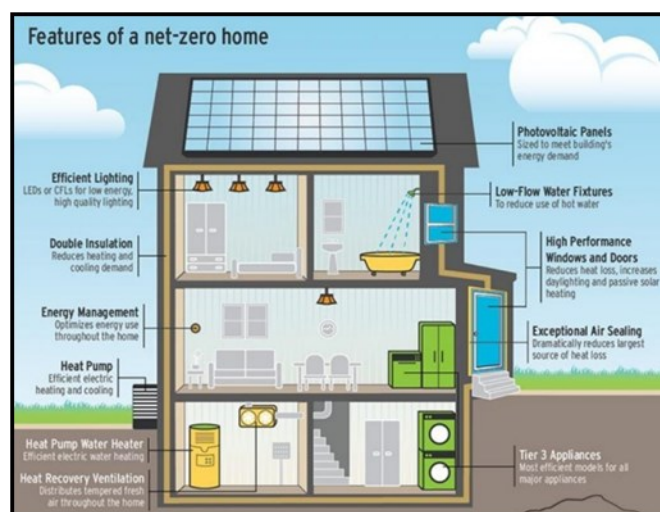
In my googling I discovered that a village near where I live has established a Low Carbon Network and has held 4 meetings in 2021 to discuss technological options for reducing household carbon emissions. I emailed the convenor and he kindly admitted me to the group. A few weeks later I discovered that my local village had a climate action group so I joined that group too and participated in their first meeting which discussed heat pumps.

I feel I am slowly making progress in informing myself about my options for shifting from electricity supplier which is based mainly on fossil fuels to one that sources its energy from renewables. Unfortunately, the energy supplier market in the later part of 2021 has gone mad and many of the green energy suppliers have gone out of business.

I am also trying to comprehend the implications of changing our heating system from a natural gas boiler to some other form of energy. Again there are circumstantial factors. Firstly, we live in what is known in the UK as 'the greenbelt'. It's an area that has many planning restrictions and erecting new structures like solar panels and wind turbines is unlikely to be permitted. Secondly, we are planning to downsize in the not too distant future and we will not see any return on a significant investment. House prices at the moment do not seem to benefit from the addition of alternative technologies to a gas boiler.

There is a lot of talk about net zero in the scientific and political rhetoric relating to carbon emissions. In my searches I discovered the concept of a net zero (energy) home which produces all the energy that it consumes and does not actively borrow any energy from its environment (1). The first priority of a net zero home is to save energy and seek energy efficiency this provides the foundation for the use of renewable energy technologies.

In my internet searches this morning I discovered the Domestic Renewable Heat Incentive (Domestic RHI) - a UK Government financial incentive to promote the use of renewable heat (2). The webpage says "Switching to heating systems that use naturally replenished energy can help the UK reduce its carbon emissions. If you join and comply with the scheme rules, you'll receive quarterly payments for seven years for the amount of clean, green renewable heat the system produces." I attended the first meeting of our village Climate Action group and was disappointed in the costs and benefits for installing heat pumps in their homes by two local residents. The most important thing I learnt was that in the first instance I need to invest in insulating our home and gaining an energy performance certificate.



The purpose of this vignette is to show how making decisions about what to do to engage with an SDG that has significant practical and financial impacts on our lives is complicated with many factors to way up including the particular circumstances of our lives. At the moment I am thinking that our best way of engaging with SDG#7 is to try to reduce energy consumption and to try to make our home more energy efficient by adding more insulation (we replaced our windows two years ago so the main considerations are more loft insulation and cavity wall insulation). We should also, when the energy market has settled try to switch an energy supplier that is explicitly greener than our current supplier, even though it might be more expensive. It does not make sense to replace our existing gas boiler technology with energy generating technologies that are greener. And that is a conclusion being drawn by many people. I wonder how you have tried to engage with this SDG?

Figure 6 documents the environments and sites for thinking and action described in my story. The map is annotated to show how different parts of my life held affordances during the inquiry and the recent past. Most of my activity is at the micro level affecting only me but over a period of weeks my activities extended to the community level through the village climate action group. Revealing that any map of SDG interactions is a snapshot and it will evolve over time.

Figure 6 Map of activity described in vignette 4. The coloured cells show the sites that were active in my story of engaging with SDG#7

Potential Environments & Sites for SDG-related Activity	MICRO	MESO	MACRO
Work/professional life & practice community/networks			
Formal study /CPD			
Self-education/informal learning – involved joining local action groups			
Research – finding out about things (academic & non-academic)			
Virtual world – email, internet searches and sites, forums			
Family & friends – conversations and other social interactions, doing things together, parenting, eating, playing.			
Home & garden, allotment – doing things like maintaining, fixing, making, growing, experimenting			
Local environs – doing things like shopping, walking and exercising, interactions with community or natural environment, meetings with a purpose, socialising <i>Participating in the village climate action group</i>			
Hobbies & interests - leisure activities and pursuits, entertainment			
Travel - experiencing other cultures, supporting indigenous people			
Donations, gifts and other forms of support - for local, national or international organisations who help people (or non-human life) in need			
Working in partnership with others to achieve something relevant to an SDG <i>Participating in the village climate action group</i>			
Exercising democratic voting right and/or political activism			

Vignette JW1
SDG#7 Use Clean Energy
SDG#11 Sustainable Cities and Communities
SDG#13 Climate Action

- Deriving positivity from the pandemic**
SDG #13 proposes a list of possible remedial activities relating to climate:
- Learn about climate solutions
 - Call for more renewable energy in your country
 - Eat more plants and cut down on meat
 - Walk and cycle rather than drive
 - Demand leaders take bold climate action today

This vignette does not directly address any one of these, but it illustrates how action on climate has been one positive (albeit unintended) outcome of the pandemic for me.

Since I learnt to drive – at the advanced age of 30! – my car has been an essential component of my identity. It (or rather they, as each has been regularly replaced by a newer model) represented my freedom and independence; such was my attachment that I



never went anywhere without it. Even when I was hospitalised for two months in central London, the doctors allowed me to keep my car nearby, parked on the premises. For years, I felt that a day without driving was an unfulfilled day. In 2020, the first wave of Covid-19 brought about a forced change of habit: months passed by without me leaving home, let alone driving. External circumstances beyond my control were demonstrating to me that my sense of who I am was not diminished if I didn't display my putative skills as a driver! Gradually, they were effecting a change in me which, I well knew, could only improve the air quality for all.

Next came a major building project: we had to move our cars off the drive onto the road, to allow the skip, portaloo and sundry other items to be stored safely as our house was extended. In this suburb of London, few drivers observe the courtesy of letting you park in front of your own property, so, once I had secured a spot in front of our house, I was reluctant to move my car and risk losing 'my' place. Again, external circumstances were forcing a change in my behaviour.

I had, of course, been well aware of the polluting effects of vehicles and, to do my bit, had switched to a Diesel engine (which we are now told is equally harmful to the environment!). I also recognised that, since retirement, my journeys were mostly local (to teach) or long-distance (to visit my very elderly father). Neither of these is easily achieved without still polluting the environment one way or another.

Next came lockdown 2, by which time my husband was working mostly from home. A new routine established itself as he would drive me to my teaching sessions, weaning me further off my associations of car/me. Weeks can now pass before I drive my car, broken only by my monthly visit to my father. I slip naturally back into my driving role, but appreciate it more: I enjoy the transition from urban roads to motorways and finally onto the winding, rural roads of Warwickshire.

Reflection

I am ashamed to be a reluctant climate change activist. My efforts to diminish the negative impact of driving have been forced by external factors, be they the pandemic or my building work. Nevertheless, I recognise that once I took the first step to renounce my irrational need to use my car, I was able to change my behaviour – to the benefit of the environment, local community and myself. Ultimately, every small step counts, irrespective of the stimulus for change.

Figure 7 shows a maps of activity described in this vignette. I have quoted extracts from the vignette to illustrate each point. Whilst all of my actions were at the micro level, they inevitably impact on the local (meso) environment and, in the case of air pollution through driving, this extends to the macro level.

Figure 7 Map of activity described in vignette JW1. The coloured cells show the sites that were active in my story of engaging with SDG#13

Potential Environments & Sites for SDG-related Activity	MICRO	MESO	MACRO
Work/professional life & practice community/networks <i>since retirement, my journeys were mostly local (to teach) or long-distance (to visit my very elderly father)</i>			
Formal study /CPD			
Self-education/informal learning individual (micro) & social (meso) <i>I recognise that once I took the first step to renounce my irrational need to use my car, I was able to change my behaviour</i>			
Research – finding out about things (academic & non-academic)			
Virtual world – email, internet searches and sites, forums			
Family & friends – conversations and other social interactions, doing things together, parenting, eating, playing. <i>my monthly visit to my father.</i>			
Home & garden, allotment – doing things like fixing, making, growing, experimenting <i>months passed by without me leaving home, let alone driving</i>			
Local environs – doing things like shopping, walking and exercising, interactions with community or natural environment, meetings with a purpose, socialising <i>I had, of course, been well aware of the polluting effects of vehicles and, to do my bit, had switched to a Diesel engine (which we are now told is equally harmful to the environment!)</i>			
Hobbies & interests - leisure activities and pursuits, entertainment <i>For years, I felt that a day without driving was an unfulfilled day.</i>			
Travel - experiencing other cultures, supporting indigenous people			
Providing donations, gifts and other forms of support - for local, national or international organisations who help people in need (or non-human life).			
Working in partnership with others <i>he would drive me to my teaching sessions.</i>			
Political and/or environmental activism – including using democratic right to vote and to campaign for social and environmental justice			

Vignette JW2

SDG#3 Good Health and Wellbeing

SDG#4 Quality Education

SDG#5 Gender Equality

SDG#16 Peace, Justice, Strong Institutions

SDG#17 Partnerships for the Goals

Collaboration across cultures for student wellbeing

After a lifetime of teaching, from classroom to senior management, infants to the aged, primary to post-graduate, learners' wellbeing has been a common, albeit sometimes implicit, objective. Alongside this, personal and close family mental illness have contributed to my determination to confront stigma, not merely in relation to psychiatric conditions, but in wider social contexts. I have striven to challenge prejudice, inequality and injustice both informally and formally, as a university advisor on harassment and bullying. This all stood me in good stead for an opportunity that presented itself in February 2020, just before the pandemic struck, when my husband and I were invited to address the senior management of the University of Colombo (UoC) on the theme of student wellbeing in the context of radicalisation.



To explain the background for those not familiar with Sri Lanka, this beautiful country has been riven by ethnic conflict for decades. My husband was, himself, a victim of this, and like so many of his fellow Tamils, has been part of the diaspora that has scattered these talented people around the globe. On Easter Sunday, 2019, one of the UoC's students was jointly responsible for the horrific bombing of a church, slaughtering 270 innocent people. The university was struggling to comprehend this act and feared that radicalisation would spread through a vulnerable student community.

We were attending an international conference to celebrate the 150th anniversary of the University of Colombo's Medical School, of which my husband is an alumnus, and at which he was speaking. Knowing of the anti-stigma work he and I have been engaged in for many years, the Vice Chancellor invited us to give a seminar to senior staff, outside the conference, to examine strategies for dealing with radicalisation. We were, effectively, bringing together three SDGs, health and wellbeing and gender equality, through education. This collaboration represented SDG#17.

This was to be the first act in what was to become an ongoing collaboration with the UoC, and which, because of the pandemic, would spread into unexpected domains. I shall write about this in further vignettes, to demonstrate how action is sustained over time

Reflection

Unlike my first vignette, this story shows how my involvement in positive action derived from a pre-existing commitment to the specific SDGs. There was no need for motivation, I was already engaged and felt that I had some relevant professional experience to share. I was spurred by sadness at what my husband and his people had had to endure, and together, we wanted to give something back to his homeland.



We both recognised that this was a difficult path to tread: we did not wish to be patronising, nor to assume that the values and practices of the developed world were directly transferrable or appropriate for a less economically advanced country. I was painfully aware that I am no 'expert' in the field, and had but experience and the wisdom that comes with age to offer.

Writing this vignette has stimulated some questions for us as we seek to take a more proactive approach to SDGs:

- Should we each select the SDGs to which we feel most drawn, or should we be looking more broadly?
- Does it matter if we have no expertise in an area?
- To what extent do SDGs need to be tailored to the cultural context?
- What is the potential for collaboration, if we are brave enough to think creatively?

In figure 8, I identify the potential environments for activity that are involved in this vignette. They include quotations from the vignette to illustrate each site. The pattern shown is quite different from that of figure 6, but it should be borne in mind that this is an evolving situation so the image is but one moment in time. There is greater action at the meso levels, as we work in partnership with the UoC. In order to tailor activities appropriately, we also venture into the macro levels to inform ourselves of options available and select those most appropriate to the context. Although not an explicit intention, we are inevitably taken into political areas.

Figure 8 Map of activity described in vignette JW2. The coloured cells show the sites that were active in my story of collaborating with the UoC.

Potential Environments & Sites for SDG-related Activity	MICRO	MESO	MACRO
Work/professional life & practice community/networks <i>the Vice Chancellor invited us to give a seminar to senior staff</i>			
Formal study /CPD – delivering to others <i>the anti-stigma work he and I have been engaged in for many years</i>			
Self-education/informal learning individual (micro) & social (meso) <i>I was painfully aware that I am no 'expert' in the field, and had but experience and the wisdom that comes with age to offer</i>			
Research – finding out about things (academic & non-academic) <i>examine strategies for dealing with radicalisation.</i>			
Virtual world – email, internet searches and sites, forums <i>Zoom conferences and email</i>			
Family & friends – conversations and other social interactions, doing things together, parenting, eating, playing,			
Home & garden, allotment – doing things like fixing, making, growing, experimenting			
Local environs – doing things like shopping, walking and exercising, interactions with community or natural environment, meetings with a purpose, socialising			
Hobbies & interests - leisure activities and pursuits, entertainment			
Travel - experiencing other cultures, supporting indigenous people <i>we did not wish to be patronising, nor to assume that the values and practices of the developed world were directly transferrable or appropriate for a less economically advanced country</i>			
Providing donations, gifts and other forms of support - for local, national or international organisations who help people in need (or non-human life). <i>Affective and academic support</i>			
Working in partnership with others <i>the first act in what was to become an ongoing collaboration with the UoC</i>			
Political and/or environmental activism – including using democratic right to vote and to campaign for social and environmental justice <i>The university was struggling to comprehend this act and feared that radicalisation would spread through a vulnerable student community.</i>			

Vignette JW3

SDG#3 Good Health and Wellbeing

SDG#10 Reducing Inequality

SDG#16 Peace, Justice, Strong Institutions

The elderly are people too

When analysing the personal statements from week 1, I was struck by the apparent difficulty we all had in addressing SDG#16 (Peace, Justice and Strong Institutions) and a lack of recognition of our impact. My life is very routine-bound, so there is not a lot for me to write about but maybe this story, on the surface trivial, can tell us something about peace and justice at the micro level.

Context

I have previously mentioned my father. He is 95 years old, lives alone and proudly maintains his house and garden, more than a hundred miles away from me, in rural Warwickshire. Last year, he had a fall which led to serious complications requiring hospitalisation then rehabilitation in a care home. He was adamant that he wanted to remain as independent as possible when he went home, but he agreed to one form of assistance: he would pay for a daily delivery of a hot lunch. These meals are properly balanced to ensure he receives all the nutrients necessary for good health. They are provided by a company which has an international market, and is subsidised by Warwickshire County Council. Deliverers are meant to check that recipients are alright, and record this, as part of a social care arrangement.

Each month, my father receives an order sheet, on which he selects the meals he wants. He is mentally very alert, so takes time planning his choices then looks forward to receiving his meal.

For someone in his position, meals are an important part of their day, as well as essential to health. My father will sit, watching for the delivery, which should come between 11.30 and 12.30.



Over the last 18 months, there have been repeated days when the meal that arrived was not the one ordered. For reasons to do with medications and personal choice, my father is unable to eat what has been brought on these occasions. Deliveries come late, and sometimes, not at all. My father has tried to phone the office for help, but the phone goes into answerphone mode and no one every replies.

This is where my role comes in: like some of you, I have found myself becoming parent to my parent. Since the death of my mother, 18 years ago, I have been my father's first port of call, his advocate. I speak to him daily for an hour on the phone, and deal with any practical issues that he cannot do himself. My immediate response to the meal problem was to contact head office complaints department by email, given that the local office was unresponsive. I wrote a comprehensive account of what had gone wrong, dates, times etc., pointing out the importance of nutrition to the elderly. We received a supportive response and assurance that matters had been rectified. Sadly, they had not and I went through this process again.

A fortnight ago, every single day's meal was wrong. This time, I wrote to inform the Council, since they subsidise the company and should know that it is not performing correctly. The on-line complaint procedure involved giving a full account of events and identifying what action I wanted as an outcome. Now, I found that my advocacy was subtly moving from treatment by this company of the individual (my father) to that of the elderly clientele as a whole. They were being seen as mere addresses to which a meal should be delivered, not as intelligent human beings who had made choices about their meals. There seemed to be an assumption that recipients are unable to discriminate between dishes, and will eat whatever is placed in front of them. In identifying remedial action, I was proposing staff development and systems that would benefit not only my father, but all those in receipt of the service.



Did it work? The local office was in a panic that I had gone to the Council. The Council thought they had resolved the matter and closed the case. On Monday, my father's meal did not arrive at all. His answerphone message to the office remained unanswered. I sprang into action again, back to the Council. To be continued!

Reflection

This is a mundane story, told not to relieve my frustration but to illustrate that we may be taking small steps towards addressing SDG16, without fully appreciating this. Furthermore, it is by taking such tiny steps that we can progress to higher levels of impact. My experience has made me think more deeply about the plight of vulnerable and elderly people, dependent on the assistance of others, and I hope to build on this understanding.

This is another dynamic situation, so any attempt to identify the sites of activity can but glimpse one stage in events. Figure 9 maps those environments involved at the time of writing the vignette and includes quotations from the text. These sites are mostly at the micro level, but also entail interaction at local community (meso) level. This illustrates how what began as a personal issue has moved into advocacy for a minority group in the community.

Figure 9 Map of activity relating to this vignette. The coloured cells show the sites that were active in my story of engaging with SDGs #3, #10 and #16

Potential Environments & Sites for SDG-related Activity	MICRO	MESO	MACRO
Work/professional life & practice community/networks			
Formal study /CPD			
Self-education/informal learning individual (micro) & social (meso) <i>My experience has made me think more deeply about the plight of vulnerable and elderly people, dependent on the assistance of others, and I hope to build on this understanding.</i>			
Research – finding out about things (academic & non-academic)			
Virtual world – email, internet searches and sites, forums <i>The (on-line) complaint procedure involved giving a full account of events and identifying what action I wanted as an outcome.</i>			
Family & friends – conversations and other social interactions, doing things together, parenting, eating, playing, <i>Since the death of my mother, 18 years ago, I have been my father's first port of call,</i>			
Home & garden, allotment – doing things like fixing, making, growing, experimenting <i>My father will sit, watching for the delivery,</i>			
Local environs – doing things like shopping, walking and exercising, interactions with community or natural environment, meetings with a purpose, socialising			
Hobbies & interests - leisure activities and pursuits, entertainment			
Travel - experiencing other cultures, supporting indigenous people			
Providing donations, gifts and other forms of support - for local, national or international organisations who help people in need (or non-human life).			
Working in partnership with others <i>I wrote to inform the Council,</i>			
Political and/or environmental activism – including using democratic right to vote and to campaign for social and environmental justice <i>I found that my advocacy was subtly moving from treatment by this company of the individual (my father) to that of the elderly clientele as a whole.</i>			

Vignette JW4

SDG#4 Quality Education

SDG#10 Reducing Inequality

A good start in life

Like any dedicated teacher, my life has been devoted to optimising the competence of every person I have taught, irrespective of age, gender, ethnicity or any other factor. Although now over 70 of age, I continue to enjoy opportunities to teach - and learn from - my students. Nowadays, I am teaching predominantly first or second generation children from Chinese, Korean and Bulgarian backgrounds, for most of whom English is a second language, though some are bilingual. They are filtered through to me from the age of about four, with a view to my developing their English language skills, including creative writing, comprehension, verbal and non-verbal skills. These children come from cultures where education remains highly valued, parents are ambitious for them, and they aspire to selective schools from the age of 7 upwards. Before anyone questions the morality of such tuition, I hasten to add that few of these families have the means to pay for selective education, therefore I see my role as a vital step in helping their children on to the educational ladder that will offer opportunities for social mobility, provided the learners apply themselves and earn financial support in the form of bursaries.

So, whilst clearly my activities lie within SDG#4 (quality education), achieving this is inextricably linked to #1 (action on poverty), #5 and #10 (reducing gender and wider inequality) with a view to improving #3 (personal and social wellbeing), as illustrated below. The goal is never-ending, completely integrated into my life and is one that I shall pursue so long as I am able. Can I really call it an SDG?

Reflection

This example raises for me a dilemma: is it justified to call an endeavour to which I have long been dedicated an SDG objective? Whereas some of my previous vignettes recognised a need for motivation to address something I 'knew' to be environmentally important, I did not intuitively 'feel' drawn to act. Here, I AM intuitively drawn to the issue, but have already taken it on board as part of my habitual activities because of my emotional and intellectual attraction. I feel a fraud in claiming commitment to something I enjoy. What does this say about the value of individual actions towards improving life? Are they any the less important for being mutually beneficial?



Extending this idea, how should I continue to challenge myself so that my contribution to quality education is optimised? Do I use this experience to diversify my activities or focus on improving the areas I am already active in?

Another obvious observation is that there is a chain effect: education supports social mobility. As long ago as 1870, Forster's Education Act recognised the role of education as a ladder to raise people from poverty. Not surprising, then, that SDG#4 is a potential means of effecting equality and enhancing both personal and social equality.

Finally, inseparable from the political objective implicit in my teaching, ethical issues are raised: should the long-term objective of improving individual opportunity be achieved by buying into a selective system which appears to conflict with equality? There are no easy answers to this, and responses will vary, but perhaps it is reminiscent of the need to discriminate positively in favour of gender or ethnicity, in order to break into traditionally restricted domains?

Figure 10 Map of activity relating to this vignette. The coloured cells show the sites that were active in my story of engaging with SDG#4 and SDG#10.

Figure 10 I draws out the sites in which I am active in this vignette. Again, entries are illustrated with quotations from the story itself. My actions are limited to the immediate community in which I live, hence feature at the meso level, though the impact they potentially hold is for individuals to use their learning beyond, into the macro world.

Potential Environments & Sites for SDG-related Activity	MICRO	MESO	MACRO
Work/professional life & practice community/networks <i>my life has been devoted to optimising the competence of every person I have taught</i>			
Formal study /CPD			
Self-education/informal learning individual (micro) & social (meso) <i>how should I continue to challenge myself so that my contribution to quality education is optimised</i>			
Research – finding out about things (academic & non-academic)			
Virtual world – email, internet searches and sites, forums			
Family & friends – conversations and other social interactions, doing things together, parenting, eating, playing,			
Home & garden, allotment – doing things like fixing, making, growing, experimenting			
Local environs – doing things like shopping, <u>walking</u> and exercising, interactions with community or natural environment, meetings with a purpose, socialising			
Hobbies & interests - leisure activities and pursuits, entertainment			
Travel - experiencing other cultures, supporting indigenous people			
Providing donations, gifts and other forms of support - for local, national or international organisations who help people in need (or non-human life). <i>I am teaching predominantly first or <u>second generation</u> children from Chinese, Korean and Bulgarian backgrounds</i>			
Working in partnership with others <i>few of these families have the means to pay for selective education</i>			
Political and/or environmental activism – including using democratic right to vote and to campaign for social and environmental justice <i>I see my role as a vital step in helping their children on to the educational ladder that will offer opportunities for social mobility,</i>			

Lifewide perspectives on living a life for a sustainable future

One of the aims in participating in the Learning for Sustainable Regenerative Futures inquiry was to try to understand the extent to which we draw upon our whole life in our engagements with the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). Figures 2-10 synthesise the patterns of engagements that emerge for the 8 stories. Each story has its own pattern but what they show collectively is that we engage across many different parts of our life. Not surprising, given that our actions are personal, most actions affect only ourselves our immediate environment but in some areas what we did has impacted on or influenced others. The graphic shows that we make use of different parts of our lives when we engage with the SDGs and that every story has a different pattern of engagement with the world.

In order to interpret the data more easily, Figure 11 collates the analyses of the 8 vignettes by site and level of activity. Not surprisingly, given that our actions are personal, most affect only ourselves and our immediate environment (micro level) but in some areas what we did has impacted on or influenced others (meso and macro levels). The columns in this overview show us that 47 sites of activity featured in the 8 vignettes at micro level, and that the numbers decreased to 26 at the meso level and 16 at the macro.

Reading the rows horizontally, we see the relative significance of each of the 13 potential sites of activity. The site with the greatest presence was Self-education/informal learning, which featured 14 times, both at the macro level and extending into the meso and macro zones. The authors have both devoted their lives to education, so this reflects their interests, but would not be typical for others. Much of the activity was supported by virtual tools, scoring 11 mentions, whilst working through partnerships appeared in 10 places.

These visual ways of representing our actions in respect of trying to live a life for a more sustainable world, demonstrates that we make use of all parts of our life when we engage with the SDGs. They provide evidence to support the argument for making the lifewide dimension of learning and action explicit within the current lifelong learning paradigm.

Figure 11 Levels of SDG-related activities for the eight vignettes described in this article

Potential Sites for SDG-related Activity in the 8 Vignette samples	MICRO	MESO	MACRO	TOTALS
Work/professional life & practice community/networks	2	4	2	8
Formal study /CPD	3	2	1	6
Self-education/informal learning	8	5	1	14
Research	5	1	2	8
Virtual world	6	2	3	11
Family & friends	5	1	0	6
Home & garden, allotment	6	0	0	6
Local environs	2	2	1	5
Hobbies & interests	3	0	1	4
Travel	0	1	1	2
Providing donations, gifts and other forms of support	1	1	1	3
Working in partnership with others	4	4	2	10
Political and/or environmental activism	2	3	1	6
TOTALS	47	26	16	

Motivations for Learning & Action for Sustainable Futures

The SDGs force us to think beyond ourselves. They force us to care about the environment and the detrimental impacts we and other members of our species are having on the planet: impacts that are upsetting the ecological balances that have enabled humans and all other life to flourish for the last 10,000 years.⁷ During the introductory meeting for the Lifewide Learning for Sustainable Futures inquiry, a number of participants shared some of their feelings about their relationships with the sustainability goals. Words like 'discomfort' and 'guilt' were used. We feel guilty because we know *we need to care more* about the world we inhabit and our fellow human beings, and we should do more to change our behaviours and live in ways that are more beneficial and do less damage to the world. Some participants also felt they had *a need to try to create* a better future for their children and grand-children suggesting that our needs go beyond our own lives and connect to the lives of future generations, But words like 'hope'

and ‘optimism’ were also used, hinting at a need that was yet to be fulfilled and also a willingness or need to try. This willingness, combined with the curiosity to collaborate with other like-minded people to explore our own engagements with the SDGs, provided the motivational force behind our inquiry.

As Ron Barnett tells us,⁸ without the will to act nothing will change, so motivation is a key factor when considering engagement with the SDGs. The sample of vignettes discussed above include explicit reflection on this issue. The previous Learning Lives inquiry, conducted in February 2021⁹, demonstrated that Alderfer’s Existence, Relatedness and Growth (ERG) theory¹⁰ provided a useful aid to understanding the motivational forces involved in an individual’s lifewide learning. In this article we seek to extend the use of ERG theory to lifewide learning for sustainable futures. In the process we adapt the theory to show how the concept of needs might be extended to take in concerns for the natural, physical and social world beyond ourselves, as well as for ourselves and others we care about.

Expanding the ERG theory of human needs to embrace the needs of the planet

Maslow¹¹ proposed five levels of human need which he defined as *basic needs* - physiological and safety needs, *needs for love and affection* and *needs for belonging*, *needs for esteem*, and *needs for self-actualization* (Figure 12). Alderfer (1969) refined Maslow’s scheme into three categories - *existence needs*, *relatedness needs*, and *growth needs* (Table 1 and Figure 12) and proposed the ERG theory to explain the relationship between the satisfaction of human needs and desires.

In the context of learning and acting for a more sustainable future, the needs that motivate us must extend beyond ourselves into the world around us. The literature seems to be deficient on this matter so we are making tentative proposals for the inclusion of new SDG-related needs into ERG theory (Table 1). For each category we have included a commentary showing how these new needs might be manifest.

Table 1 Summary of the Alderfer’s ERG categories¹² *We include a commentary showing how these categories might be extended to take account of concerns for the planet and the life it supports.*

Existence needs

Existence needs include various forms of safety, physiological and material needs. Safety needs mainly refer to the prevention of threat from fear, anxiety, threat, danger, tension, and so on. Physiological needs refer to an individual’s pursuit of satisfaction at the vitality level, such as leisure, exercise, sleep. Material needs refer to resources required for an individual’s living, including food and clothing [and the maintenance of tools they need for their day to day existence or wellbeing].

Commentary – We propose that this category should extend beyond concerns for one’s own existence to concerns for the existence of future generations and the planet. The SDGs expand concerns for meeting everyday needs to include the existential threat of the future demise of humanity as a result of the destruction of planetary systems through human behaviours and consumptive and exploitative practices. Such concerns and needs are more likely in individuals who are not fighting every day for their existence and they extend concerns for one’s own existence to concerns for future generations -like one’s children, grandchildren and people in the future.

Relatedness needs

Relatedness needs include senses of security, belonging, and respect. Sense of security involves the mutual trust of humanity. Sense of belonging refers to prevention from all forms of suffering, such as isolation, loneliness and distance. People normally wish to be accepted and become members of a group. The needs for belongingness include love given to others or caring accepted from others. Sense of respect simply means feeling of respect from others, such as popularity, social status, superiority, importance and compliment. Such form of need gives people value to their existence.

Commentary: The SDGs require us to recognise our connectedness - feeling and acting in a connected and related way to other living and non-living things. Recognising this as a motivational force for our actions helps us move forwards to recognising that we are ecological interbeings, deeply connected, related to and interdependent on, other people and living and non-living things.

Growth needs

Growth needs involve needs for self-esteem and self-actualization. The need for self-esteem refers to self-productive effects such as the ability to pursue, to seek knowledge, to achieve, to control, to build confidence, to be independent and to feel competent. Self-actualization refers to self-accomplishments including achieving an individual’s goals and developing his or her personality. The abilities to realize one’s potentials and to support the growth of others are also included. [Individuals’ creativity projects are often included in this category].

Commentary: The SDGs identify the need to learn beyond oneself “learning for oneself, for others and for the planet..... has a key role in driving sustainability”.^{13 p.14} Learning and acting for a regenerative future means that we must seek growth not just for ourselves but for the environment of which we are a part. Our actions must not inhibit or damage Earth’s natural and physical systems rather they must enable the growth of other living things and where possible restore damaged ecological and planetary systems

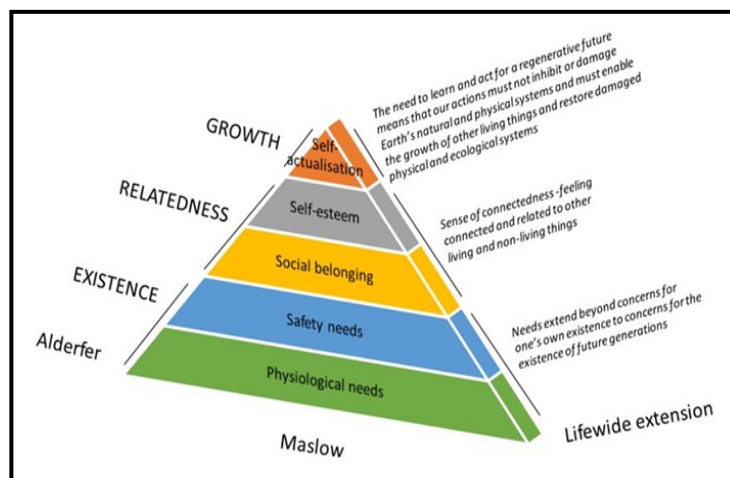
Figure 12 encapsulates the proposed extensions lifewide learning can offer to Maslow and Alderfer in order to address sustainability at each level of existence.

Figure 12 Extending Maslow and Alderfer through Lifewide Learning for sustainable goals

We used this adapted ERG framework as an analytical tool to audit our own sample of 8 vignettes to identify the needs and concerns that our stories of engaging with the SDGs were addressing. Appendix 1 provides our subjective interpretative map of the needs expressed in the 8 vignettes discussed above across the three categories of Alderfer's ERG model.

Concluding thoughts

We entered into the Learning for Sustainable Regenerative Futures Inquiry in order to understand better which aspects of our life we draw upon when we engage with the SDGs. The 35 vignettes that were produced by participants provide a useful database of stories to appreciate the nature of our everyday engagements with the SDGs.



We developed a mapping tool (Figure 1) and used it on a sample of 8 vignettes that we had written during the inquiry, to test our hypothesis that every aspect of our life offers affordance or opportunity for engagement with the SDGs. Figure 11 synthesises the results of the mapping exercise and demonstrates that we make use of many different parts of our lives when we engage with the SDGs and that every story has a different pattern of engagement with the world. The small-scale study provides evidence to support the argument for making the lifewide dimension of learning and action explicit within the current lifelong learning paradigm.

But opportunity to interact with the world in ways that are consistent with the SDGs is not enough. We need to be motivated to act and to commit to sustained and repeated action. We explored our motivations to act using Alderfer's ERG theory but adapted the three categories to recognise that the needs that motivate us must extend beyond ourselves into caring for the world around us. The mapping tool we developed (Figure 13) reveals the complex nature of needs that are attempting to be satisfied through any engagement with the SDGs.

People continually search for meaning in their lives. Martela and Steger propose¹⁴ that there are three key aspects of meaning: Coherence, significance, and purpose. Coherence is being able to make sense of one's life, as opposed to seeing the past or present as being a series of random and chaotic events. Significance is seeing value, joy, and connection in one's everyday living. Purpose is having plans and goals for the future. As we learn more about sustainability, we create new meaning and develop new values. As our commitments to living a life for a sustainable world grow the idea becomes more relevant and significant. We discover new purposes for living our life and as we engage in and create new practices that enable us to fulfil our need to contribute to a world that is more sustainable, our practices and our very being become more coherent.

Sources

- 1 Wilson, H. (2021) Fools and Dreamers Regenerating a Native Forest. <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=3VZSJkbyMc&t=336s>
- 2 Garden Notes Blog Sometimes doing nothing is the only help nature needs 20/07/21 <http://www.normanjackson.co.uk/garden-notes>
- 3 What is Net Zero Home <https://heartlandhomesinc.com/what-is-a-net-zero-home>
- 4 <https://renewable-heat-calculator.service.gov.uk/Home>
- 5 Enriching and Vivifying the Concept of Lifelong Learning through Lifewide Learning and Ecologies for Learning & Practice Lifewide Education White Paper <https://www.lifewideeducation.uk/white-paper.html>
- 6 Jackson, N. J. (2022) Steps To An Ecology of Lifelong-Lifewide Learning for Sustainable, Regenerative Futures, In K. Evans et al (Eds) Third International Handbook of Lifelong Learning. Springer
- 7 Gaffney, O. & Rockström, J. (2022). Breaking Boundaries: The Science of Our Planet London: DK: Penguin Random House.
- 8 Barnett, R. (2007) A will to learn: being a student in an age of uncertainty. Milton Keynes : OUP
- 9 Jackson, N.J. (2021) Concepts and Models for Lifewide Learning Lifewide Magazine #24 p 89-105
- 10 Alderfer, C. P. (1969) An empirical test of a new theory of human needs. Organizational Behaviour & Human Performance. Vol 4(2), 142-17
- 11 Maslow AH (1954). Motivation and personality. New York: Harper and Row.
- 12 Yang, Cheng-Liang & Hwang, Mark & Chen, Ya-Chien. (2011). An empirical study of the existence, relatedness, and growth (ERG) theory in consumer's selection of mobile value-added services. African journal of business management. 5. 10.5897/AJBM10.1586.
- 13 UNESCO (2020) Embracing a culture of lifelong learning: Contribution to the Futures of Education initiative Report | A transdisciplinary expert consultation UNESCO Institute for Lifelong Learning: Paris Available at: <https://www.sdg4education2030.org/embracing-culture-lifelong-learning-uil-september-2020>
- 14 Frank Martela & Michael F. Steger (2016) The three meanings of meaning in life: Distinguishing coherence, purpose, and significance, The Journal of Positive Psychology, 11:5, 531-545, DOI: 10.1080/17439760.2015.1137623 Available at: <http://www.ippanetwork.org/wp-content/uploads/2017/02/Martela-Steger-JOPP.pdf>

Appendix 1 Mapping the vignettes using the adapted ERG human needs framework

	EXISTENCE NEEDS Safety needs – relate to fear, anxiety, threat, danger, tension, and so on. Physiological needs refer to an individual's pursuit of satisfaction at the vitality level, such as leisure, exercise, sleep. Material needs refer to resources and tools required for an individual's living, including food, clothing, shelter. <i>Needs extend beyond concerns for one's own existence to concerns for the existence of future generations</i>	RELATEDNESS NEEDS Sense of security - mutual trust of humanity. Sense of belonging – feeling connected to other people, groups, communities: absence of isolation, loneliness and distance. It includes love given to others or care accepted from others. Sense of respect means feeling we are respected and valued Sense of connectedness -feeling connected and related to other living and non-living things	GROWTH NEEDS The self-esteem need refers to self-productive effects such as the ability to seek knowledge and understanding, to achieve, to control, to build confidence, to be independent and to feel competent. The need for self-actualization refers to accomplishments including achieving goals, purposes and potentials. Need to encourage and support the growth of others is also included. The need to learn and act for a regenerative future means that our actions must not inhibit or damage Earth's natural and physical systems and must enable the growth of other living things and restore damaged physical and ecological systems
NJ1	1 Concerns for future generations if we continue emitting carbon 2 Need to reduce carbon emissions caused by travel	1 Need to communicate my ideas about learning for sustainable regenerative futures to others, by participating in a conference in China	1 Need to accomplish goals I had set myself and my organisation 2 Need to find ways of restoring the atmospheric system by planting more trees (regeneration goal)
NJ2		1 Need to feel more deeply connected to my own natural environment	1 Need to increase biodiversity of my lawn by enabling nature to regenerate itself in the process I restored an ancient orchard ecosystem 2 My own self-actualisation now bound up with needing the knowledge to enable me to achieve my restorative/regenerative goals
NJ3		1 Need to relate my ideas on lifelong learning and learning ecologies to lifelong learning policies 2 Need to engage UNESCO Institute for Lifelong Learning and draw attention to the important role of lifewide learning in achieving their vision for a culture of lifelong 3 Need to belong to and support social learning in groups that are interested in and believe in these ideas. 4 Need to engage others (members of lifewide learning R&D group) in sharing their own experiences of engaging with SDGs.	1 Need to accomplish goals I had set myself and my organisation to influence the way we perceive lifelong learning for sustainable futures 2 Need to support knowledge development, reflection and intellectual growth of the participants in our inquiry
NJ4	1 Need to reduce carbon emission to protect future generations 2 Need to reduce energy consumption and household energy bills	1 Need to belong to and participate in a community climate action group	1 Need to accomplish goals I had set myself of trying to live a more sustainable life
JW1	1 Need to reduce carbon pollution through my car use 2 Need to leave healthy environment for future generations	1 Need to be responsible member of community	1 Need to free my sense of self from dependence on driving
JW2	1 Need to protect students from racial, sex and other forms of discrimination	1 Need to give back to Sri Lankan community from which my husband came	1 Need to prepare UOC for sustainable future through policies and procedures
JW3	1 Need to ensure father's nutrition is optimised 2 Need to help establish good systems for future clients	1 As daughter, need to provide care and advocacy for my father 2 Need to advocate on behalf of others in his situation	1 Need to meet personal expectations regarding family responsibilities 2 Need to contribute to dignity of elderly
JW4	1 Need to help integrate migrant communities into host community	1 Need to educate local community children passing on my knowledge and skills	1 Need to sustain my personal sense of responsibility after retirement 2 Through education, to facilitate children's potential social mobility

What Have the SDGs Got To Do With Wellbeing?

Jenny Willis



Jenny is a founding member of Lifewide Education and was Executive Editor of Lifewide Magazine between 2012-2019. She continues to teach children and adults while pursuing her other interests relating to mental illness and wellbeing.

Connecting SDGs to wellbeing: the hypothesis

If our actions to live a more sustainable life are connected to needs, and if we are able to satisfy these needs, what effect does it have on us? We might ask ourselves “what have the SDGs got to do with our wellbeing?” This question was in my thoughts as I read the vignettes and related discussion and my subsequent analysis would lead me to conclude that the answer to this question is: everything!

Figure 1, Evaluating my response to the SDGs

One of my immediate observations on reading submissions was how both I, and so many more of the participants, expressed a sense of guilt or inadequacy in how we are addressing the SDGs. Typical comments were *I fail regularly*, and *I know I can do better*. Indeed, I even categorised my own responses to the first task as areas where I was failing, partially active or active (Figure 1). Why did we feel this way? What had been our personal expectations? This led me to another question: what are the ultimate objectives of the SDGs? We might think first of the more imminent crises such as to make life sustainable in the future through tackling global warming, deforestation and similar ‘big’ issues. These relate to the wellbeing of the planet, but in turn impact on and are impacted by our communities and within them, each individual. Could we, then, say that wellbeing was the primary aim of the SDGs? That is the question I consider in this article.

Updated SDGs, Jenny Willis 22.10.21

Colour-coding: ■ Areas where I feel I am failing ■ My priorities and areas where I am very active ■ Areas where I have some positive action

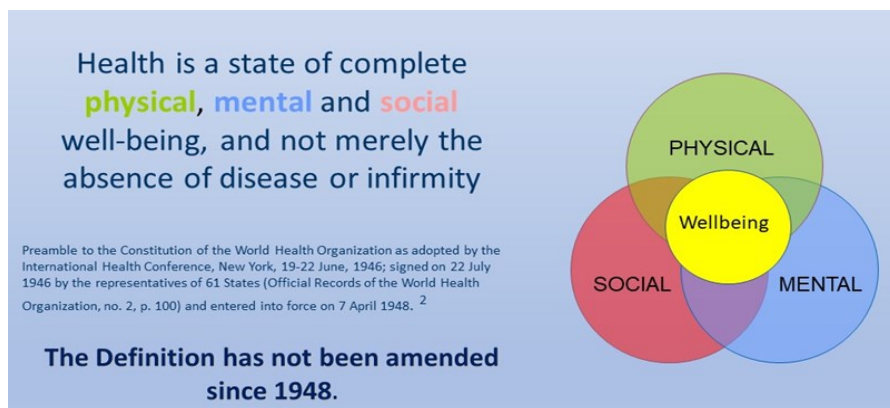
1 UN Sustainable Development Goals	2 Good Life Goals	3 Past, Current & Future Actions <i>Specific things I have done, I currently do, or I will try to do</i>
(1) No Poverty	1 Help End Poverty	Give to and buy from charity shops When travelling abroad, buy local goods Indirectly educate socially deprived communities to enable social mobility
(2) Zero Hunger	2. Eat Better	Give to and buy from charity shops When travelling abroad, buy local goods Indirectly educate socially deprived communities to enable social mobility
(3) Good Health and Well-being	3. Stay Well	Personal: vegetarian since age of 7 Others: research and conference contributions on wellbeing and mental health (expert by experience). International advisor for charity Careif Set up Kingston Wellbeing (kingstonwellbeing.com) with husband (a psychiatrist), previously no2stigma (no2stigma.weebly.com) Care at a distance for elderly father, manage his communications and purchases
(4) Quality Education	4. Learn and Teach	Teacher of all ages and levels from school to university. Mostly in inner London areas of social deprivation, from 1975. Deputy Head of secondary school for 5 years tasked with enacting Education Act 1986 e.g. devised and introduced appraisal & CPD system, records of achievement, transition to new examinations (GCSE, S-Levels). Taught and staff tutor for OU. University Academic Registrar, co-wrote successful CETL bid. Research Fellow SCEPTre, various other projects e.g. research on work placements, student awards. Founder member Lifewide Learning. Editor of Lifewide Magazine and Creative Academic Magazine until 2019; research and writing for both. Working as advisor to University of Colombo to put in place policies and procedures e.g. harassment, staff development.

What is wellbeing?

The word ‘wellbeing’ has become ubiquitous and the concept distorted to apply to such mundane issues as to whether the shampoo you use makes you feel good at one extreme, to the most profound ontological questions at the other. Somewhere in between, wellbeing is often, erroneously, equated with health. The association is logical, since many of the early philosophers were healers, doctors in today’s parlance. In c.500 BCE, Alcmaeon of Croton¹ was arguably the first to identify an association between an individual’s lifestyle and diet and their health, an idea that would be developed to demand taking personal responsibility for our lives. For Aristotle², this was conceptualised as eudaimonia, behaving virtuously for ethical reasons. There are traces of this objective in modern theories of self-actualisation e.g. Maslow’s³ ‘hierarchy’ of human needs, where we can aspire to the higher needs associated with self-realisation building on satisfaction of basic needs such as having adequate food, living conditions and so on.

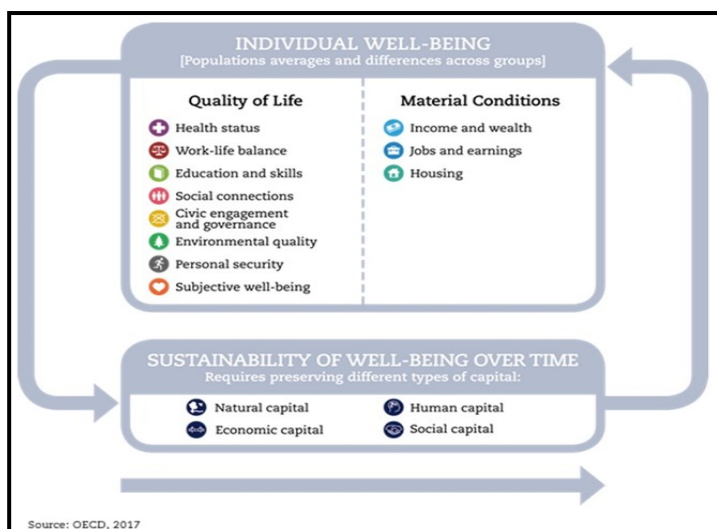
Wellbeing, we are beginning to appreciate, is far more than just health, and extends beyond the individual to their community. It is a dynamic state, deeply individual but inextricable from the social and environmental context in which the individual finds or creates. Indeed, some of the vignettes that were shared reveal how a sense of wellbeing can be deeply connected to the natural world and the living and non-living things it contains.

Figure 2, WHO definition of health, 1948



Significantly for this analysis, the World Health Association (WHO) defined health as being a balance between personal physical and mental health and social conditions. This definition has remained unchanged since 1948, and we might challenge its feasibility in the 21st century. Nevertheless, it is helpful in showing us how wellbeing lies at the point of intersection of our personal needs and social environment (Figure 2).

Greater attention has been devoted to the issue of wellbeing over the last two decades, partly in response to the incontrovertible evidence of how humankind's behaviour is threatening survival of the planet and our species, but also in recognition of our individually longer life expectancy and the greater proportion of our years spent in retirement. How can we ensure that these years are meaningful and valued? In other words, what is the quality of life for each individual who makes up their community, which in turn is part of a global community? Now we begin to see convergence with the template used in our project, where we categorised actions as being at the micro (personal), meso (immediate social environment) or macro (wider environment) levels. Every action, whatever its magnitude, has repercussions across domains.



A conceptual model has been developed by the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) which lists the personal dimensions that contribute to individual wellbeing, whilst also placing the individual in their social context. Figure 3 reproduces this, showing the factors that influence individual quality of life and their material conditions, which in turn contribute to and are influenced by social wellbeing, comprised of natural, human, economic and social capital. These are, respectively, comparable with the micro and meso levels to which we attributed action on the SDGs. If we were to scale this up to the wider and global environmental levels, we would have what we termed the macro plane. We note that the OECD explicitly incorporates the notion of sustainability in this model.

Figure 3, Conceptualisation of personal and social wellbeing

Aspiring to personal wellbeing

The UK government embraced the pursuit of personal wellbeing and, in 2011, the New Economics Foundation proposed Five Ways to Wellbeing. Similar to our dietary needs for a balance of nutrients, this suggested that personal wellbeing could be optimised by engaging regularly in a mix of 5 activities: connecting with other people; continuing to learn; being active; taking notice and giving to others. Each of these 'ways' is expanded as shown in figure 4. The assumption is that over a given period of time, if we engage in each activity, the quality of our individual lives will be enhanced. This will enhance social wellbeing, in a continuous spiral of wellbeing through interaction.

Figure 4 Five ways to wellbeing



Relating the SDGs to 5 Ways to Wellbeing

The next step in my investigation was to test whether the activities described or aspired to in the SDG vignettes correlate to the five activities deemed conducive to wellbeing. At the time of this analysis, 43 written vignettes have been received. These have been compiled and can be downloaded from the project page, at <https://www.lifewideeducation.uk/sustainable--regenerative-futures.html>.

Figure 5, Mapping the vignette SDGs on to the Five ways to Wellbeing. NB The keep active column is based on physical activity only. We appreciate that engaging with an SDG will always involve activity but it might not be physical.

The first step in my analysis was to create a mapping tool (Figure 5). The first column in Figure 5 lists the page on which each vignette begins. If this figure is followed by an asterisk, this denotes overt reference to wellbeing. The next five columns each relate to one of the five ways to wellbeing. Cells are shaded if the vignette includes activity related to the theme, otherwise the cell is left blank. For instance, the vignette that begins on page 2 shows activity in respect of connecting, keeping learning and giving. Colour coding is used to facilitate comparison of each form of activity. This is a personal interpretation, and readers may have alternative views, but there is internal consistency in so far as I have applied the same criteria to all vignettes.

Column 1 shows that 10 of the 43 vignettes make an explicit reference to wellbeing, either personal or social. In addition, all the coloured cells indicate the extent of activities which implicitly contribute to wellbeing. We can see at a glance that some activities are more frequently mentioned than others, and that there are individual combinations of action.

Perhaps the most striking finding is that every single vignette involves CONNECTING. This should not come as a surprise given the adverse impact the Covid pandemic has had on our mental health: the lack of social contact has greatly exacerbated individuals' ability to cope emotionally during periods of lockdown and sheltering. A few vignettes will illustrate how connecting is the common denominator which unites other dimensions of personal wellbeing. Pseudonyms are used to preserve the writers' anonymity.

Example 1, A health body and a healthy mind

In her vignette, Sylvia explains her multiple roles and how Covid has raised her awareness of our social needs: *as a mum and wife and working individual I look after and care for people. During the pandemic we have perhaps recognised more than ever before how vulnerable humans are.* In other words, she has NOTICED her social environment, and this leads to reflection and action.

Believing that *healthy individuals make up healthy communities and boosts our individual, collective wellbeing and brings joy in our lives*, she asks herself *how can we help those in need? Starting small and locally is helpful and can have a ripple effect. Communities, businesses, society and governments have a responsibility too. We all have. It is far too easy to think that I am just tiny and powerless, I can't do anything. We all can!* Now she is trying to turn her observations into action, which clearly encompasses both the micro and meso levels. Implicitly, Sylvia demonstrates LEARNING from her observations and reflection. She

V/ page	Connect	Keep learning	Keep active	Take notice	Give
2					
3*					
7					
9*					
10*					
13*					
14					
16*					
18					
20					
23*					
25					
26					
28					
33					
35					
37					
39*					
41					
43					
45					
49					
54					
55*					
57					
59					
62					
64					
65					
67					
69					
70*					
74					
76					
78					
79					
81*					
84					
86					
88					
94					
96					
98					

operationalises this through KEEPING ACTIVE for her personal wellbeing: *healthy eating can do wonders and physical exercise too*. But she extends this to her family: *as a family, and everybody gets involved, we are now preparing and eating now probably more nutritious food and are making a bigger effort to keep fit*. This now brings in CONNECTING with others, as do further examples of her routine: *I have started running in the summer with an ex-colleague and find it that it really does help me feel better. Also, having somebody to talk to when there is darkness and despair, somebody to lean on and hug are so so important too to bring us comfort and hope*.

Sylvia then moves on to the macro level, asking *how can we help to create a more caring and humane planet?* She answers: *I will continue being embracing of others and help them in any way I can to feel and be better. I think when we can bring comfort to others, this comfort bounces also back to us*. This now demonstrates GIVING.

In summary, this single vignette does explicitly address wellbeing, from the personal, through her local community to the global scale. The means of Sylvia achieving this personally draw on both personal resources and interconnection with others. Connecting with others is, arguably by definition, necessary for local and global action.

Example 2, Organising for Sustainability

The title I have given to this example implicitly recognised CONNECTING with others, in this case, students coming together for local environmental benefit. Fiona explains the principles of such projects: *SHAPE Sustainability Impact Projects - SHAPE Impact Projects are a collaborative initiative between the British Academy and Students Organising for Sustainability (SOS-UK) which uses an applied learning 'living laboratory' model to demonstrate the importance of the arts, humanities and social sciences in tackling sustainability challenges*.

The project she is involved in is tackling poverty in a London borough. She explains how it brings together students and academics from different disciplines, to work with members of the community: *the project aims to engage students and academics in realising the relevance and impact of their disciplines in tackling environmental, social, and economic sustainability challenges. Students' and academics' own institutions, as well as the local community, will serve as the testbed for their ideas, enabling an understanding of the impact of their field of study in a local and hands-on context*. So, Fiona is using LEARNING to GIVE to others at the meso level, through CONNECTING. She describes the actions designed to bring about change, demonstrating KEEPING ACTIVE, LEARNING and CONNECTING: *Social prescribing involves helping patients to improve their health, wellbeing and social welfare by connecting them to community services which might be run by the council or a local charity. Patients are referred to non-clinical services - such as personal training and gym membership, social and 'hobby' groups, or specific skills training*.

Fiona concludes her vignette with recognition of what she has personally gained from her involvement in the project, and hope for the future thanks to engagement on the part of the local council: *so far, being asked to participate in this has been really uplifting on a personal level because it is an opportunity to explore real-world problems with a focus on integrating the SDGs, and though it has only just started, the brief conversations have inspired me to be creative*.

I expect I will learn a lot from the students and the other stakeholders, and I really value this. I have been told that even if the students don't take on this project the Council are interested in working on this. So I hope, either way, I can see how this develops and that it can have a positive impact.

Again, the vignette shows how wellbeing, this time at the meso level, relies on a blend of actions, all ultimately reliant upon CONNECTING with other people. It also reveals how personal wellbeing, although not the objective of the project, is enhanced by working towards that of the community.

Example 3, Experiments of a custodian

Peter's vignette is focused on his immediate environment but has messages for the globe. He is fortunate in owning an extensive plot of land. He explains, *I like to conduct experiments in my garden*, demonstrating his need to KEEP LEARNING. We might assume that there is, implicitly, an element of KEEPING ACTIVE in his experiments.

On this occasion, the experiment was to see what would happen if he stopped mowing the grass. He NOTICED, *by early June the 30cm tall oxeye daisies formed a dense beautiful blanket together with many wild flowers – buttercup, dandelion, clover, cowslip, yellow rattle and the most beautiful magenta pyramid orchids to name but a few. For over two months they created a wonderful and uplifting spectacle for me and my family but more importantly they supported a thriving community of insects – bees, wasps, beetles, butterflies and more. By late July most of the flowers had withered so I mowed the wildflower meadow in order to scatter the seeds*. By noticing and taking action, Peter is GIVING to his personal and local environment.

So far, Peter's actions have been individual, though influencing the flora and fauna around him. Illustrating his desire for LEARNING, he records that, *after doing a bit of online research I discovered that wild flowers were cultivated in orchards or fields adjacent to orchards to attract insects*, which would go on to impact the wider environment. At this point, he uses the internet to CONNECT with other people, in order to buy ducks that would extend the chain of natural life on his land. He tells us, *after searching the internet I discovered someone close by who wanted to sell some ducks and got in touch. She responded*. CONNECTING

continued as Peter recounts, *I set about building the shelter with my grandson who likes to get involved in garden projects and we were pleased with the result. The lady brought her ducks.* He was now KEEPING ACTIVE, too.

The experiment appeared to be stalling when the ducks declined to use the shelter he had made. Determined to succeed, he went out at night and found (NOTICED) the ducks had made their own shelter. Further on-line research brought about his LEARNING more about ducks' behaviour. He reflected and realised that, *by regularly cutting the grass and weeding the lawn I work for myself rather than nature to create a lawn that looks good, because I have become enculturated into believing that a nice lawn is a good thing. Perhaps it gives me a sense of control over my environment. But I have worked against nature by cultivating something that is biologically impoverished. Not only that I probably killed thousands of insects as I cut the grass.* Peter concludes, *perhaps a lot of trying to change practice in response to the SDGs will involve small scale experiments that we learn from, followed by more significant actions when we are convinced of the value of what we are doing.* Here he is envisaging moving from micro and meso actions that will improve the 'wellbeing' of the environment. He follows this through to the macro level, suggesting, *the SDGs force us to recognise that individually and collectively we are part of many natural and social ecosystems.*

This vignette also illustrates how CONNECTING and the formation of deeper RELATIONSHIPS founded on the desire to care, is central to addressing sustainability (giving), be it connecting with family, strangers, flora or fauna. The means to achieving his goals are observing, learning and acting.

My conclusions

My hypothesis was that the SDGs are aimed, fundamentally if not explicitly, at enhancing wellbeing, that of the individual, the local community, the wider community and the global environment, from climate to geography, including economic wellbeing and stretching beyond the present generation to those yet to be born. I asked whether the vignettes could shed light on any connection between the SDGs and actions believed to be conducive to personal and social wellbeing.

The exercise of mapping the Five Ways to Wellbeing on to the vignettes (Figure 5) revealed a clear alignment. Moreover, it revealed the centrality of CONNECTING to achieving the SDGs. Implicitly or explicitly, one aim of each of the SDGs is to optimise wellbeing, be that for the individual, community or globe, and this entails GIVING. The three sample vignettes illustrate how NOTICING, KEEPING LEARNING and KEEPING ACTIVE are the means to achieving a sense of wellbeing.

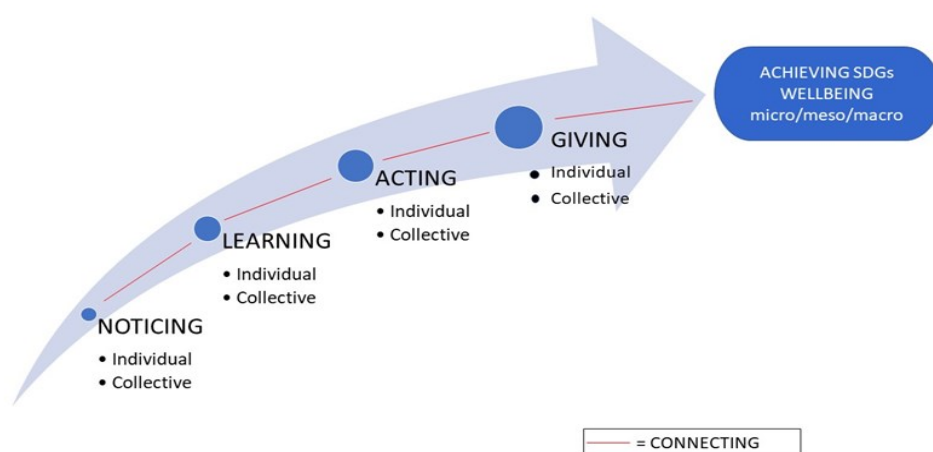


Figure 6, The SDGs and Wellbeing through Connecting

Figure 6 captures this progression, showing communication at the heart of each activity, from micro through meso to macro levels, with achievement of the SDGs being the ultimate objective, thereby enhancing wellbeing for the individual, our communities and the environment. Having undertaken this analysis, I now believe strongly that the SDGs are all about wellbeing. When we first encounter them and try to comprehend what a particular SDG might mean for us, we may well feel such emotions as guilt, frustration, anger and more that would certainly not be conducive to our wellbeing. But when we try to do something about the SDG and feel we have made even a small positive difference, we feel we have achieved something of value. We feel that the world is a slightly better place for our intervention and it makes us feel good. Perhaps this is a message that would help us to understand their relevance and significance to us, and help us overcome our sense of helplessness when faced by their apparently remote objectives. If you agree with me, please share this idea!

References

- 1 Alcmæon of Croton See Celesia, Gastone. (2012). Alcmæon of Croton's Observations on Health, Brain, Mind, and Soul. *Journal of the history of the neurosciences*. 21. 409-26. 10.1080/0964704X.2011.626265.
 - 2 Aristotle *Nicomachean Ethics* 1098a 13
 - 3 Maslow, A.H. (1943). "[A theory of human motivation](#)". *Psychological Review*. 50 (4): 370–96.
 - 4 OECD
 - 5 nef (2011) *Five Ways to Wellbeing New applications, new ways of thinking*. New Economics Foundation available at: http://dnwssx4l7ql7s.cloudfront.net/nefoundation/default/page/-/files/Five_Ways_to_Wellbeing.pdf.
- Image credit, Wellbeing [Campaign launches today promoting '5 Ways to Wellbeing' | Maldon & District CVS \(maldoncv.org.uk\)](#)

The Wisdom of the Collective

Norman Jackson

When a group of people collaborate in an inquiry, such as we did, we willingly become connected through the sharing of ideas, experiences, stories and about ourselves that are important hold deep meanings for us. We become a *collective* – giving to and helping each other – sharing our lives, insights, empathy and wisdom and caring about the people we are interacting with.

A “collective,” as the name implies, “is a collection of people, skills, and talent that produces a result greater than the sum of its parts. For our purposes, collectives are not solely defined by shared intention, action, or purpose (though those elements may exist and often do). Rather, they are defined by an active engagement with the process of learning. A collective is very different from an ordinary community. Where communities can be passive, collectives cannot. In communities, people learn in order to belong. In a collective, people belong in order to learn. Communities derive their strength from creating a sense of belonging, while collectives derive theirs from participation.”¹

The collective is a powerful concept when it comes to adult self-education, which is what our inquiry was intended to be. For the time we are involved in the inquiry and are present in its environment, we should not think of ourselves and our environment as separate things - we are indivisible, bound together through an ecology of living and experiencing and developing through our shared experiences. Anthropologist Tim Ingold captured this profound idea, “*‘Organism plus environment’ should denote not a compound of two things, but one indivisible totality*”, “*this totality is not a bounded entity but a process in real time: a process, that is, of growth or development*”². This is the true meaning of what being a collective means and it is a rich environment for growing wisdom.

Give a man a fish and feed him for a day.
Teach a man to fish and feed him as long
as the fish supply holds out. But create a
collective, and every man will learn how
to feed himself for a lifetime.¹

These notes draw on a range of perspectives from 11 reflective commentaries offered by participants at the end of the inquiry. They convey a general sense of what these participants thought about their experience but also some real nuggets of wisdom.

Learning about sustainability and the SDGs

Learning is always proportional to the time and effort we invest. All those who actively engaged learnt new things. Some participants began with a general and patchy awareness of the SDGs and now have more specific and more systematic understanding of the SDGs and what the SDGs mean in their own lives.

“I was very grateful to hear about this project where I could learn about them and explore my life on the basis of these goals. I now have a lot of insight about their meaning and about possible ways to support them in every day life as an individual.”

One participant used the opportunity to change his understanding of the SDGs *“from an interested awareness and an attempt to be more sustainable in the way I live to embarking on a personal critical understanding of the details of all 17 SDGs and their 169 component elements total breadth.”*

For participants who were already well versed in the SDGs and had already personalised some of them, there was still recognition that the process had been valuable. In the words of one such participant, *“This opportunity has continued to provide me with nudges and prompts to strive to do more personally and professionally.”*

The one story at a time approach seemed to be a good way of expanding our understanding of the SDGs because we all have stories to tell across a range of SDGs. There seemed to be a general realisation that *“we do not have to be an activist to engage personally in action towards the SDGs. Small, individual actions can make a difference.”* And we all shared examples of small actions that impacted on ourselves and those close to us.

For one participant engaging with the SDGs had seemed intimidating at first but the sharing of personal stories helped build confidence to the point where this participant said, *“This inquiry has prompted me to think about integrating SDGs in my work and act with more awareness.”*

Perhaps this is the main benefit of participation – through our experience we are enthused to try to do more, and as we are exposed to what other people are doing we can see more possibilities for doing more in our own lives.

Emerging from the reflective commentaries is a sense that the inquiry made us all more aware of sustainability issues and how we can engage with some of the goals in our everyday lives. We realised that some goals are more easy to action than others.

“There are goals I find easy/easier to support as an individual, like buying products with less or no packaging, use less water, energy, fuel, buy more local products, eat less or no animal products, eat organic products. There are also goals I find (more) difficult to support as an individual, like clean the seas, make peace, help end poverty, smart choices related to industry and innovation. I think these are areas that can be supported much better in groups, organizations, companies and governments.”

The fact that COP26 coincided was also relevant here and became a catalyst for conversations not just in the inquiry but with friends and family about SDGs more generally: *“Over these weeks, I have become more aware of references to sustainability in my environment: the media, in shops and cafes, at work.”*

It has also stimulated our curiosity to learn – I watched many videos on YouTube about sustainability and regeneration and some of them really inspired me. One participant commented, *“Because of my involvement in the Inquiry, I was curious to follow links and references, and to explore resources, to be better informed about climate change, and sustainability.”*

Emerging from my reading of the vignettes is a sense that CARING ABOUT SOMETHING BEYOND OURSELF is the universal motivational force for engaging with the SDGs.

“I am interested in making this planet healthier and happier also in a professional way, I had the chance to also focus on goal number 4 Quality Education. I know that everything I want to learn and do in order to help support as many goals as possible, I do it out of interest and love. I also know that both, love and interest, originated from connection. Connection to nature, animals and people, therefore, I want to try and help others to connect more as well. I have noticed that humans usually do things and change habits only out of their own interest and I think this is where I have to start by showing others that doing good things for the environment will also be good for them and the future living lives.”

That if we are aware of something it may trigger a concern when we encounter a situation where it is relevant. But if we also care about something, when it is a concern we are more likely to act or plan to act when the time is right. John Dewey said, *“When we experience something we act upon it, we do something; then we suffer or undergo the consequences. We do something to the thing and then it does something to us in return: such is the peculiar combination. The connection of these two phases of experience measures the fruitfulness of experience. Mere activity does not constitute experience”*³. When we perceive a situation with awareness of what it means for human or natural justice as seen through the lens of the SDGs, we feel concerned and experience a range of emotions that make us feel uncomfortable, or guilty, angry, inspired or any number of feelings that generate the will to act. Because we have undergone we perceive our environment in a particular way and something in it triggers our concerns and desire to care. The interaction does something to us and it causes us to act and in the process we undergo – we continue to grow as a person.

Learning about Ourselves

We are all different in terms of our histories, our current circumstances, our interests and what we care about – and our stories reflect this in the SDGs we chose to engage with and reflect upon. Emerging from the vignettes is a strong sense of identity, of who we are and who we want to be and become. The highly personal nature of our stories shows how they grow out of our evolving life. They are themselves generative and emergent phenomena.

One participant shared her life story and the insight that *“I consider my life story as the background for emerging sustainability themes.”* Another participant said, *“I have realised that I view myself as inter-connected in networks of generations of family, friends, colleagues etc. and that realising this, I feel empowered.”*

The idea that we are not only connected to people but to other living things, places, environments and much more was a general theme across many vignettes. *“My understanding has grown specially on the awareness of how daily we may enhance the way we interconnect and relate to others and to nature. (Inter- being - a new word mentioned in the vignettes).”*

Perhaps the most important learning to emerge from the inquiry is that we are not just beings we are interbeings. We are connected, related to and interdependent on, other people and living and non-living things. We are also deeply connected to ourselves to our life histories and experiences to our values and beliefs, our emotions and our concerns.

One participant connected his stories to the values he has developed over a lifetime saying *“I have found that the SDGs which are at the heart of my vignettes relate to the basic or fundamental needs of individuals water/food and shelter and to the potential of education and of technologies (old and new) to make a positive difference to lives. This exercise .. has reinforced my socialist/ humanist preferences and enabled my refreshed brain to recognise the dangers of capitalism in the extreme. Profit before people, personal over collective gain or profit goes strongly against the values with which I grew up as a child and a young man.”*

Ultimately, the way we engage or don't engage with the SDGs is a reflection of our value systems and the motivation to care that emerges from them.

Future practice and behaviours

Learning is not just about changes in understanding and awareness but about how we use what we have learnt to act differently. In the context of sustainability one participant offered the perspective that, *"to live a more sustainable life is not a conversion but an evolutionary process."* Implying that the first step is the willingness to engage in thinking and conversation but we must continue doing this in the context of our evolving life. This participant intended *"to focus my efforts on higher impact behaviours e.g. I have embarked on my approach to adjusting my diet; I am exploring ways to drive less. I will look for synergies and ways that action in one area can support actions relating to other SDGs."*

This was another general point to emerge across the vignettes produced by the collective. Through our story telling we all became aware of the ways in which actions relating to one SDG fed into another SDG suggesting that we have to think of them in a holistic rather than atomised way.

With heightened awareness one participant expresses a view that I think many will share, saying *"[My] intention is to continue to be more directed and purposeful with regard to my small contributions (personally and professionally) to a sustainable future."*

Perhaps our greater awareness becomes embedded in our morality and we are no longer able to ignore concerns in the way we could before. We do something to the environment and the environment does something to us – we undergo, in a continuous spiral.

Challenges to living a life that is more concerned with sustainable futures

We are all consumers of the Earth's resources and the stark reality, wonderfully expressed by one participant, is *"There are no challenges to living a life more sustainably other than gaining access to education and being creative and less demanding in what one's real needs are rather than being a consummate consumer."*

But as one participant noted, the challenges for individuals are often about being pragmatic even when you want to base your actions on values and principles, *"the need to balance one's principles against the realities of life e.g. financial disincentives may prevent me buying a new, more fuel efficient, boiler, or insufficient charging points and limited battery life will deter me from exchanging my diesel engine for an electric car."*

There is quite a lot of dismay amongst participants after COP26 as we were forced to confront the reality of trying to bring about change at the global scale in the face of the multitude of self-interests represented at the event. In spite of our scepticism, there is still hope amongst some of us: *"let's hope that sustainable development isn't the buzz word of the moment but something more long term which promotes new ways of being and doing. There is certainly a generation of young people who are focused on this so that is hopeful."*

Collaborative inquiry as self-organised adult education

The designers and facilitators of the process are interested in knowing if the method we used to promote inquiry was an effective way of developing understanding about living for a more sustainable future. My sense is that it was successful as a process for self-education because participants engaged fully with the opportunity.

"The approach of how to inspire others to self-educate has been a success I would say. I was surprised by the amount of participation of people, who sent their reflections and comments."

Like all educational processes individuals took different things from the inquiry according to their interests and pre-existing knowledge, the time they were able to devote to the process and their level of involvement. Perhaps we can see a spectrum: at one end are those who used it to take stock of their life and use it as a springboard for personal change at the other, participants used it more selectively as a prompt for action and raising awareness.

"This Inquiry has prompted and encouraged me to take a focused look at my way of living now and for the future. This focus seems to have developed a greater personal investment in considering, making changes, and intensifying my efforts to live for a more sustainable future."

To my delight, one participant reported that she is going to use the methodology in a course that she will teach on SDGs in her school.

Strengths – many positive and appreciative comments for example

The international nature of our collaboration NZ to Chile

“knowing that colleagues across the world were thinking about the same challenges, though they might have different approaches, experiences, and conclusions.”

“I have been grateful to be involved in this inquiry as reading through some of the vignettes have allowed me to learn more and being able to interact from people all of the world.”

Being amongst people from different backgrounds who are willing to share their stories – *“the collaborative process of posting and commenting was motivating and supportive. I can see that everyone has been committed to this process and invested time into sharing.”*

“the informal nature of this inquiry doesn’t make you feel compelled.”

“the way it prompted us to think about a sustainable future by reflecting on personal lives and stories”.

“personal choice, deep, personal learning.”

“I felt comfortable sharing my thoughts in the group.”

“flexibility was great particularly with time constraints related to work in the week.”

Weaknesses

One person felt *“A possible sense of isolation as no common focus. Maybe focusing on a small number of SDGs might have helped but that takes something away from the individual choice of focus, which is a strength.”*

Another found it difficult to fit the inquiry into her busy schedule. *“As I was busier than I thought I would be during the time of the project, it would have been more helpful for me to have more time for each vignette, maybe 2 weeks per vignette instead of one. This would have allowed me also to spend more time in reading all the vignettes and comments and participate more on commenting.”*

Another commented on the fact that the *“benefits are only for those who were able to actively contribute”*. Although our inquiry was open to anyone who saw our invitations the people who actively participated were a self-selected group. Indeed, although 21 people joined the initial part of the inquiry only 13 people stayed the course. Being delivered on a social media platform we don’t know whether any members of the lifewide learning R&D group who were not active participants, have benefited from the process.

Challenges

Four challenges were highlighted. The first relates to participating in the way people would like to participate and is something that many of us would feel: *“I found that the pressure I placed on myself to read and contribute during the Inquiry was uncomfortable at times.”* Clearly the more people who contribute to the discussion the more difficult it is to engage with every post and contribute to the discussion so perhaps there is an optimum size to these types of on-line inquiry.

The importance of good health is something we all recognise but illness strikes us all and in a time constrained inquiry it can severely disrupt good intentions. Several participants reported illness during the process.

“I submitted a vignette and truthfully, I wish I had time to have submitted more vignettes however my health had other ideas and I had to concede.”

The third challenge is to ensure that discussions about sustainable regenerative futures truly embraces diverse perspectives. Our invitation to participate did not exclude anyone but we must recognise that we are a self-selected, educationally privileged group of people with a keen interest in education and we are not representative of even our own societies. We must try to incorporate a multitude of perspectives into our inquiries.

“I am constantly learning about myself through my studies and the reflections I make. What I have noticed

is a lot of ‘white saviourism’ and this maybe a controversial thing to state but to me it is what it is... Some may say not everything is about race, however it is and it always will be. The question is do you want to have an open discourse or do you wish to remain in denial and push a false narrative?”

The fourth challenge relates to what happens after the inquiry. *“Maintaining good intentions beyond the event. Perhaps the benefits we now feel will quickly fade.”* We have tried to address this issue in our ‘next steps’ plan below.

Value

The value of the inquiry as a means of self-education was summed up by one participant in a comprehensive statement which is reproduced below as it captures so many dimensions of the experience and the outcomes that can emerge.

- *Self-reflection regarding SDGs make us more sensitive human beings towards building a better future for next generations.*
- *Being conscious about our actions and what we can do in our family, house, workplace, mobility will certainly change the world if each of us implements actions.*
- *Analyzing each SDG is important to decide how to take action, regarding the different topics that will finally promote sustainability.*
- *After deep analysis, education is the key to change mindsets and to develop consciousness in the community.*
- *Understanding the possibilities, we have and the different realities the world lives, makes us responsible and empathetic about it.*
- *Inquiries like this are a way to understand and get to know different points of view, to open our minds to new ideas, actions, reflections and possibilities.*
- *Going from the general self-reflection to the specific reflection, encourage us to really take action, and be conscious of what we do daily to have a better world.*
- *This methodology is applicable in different contexts, and works for lifelong learning, since the times between productions are enough to think about it, reflect and be creative.*
- *The instructions and feedback were very clear and motivated the participants to keep interacting and producing material for the investigation.*
- *I'm grateful for this opportunity, it made me take the time to reflect, to think, to create, to evaluate myself and the school I work at.*
- *I hope I can be part of more of this great learning experiences, I experienced a true learning community.*
- *It was a way to develop XXI century skills such as critical thinking, communication, creativity and collaboration, global citizenship, a true XXI century experience.*

Next steps - things we might do to progress our understanding and practice

As we come to the end of our inquiry there is always the question of what more we can do with what we have learnt? Our inquiries are always open and we try to make what we have learnt available to the wider world in case it is of interest or value to someone. The inquiry was undertaken in the context of the UNESCO Futures of Education initiative and what we have learnt will be made available to the project team. Our approach is to create a magazine from the substantial content and so our first task is to consolidate, analyse, synthesise and curate the perspectives we have generated in an issue of Lifewide Magazine. The inquiry is not complete until we have achieved this.

There were 4 suggestions for how we might build on what we have learnt. We could:

- Continue posting vignettes about our engagements with the SDGs from time to time in the knowledge that some members of the group are likely to be interested
- Come together again after say 6 months to share experiences and perspectives and monitor whether changes in practice have been sustained
- Engage in small scale action-learning projects – as individuals or in small groups
- Work towards developing an award to recognise a person's efforts to live their lives for a sustainable regenerative world

Points made in discussion at the final

In discussions of these points at our closing meeting a number of points were raised.

- We should acknowledge and celebrate the scope, scale and richness of what we have learnt as a collective.
- The way in which engagement in the inquiry revealed our connectedness to each other, to our families, friends and colleagues, to the SDGs and to the concerns people have relating to a sustainable future.
- Although our access to, and involvement at, the macro level may be limited, we can influence the micro and meso levels through the network of relationships we have developed.

- Although few of us felt we were an activist – in a political sense, we all have the power to be activists at the level of our own everyday life – our stories demonstrated this. We are all micro-activists and the world needs us to be agents for change at the micro level.
- The power of storytelling as a vehicle for connecting us to other people and their circumstances and histories.
- By reading other people's stories we realise we are doing some of the things they are doing and therefore appreciate that we are doing more than we think we are.
- Reading the stories of how other people have engaged with the SDGs "makes us feel better". Just reading someone else's story is a way we empathise with and influence each other.

In conclusion I would like to say a great big thank you to everyone who participated in and contributed to the inquiry. I have always believed that if we bring people together to discuss something they care about – like the world they live in and the future for generations to come – something magical happens. We not only undergo as individuals we undergo as a collective and this is my best explanation for what happened!

Sources

- 1 Thomas, D. and Brown, J.S, (2011) A New Culture of Learning: Cultivating the Imagination for a World of Constant Change
- 2 Ingold, T. (2000) Hunting and gathering as ways of perceiving the environment. The Perception of the Environment. Essays on livelihood, dwelling and skill. New York and London: Routledge, 2000
- 3 Dewey, J. (1916), (2007 edition) Democracy and Education, Teddington: Echo Library

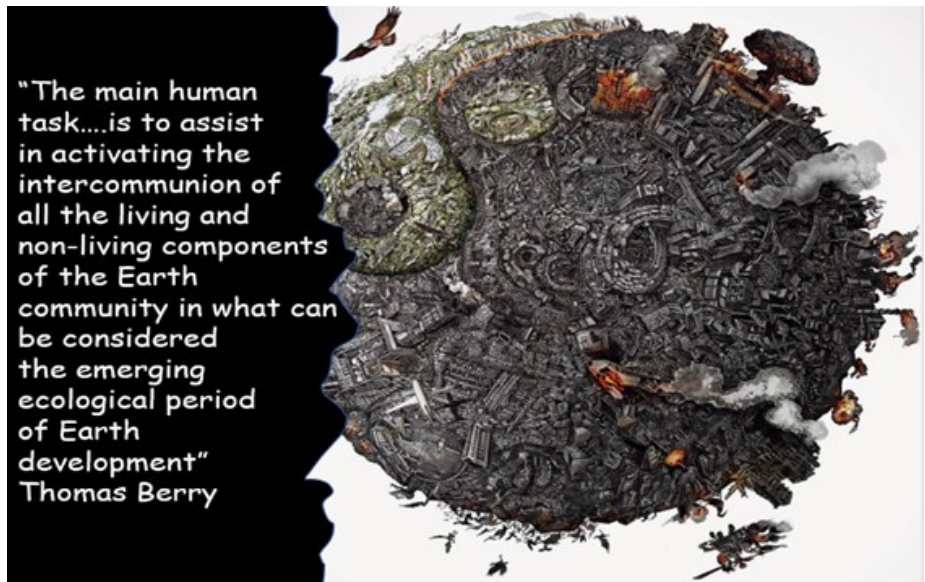


Editor – First Steps Towards An Ecological Civilisation

The sustainable development agenda calls for nothing less than the transformation of human civilisation: a transformation that moves us from “*an uncivilized society based on selfish wealth accumulation to one that is community-oriented and life-affirming.*” (Zenobia Jeffries Warfield). The pathway to such a transformation will include changes in thinking and behaviour at all levels of society but the small steps we have described in our magazine are a necessary and vital part of this movement. But what is the vision that will guide us. Making and staying on path towards the unknown is always easier if we are inspired by a vision of where we are heading. We began this issue with the inspiring vision of Thomas Berry inviting us to contribute to the next ‘Great Work’ of the human species. “*The great work now, as we move into the new millennium, is to carry out the transition from a period of human devastation of the Earth to a period when humans would be present to the planet in a mutually beneficial way*”^{1 p3}

Figure 1 Principle 11 of Thomas Berry’s Twelve Principles for Understanding the Universe and the Role of the Human in the Universe²

The natural world managed to form, evolve and regulate itself without the assistance of humans for 4.5 billion years thanks to the self-organising principles that govern the universe and its ecological expression in living organisms. But humans have firstly learnt these ecological principles and then abandoned them as we have come to believe that we, rather than the principles, control the natural and material world. For Berry the only way to address this manmade imbalance is to rediscover and live by these principles and consciously transition to a new ecological age³.



The ecological age into which we are now moving.....succeeds the technological age... this new age takes us back to certain basic aspects of the universe which were evident to the human mind from its earliest period, but which have been further refined, observed, and scientifically stated in recent centuries. These governing principles of the universe have controlled the entire evolutionary process from the moment of its explosive origin some fourteen billion years ago to the shaping of the earth, the emergence of life and consciousness, and so through the various ages of history. These principles. Known in past ages by intuitive processes. Are now understood by scientific reasoning. Although their implications have not yet been acted upon in any effective way. The ecological age must now activate these principles in a universal context if the human venture is to continue. ^{3 p44}

A new ecological age, such as that described by Thomas Berry, demands an ecological civilisation so we conclude this issue of our magazine with the inspiring vision of an ecological civilisation imagined by author Jeremy Lent whose work investigates the underlying causes of our civilization’s existential crisis and explores pathways toward a future that is radically different to the one we have invented for ourselves: a future that is life-affirming for all life. Jeremy’s article was published in YES magazine under a Creative Commons licence and it is republished here under this permission. We greatly appreciate the generosity of YES Magazine in sharing the content of its magazines in this way.

Sources

- 1 Berry, T. (1999) ‘The Great Work’
- 2 Berry, T. (1985) Twelve Principles for Understanding the Universe and the Role of the Human in the Universe Process Available at <http://www.earthethicsinstitute.org/GSELS/T%20Berry-TwelvePrinciples%202.pdf>
- 3 Barry, T. (1988) The Dream of the Earth. Counterpoint: Berkley

What Does An Ecological Civilization Look Like? **A society based on natural ecology might seem like a far-off utopia** **— yet communities everywhere are already creating it.** **Jeremy Lent**



Jeremy is author of *The Patterning Instinct: A Cultural History of Humanity's Search for Meaning* and his next book, *The Web of Meaning: Integrating Science and Traditional Wisdom to Find Our Place in the Universe* will be published in May 2022.

As a new, saner administration sets up shop in Washington, D.C., there are plenty of policy initiatives this country desperately needs. Beyond a national plan for the COVID-19 pandemic, progressives will strive to focus the administration's attention on challenges like fixing the broken health care system, grappling with systemic racial inequities, and a just transition from fossil fuels to renewables.

These are all critically important issues. But here's the rub: Even if the Democratic administration were resoundingly successful on all fronts, its initiatives would still be utterly insufficient to resolve the existential threat of climate breakdown and the devastation of our planet's life-support systems. That's because the multiple problems confronting us right now are symptoms of an even more profound problem: The underlying structure of a global economic and political system that is driving civilization toward a precipice.

Take a moment to peer beyond the day-to-day crises capturing our attention, and you quickly realize that the magnitude of the looming catastrophe makes our current political struggles, by comparison, look like arguing how to stack deck chairs on the Titanic.

The climate emergency we're facing is far worse than most people realize. While it was clearly an essential step for the United States to rejoin the 2015 Paris Agreement on climate change, the collective pledges on greenhouse gas emissions from that agreement are woefully insufficient. They would lead to a dangerous temperature rise of more than 2 degrees Celsius this century—and many nations are failing to make even these targets. We are rapidly approaching—if we haven't already passed—climate tipping points with reinforcing feedback loops that would lead to an unrecognizable and terrifying world.

Even if the climate crisis were somehow brought under control, our current growth-oriented economic juggernaut will bring us face-to-face with a slew of further existential threats in future decades. As long as government policies emphasize growth in gross domestic product and transnational corporations relentlessly pursue shareholder returns, we will continue accelerating toward global catastrophe.

We're rapidly decimating the Earth's forests, animals, insects, fish, fresh water—even the topsoil we need to grow our crops. We've already transgressed four of the nine planetary boundaries that define humanity's safe operating space, and yet global GDP is expected to triple by 2060, with potentially calamitous consequences. In 2017, more than 15,000 scientists from 184 countries issued an ominous warning to humanity that time is running out: "Soon it will be too late," they wrote, "to shift course away from our failing trajectory."

We need to forge a new era for humanity—one that is defined, at its deepest level, by a transformation in the way we make sense of the world, and a concomitant revolution in our values, goals, and collective behaviour. In short, we need to change the basis of our global civilization. We must move from a civilization based on wealth accumulation to one that is life-affirming: an ecological civilization.

A Life-Affirming Civilization

Without human disruption, ecosystems can thrive in rich abundance for millions of years, remaining resilient in the face of adversity. Clearly, there is much to learn from nature's wisdom about how to organize ourselves. Can we do so before it's too late? This is the fundamental idea underlying an ecological civilization: using nature's own design principles to reimagine the basis of our civilization. Changing our civilization's operating system to one that naturally leads to life-affirming policies and practices rather than rampant extraction and devastation.

An ecological civilization is both a new and ancient idea. While the notion of structuring human society on an ecological basis might seem radical, Indigenous peoples around the world have organized themselves from time immemorial on life-affirming principles. When Lakota communities, on the land that is now the U.S., invoke Mitakuye Oyasin ("We are all related") in ceremony, they are

referring not just to themselves but to all sentient beings. Buddhist, Taoist, and other philosophical and religious traditions have based much of their spiritual wisdom on the recognition of the deep interconnectedness of all things. And in modern times, a common thread linking progressive movements around the world is the commitment to a society that works for the flourishing of life, rather than against it.

6 Rules for Humans Re-Joining the Natural World

1. Diversity

A system's health depends on differentiation and integration. When this principle of natural ecology is applied to human society, we see it as affirmation of different groups—self-defined by ethnicity, gender, or any other delineation. Such as:

- Community self-determination
- Indigenous rights
- Restorative justice
- Social equity for LGBTQ communities

Deciphering Nature's Design Principles

There is a secret formula hidden deep in nature's intelligence, which catalyzed each of life's great evolutionary leaps over billions of years and forms the basis of all ecosystems. It's captured in the simple but profound concept of mutually beneficial symbiosis: a relationship between two parties to which each contributes something the other lacks, and both gain as a result. With such symbiosis, there is no zero-sum game: The contributions of each party create a whole that is greater than the sum of its parts.



Whenever you go for a walk in the woods, eat a meal, or take a dip in the ocean, you're experiencing the miracle of nature's symbiosis. Plants transform sunlight into chemical energy that provides food for other creatures, whose waste then fertilizes the soil the plants rely on. Underground fungal networks contribute essential chemicals to trees in return for nutrients they can't make for themselves. Pollinators fertilize plants, which produce fruit and seeds that nourish animals as they carry them to new locations. In your own gut, trillions of bacteria receive nutrition from the food you enjoy, while reciprocating by producing enzymes you need for digestion.

In human society, symbiosis translates into foundational principles of fairness and justice, ensuring that the efforts and skills people contribute to society are rewarded equitably. In an ecological civilization, relationships between workers and employers, producers and consumers, humans and animals, would thus be based on each party gaining in value rather than one group exploiting the other.

Because of symbiosis, ecosystems can sustain themselves almost indefinitely. Energy from the sun flows seamlessly to all the constituent parts. The waste of one organism becomes the sustenance of another. Nature produces a continuous flow where nothing is squandered. Likewise, an ecological civilization, in contrast to our current society built on extracting resources and accumulating waste, would comprise a circular economy with efficient reuse of waste products embedded into processes from the outset.

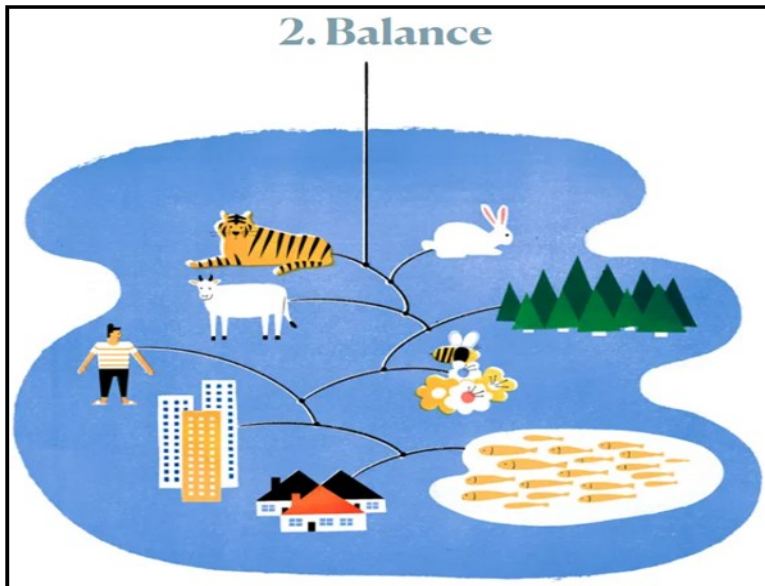
Nature uses a fractal design with similar patterns repeating themselves at different scales. Fractals are everywhere in nature—you see them in the patterns of tree branches, coastlines, cloud formations, and the bronchial system in our lungs. Ecologies are themselves fractal, with the deep principles of self-organized behaviour that perpetuate life shared by microscopic cells, organisms, species, ecosystems, and the entire living Earth. This form of organization is known as a holarchy, where each element—from cells on up—is a coherent entity in its own right, while also an integral component of something larger. In a holarchy, the health of the system as a whole requires the flourishing of each part. Each living system is interdependent on the vitality of all the other systems.

2. Balance

Every part of a system is in a harmonious relationship with the entire system. When this principle of natural ecology is applied to human society, we see it as competition and cooperation in balance and an equitable distribution of wealth and power. Such as:

- Global wealth tax
- Multibillionaires proscribed

- Abolition of offshore tax havens
- Legal support for co-ops and the commons



Based on this crucial precept, an ecological civilization would be designed on the core principle of fractal flourishing: the well-being of each person is fractally related to the health of the larger world. Individual health relies on societal health, which relies in turn on the health of the ecosystem in which it's embedded. Accordingly, from the ground up, it would foster individual dignity, providing the conditions for everyone to live in safety and self-determination, with universal access to adequate housing, competent health care, and quality education.

In the fractal design of an ecosystem, health arises not through homogeneity, but through each organism contributing to the whole by fulfilling its own unique potential. Correspondingly, an ecological civilization would celebrate diversity, recognizing that its overall health depended on different groups—self-defined by ethnicity, gender, or any other delineation—developing their own unique gifts to the greatest extent possible.

In a natural ecology, the type of exponential growth that characterizes our global economy could only occur if other variables were out of balance, and would inevitably lead to the catastrophic collapse of that population. The principle of balance would accordingly be crucial to an ecological civilization. Competition would be balanced by collaboration; disparities in income and wealth would remain within much narrower bands, and would fairly reflect the contributions people make to society. And crucially, growth would become just one part of a natural life cycle, slowing down once it reaches its healthy limits—leading to a steady-state, self-sustaining economy designed for well-being rather than consumption.

Above all, an ecological civilization would be based on the all-encompassing symbiosis between human society and the natural world. Human activity would be organized, not merely to avoid harm to the living Earth, but to actively regenerate and sustain its health.

An Ecological Civilization in Practice

The overriding objective of an ecological civilization would be to create the conditions for all humans to flourish as part of a thriving, living Earth. Currently, the success of political leaders is assessed largely by how much they increase their nation's GDP, which merely measures the rate at which society transforms nature and human activities into the monetary economy, regardless of the ensuing quality of life. A life-affirming society would, instead, emphasize growth in well-being, using measures like the Genuine Progress Indicator, which factors in qualitative components such as volunteer and household work, pollution, and crime.

For more than a century, most economic thinkers have recognized only two domains of economic activity: markets and government. The great political divide between capitalism and communism was structured accordingly, and even today the debate continues along similar lines. An ecological civilization would incorporate government spending and markets, but—as laid out by visionary economist Kate Raworth—would add two critical realms to this framework: households and the commons.

3. Fractal Organization

The small reflects the large, and the health of the whole system requires the flourishing of each part. When this principle of natural ecology is applied to human society, we see it as individual dignity and self-determination. Such as:

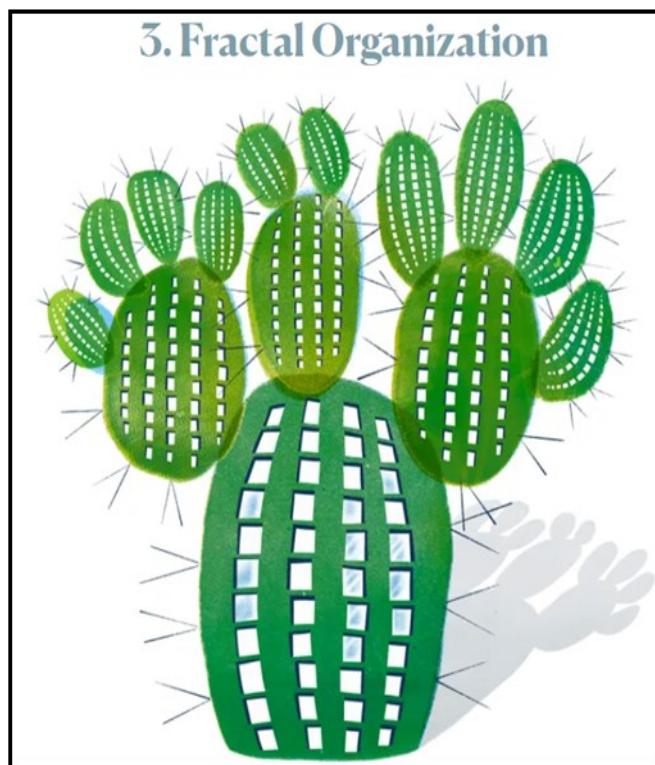
- Universal Basic Income
- Universal access to housing, health care, education
- Cities redesigned for walking
- Community interaction
- Education for life-fulfilment
- Cosmopolitanism

In particular, the commons would become a crucial part of economic activity. Historically, the commons referred to shared land that peasants accessed to graze livestock or grow crops. But more broadly, the commons refers to any source of sustenance and well-being that has not yet been appropriated by the state or private ownership: the air, water, sunshine, as well as human

creations like language, cultural traditions, and scientific knowledge. It is virtually ignored in most economic discussion because, like household work, it doesn't fit into the classic model of the economy. But the global commons belongs to all of us, and in an ecological civilization, it would once again take its rightful place as a major provider of human welfare.

The overwhelming proportion of wealth available to modern humans is the result of the cumulative ingenuity and industriousness of prior generations going back to earliest times. However, as a consequence of centuries of genocide and slavery, systemic racism, extractive capitalism, and exploitation by the Global North, that wealth is highly unevenly distributed. Once we realize the vast benefits of the commons bequeathed to us by our ancestors—along with the egregiously uneven wealth distribution—it transforms our conception of wealth and value. Contrary to the widespread view that an entrepreneur who becomes a billionaire deserves his wealth, the reality is that whatever value he created is a pittance compared to the immense bank of prior knowledge and social practices—the commonwealth—that he took from. An ecological civilization, recognizing this, would fairly reward entrepreneurial activity, but severely curtail the right of anyone to accumulate multiple billions of dollars in wealth, no matter what their accomplishments.

Conversely, it is the moral birthright of every human to share in the vast commonwealth bestowed on us. This could effectively be achieved through a program of unconditional monthly cash disbursements to every person on the planet, creating a foundation for the dignity and security required for society's fractal flourishing. It would also begin to address the moral imperative to remedy the extreme exploitation and injustices visited upon Indigenous and Black communities worldwide—historically and to this day.



Research has shown repeatedly that such programs—known as Universal Basic Income—are remarkably effective in improving quality of life in communities around the world, in both the Global North and South. Programs consistently report reduction in crime, child mortality, malnutrition, truancy, teenage pregnancy, and alcohol consumption, along with increases in health, gender equality, school performance—and even entrepreneurial activity. Work is not something people try to avoid; on the contrary, purposive work is an integral part of human flourishing. Liberated by UBI from the daily necessity to sell their labour for survival, people would reinvest their time in crucial sectors of the economy—in households and commons—that naturally lead to life-affirming activity.

The transnational corporations that currently dominate every aspect of global society would be fundamentally reorganized and made accountable to the communities they purportedly serve. Corporations above a certain size would only be permitted to operate with charters that required them to optimize social and environmental well-being along with shareholder returns. Currently, these triple bottom line charters are voluntary, and very few large corporations adopt them. If, however, they were compulsory—and strictly enforced by citizen panels comprising representatives of the communities and ecosystems covered in the company's scope of operations—it would immediately transform the intrinsic character of corporations, causing them to work for the benefit of humanity and the living Earth rather than for their demise.

In place of vast homogenized monocrops of industrial agriculture, food would be grown using principles of regenerative agriculture, leading to greater crop biodiversity, improved water and carbon efficiency, and the virtual elimination of synthetic fertilizer. Manufacturing would be structured around circular material flows, and locally owned cooperatives would become the default organizational structure. Technological innovation would still be encouraged but would be prized for its effectiveness in enhancing symbiosis between people and with living systems, rather than minting billionaires.

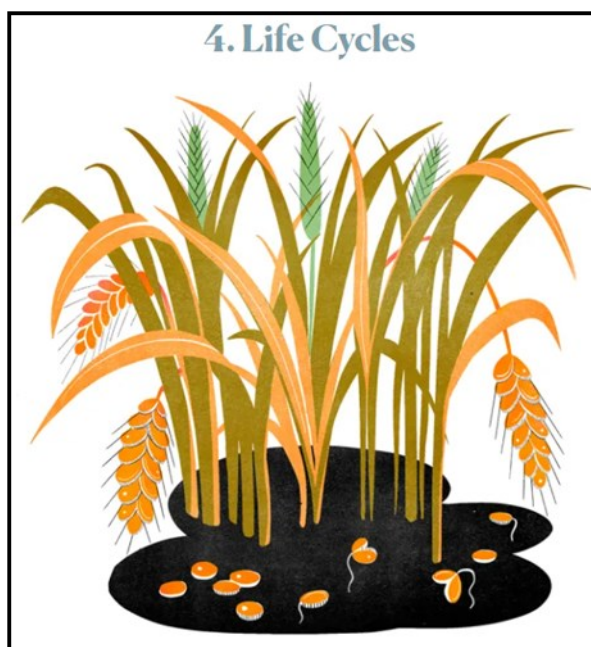
4. Life Cycles

Regenerative and sustainable flourishing into the long-term future. When this principle of natural ecology is applied to human society, we see it as economic growth halting once it reaches healthy limits. Such as:

- Steady-state economies
- A triple bottom line for corporations

Cities would be redesigned on ecological principles, with community gardens on every available piece of land, essential services within a 20-minute walk, and cars banned from city centres. The local community would be the basic building block of society, with face-to-face interaction regaining ascendancy as a crucial part of human flourishing. Education would be re-envisioned, its goal

transformed from preparing students for the corporate marketplace to cultivating in students the discernment and emotional maturity required to fulfill their life's purpose as valued members of society.



Local community life would be enriched by the global reach of the internet. Online networks with scale, such as Facebook, would be turned over to the commons, so that rather than manipulating users to maximize advertising dollars, the internet could become a vehicle for humanity to develop a planetary consciousness. Cosmopolitanism—an ancient Greek concept meaning “being a citizen of the world”—would be the defining characteristic of a global identity. It would celebrate diversity between cultures while recognizing the deep interdependence that binds all people into a single moral community with a shared destiny.

Governance would be transformed with local, regional, and global decisions made at the levels where their effects are felt most (known as subsidiarity). While much decision-making would devolve to lower levels, a stronger global governance would enforce rules on planetwide challenges such as the climate emergency and the sixth great extinction. A Rights of Nature declaration, recognizing the inalienable rights of ecosystems and natural entities to persist and thrive, would put the natural world on the same legal standing as humanity, with personhood given to ecosystems and high-functioning mammals, and the crime of ecocide—the destruction of ecosystems—prosecuted by a court with global jurisdiction.

Daring to Make It Possible

It doesn't take more than a glance at the daily headlines to realize how far we are from this vision of a society that fosters fractal flourishing. Yet, just like the underground fungal network that nourishes trees in a forest, innumerable pioneering organizations around the world are already laying the groundwork for virtually all the components of a life-affirming civilization.

In the United States, the visionary Climate Justice Alliance has laid out guidelines for a just transition from an extractive to a regenerative economy that incorporates deep democracy with ecological and societal well-being. A network of more than 70 grassroots and frontline movements, the Alliance works collectively for a just transition toward food sovereignty, energy democracy, and ecological regeneration.

5. Subsidiarity

Issues at the lowest level affect health at the top. When this principle of natural ecology is applied to human society, we see it as grassroots self-autonomy and deep democracy:

- Decision-making at the lowest possible levels
- Horizontalism
- Cooperatives

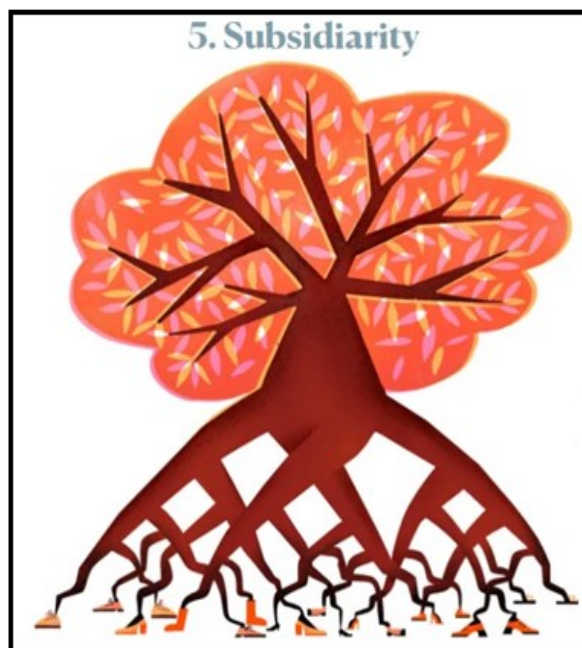
In Bolivia and Ecuador, traditional ecological principles of *buen vivir* and *sumak kawsay* (“good living”) are written into the constitutions. While mechanisms for enforcement still need considerable strengthening, these principles establish a powerful alternative to extractive practices, offering a legal and ethical platform for legislation based on harmony—both with nature, and between humans.

In Europe, large-scale thriving cooperatives, such as the Mondragón Cooperative in Spain, demonstrate that it's possible for companies to prosper without utilizing a shareholder-based profit model. With roughly a hundred businesses and 80,000 worker-owners producing a wide range of industrial and consumer goods, Mondragón proves that it's possible to succeed while maintaining a people-focused, shared community of life-affirming values.

A new ecological worldview is spreading globally throughout cultural and religious institutions, establishing common ground with the heritage of traditional Indigenous knowledge. The core principles of an ecological civilization have already been laid out in the Earth Charter—an ethical framework launched in The Hague in 2000 and endorsed by more than 50,000 organizations and individuals worldwide. In 2015, Pope Francis shook the Catholic establishment by issuing his encyclical, *Laudato Si'*, a masterpiece of ecological philosophy that demonstrates the deep interconnectedness of all life, and calls for a rejection of the individualist, neoliberal ethic.

Economists, scientists, and policymakers, recognizing the moral bankruptcy of the current economic model, are pooling resources to offer alternative frameworks. The Wellbeing Economy Alliance is an international collaboration of changemakers working to transform our economic system to one that promotes human and ecological well-being. The Global Commons Alliance is similarly developing an international platform for regenerating the Earth's natural systems. Organizations such as the Next System Project and the Global Citizens Initiative are laying down parameters for the political, economic, and social organization of an ecological civilization, and the P2P Foundation is building a commons-based infrastructure for societal change. Around the world, an international movement of transition towns is transforming communities from the grassroots up by nurturing a caring culture, reimagining ways to meet local needs, and crowdsourcing solutions.

Most importantly, a people's movement for life-affirming change is spreading globally. Led by young climate activists like Greta Thunberg, Vanessa Nakate, Mari Copeny, Xiye Bastida, Isra Hirsi, and others, millions of schoolchildren worldwide are rousing their parents' generation from its slumber. A month after Extinction Rebellion demonstrators closed down Central London in 2019, the U.K. Parliament announced a "climate emergency," which has now been declared by nearly 2,000 local and national jurisdictions worldwide, representing more than 12% of the global population. Meanwhile, the Stop Ecocide campaign to establish ecocide as a crime prosecutable under international law is making important strides, gaining serious consideration at the parliamentary level in France and Sweden, with a panel of legal experts convened to draft its definition.



6. Symbiosis

Relationships that work for mutual benefit. When this principle of natural ecology is applied to human society, we see it as fairness and justice, regenerative economies, and circular energy flows. Such as:

- Measuring well-being instead of GDP
- Regenerative agriculture
- Permaculture principles
- Circular economies and manufacturing processes
- Rights of Nature and personhood for nonhumans

When we consider the immensity of the transformation needed, the odds of achieving an ecological civilization might seem daunting—but it's far from impossible. As our current civilization begins to unravel on account of its internal failings, the strands that kept it tightly wound also get loosened. Every year that we head closer to catastrophe—as greater climate-related disasters rear up, as the outrages of racial and economic injustice become even more egregious, and as life for most people becomes increasingly intolerable—the old narrative loses its hold on the collective consciousness. Waves of young people are looking for a new worldview—one that makes sense of the current unravelling, one that offers them a future they can believe in.

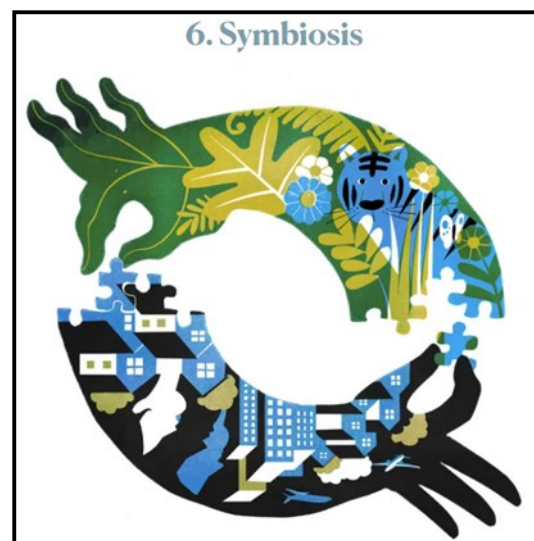
It's a bold idea to transform the very basis of our civilization to one that's life-affirming. But when the alternative is unthinkable, a vision of a flourishing future shines a light of hope that can become a self-fulfilling reality. Dare to imagine it. Dare to make it possible by the actions you take, both individually and collectively—and it might just happen sooner than you expect.

Acknowledgements

We are very grateful to YES Magazine for allowing Lifewide Magazine to republish this article.

Source

Lent, J. (2021) What Does An Ecological Civilization Look Like? A society based on natural ecology might seem like a far-off utopia—yet communities everywhere are already creating it. Published in YES Magazine Spring 2021 "ECOLOGICAL CIVILIZATION"
Available at: <https://www.yesmagazine.org/issue/ecological-civilization/2021/02/16/what-does-ecological-civilization-look-like>





Lifewide Education is a not for profit, community-based, educational enterprise whose purpose is to encourage and support a lifewide and ecological approach to learning, education and personal and professional development .

Lifewide Magazine is the voice of the Lifewide Education community. Each issue examines a different aspect of lifewide learning, education, personal development & achievement.

Lifewide Magazine is licensed under a Creative Commons AttributionNonCommercialNoDerivs 3.0 Unported License. Based on a work at :
[http:// www.lifewidemagazine. co.uk/](http://www.lifewidemagazine.co.uk/)

The Magazine is sponsored and published by Chalk Mountain, Education & Media Services Ltd.

Commissioning Editor

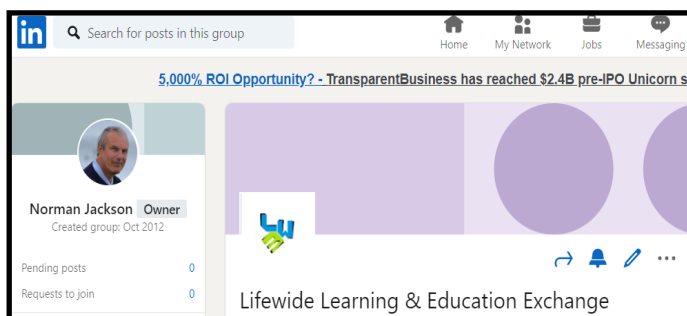
Professor Norman Jackson

We welcome contributions from members of our community.

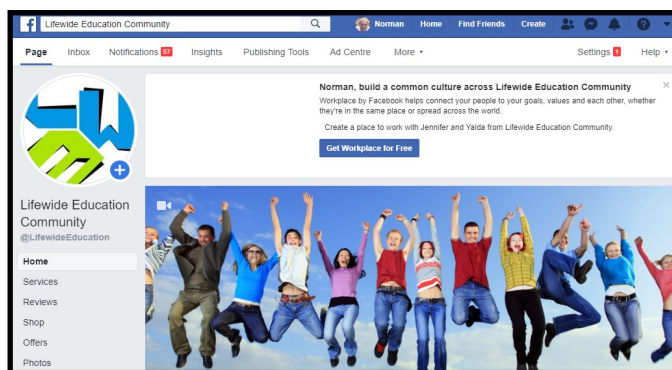
Please contact the Commissioning Editor
lifewider1@gmail.com

SOCIAL RESOURCES HUB

<https://www.lifewideeducation.uk/>



<https://www.linkedin.com/>



Follow us and send messages to

@lifewider

#lifewideeducation

