The Staff Issue

“Dear Reader,

Welcome to the third, and perhaps the most exciting issue of GLOBUS. With this issue, we are uniting the Global Sustainable Development and Liberal Arts teams, and expanding GLOBUS to the school level. It is now known as GLOBUS, the Warwick School for Cross-Faculty Studies Magazine. This decision will allow for more students to benefit from the various skills they will learn while producing GLOBUS once they take over. GLOBUS will now focus on a much broader range of topics, albeit we have made the choice to preserve the aspect of sustainability, as we aim to teach students to incorporate sustainability in all aspects of their lives.

This third issue will allow students to learn more about the way our staff think and the issues they place importance on in their own lives. To facilitate the identification of GSD and Liberal Arts staff pieces, we have colour-coded them which will hopefully be clear to you. The GSD staff appear in green, the Liberal Arts—in maroon, and the blue colour identifies those who belong to both teams. We strongly encourage you to take interest in all three categories—the choice of topics may pleasantly surprise you!”

Ande Milinyte, Editor of GLOBUS
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I am a multidisciplinary academic whose teaching and research interests range from Literature to Environmental Studies. I have a background in science, having completed a Biology undergraduate degree and studied medical sciences until my passion for undertaking research into the perceptions of health and illness amongst various native tribes diverted me away from practicing medicine and into academic research.

Subsequently, I completed a BA in English and went on to earn an MA and PhD in Comparative Literary Studies. I have developed a unique approach to course design which combines Problem-based learning with interdisciplinary teaching, enabling students to achieve depth of knowledge and breadth of perspective.

Recently I completed the Warwick Database of Arabic Resources, Warwick DAR, a unique repository of original materials including essays, translations, biographies and author interviews. The Warwick DAR supports the teaching and research activities on modules such as Art & Revolution, Issues and Problems in Arab Societies, Consumption and Sustainability.

Another area of interest is the field of Coaching in Education in which I am a practitioner and researcher. My most recent publication is a framework for using a coaching approach in supervising undergraduate research (in van Nieuwerburgh, 2016). I am an Associate Editor of Coaching: An International Journal of Theory, Research and Practice (Taylor & Francis).

I am currently leading on an Erasmus+ funded project which involves five other European universities. The project is titled The Best Liberal Arts and Science Teaching Expanded and Reinforced (BLASTER) and will run until 2018. Warwick University is leading on the Undergraduate Research strand; other strands include Quality Standards and Assessment led by ECOLAS and Professional Development and Teacher Training led by University College Roosevelt.
Rock music has been at the forefront of advocating for social change. Since its early inception in the 1940s and 1950s, rock music has expressed the anger of its generation and vocalised their disenchantment with political establishments and outmoded traditions. It is this militant approach that caused a backlash against the music and its proponents. It’s been dubbed “Satan’s Music” and linked to demonic possession. It has also been linked to political dissent and the fall of communism.

In the 1960s artists such as Bob Dylan and John Lennon, among others, expressed their disapproval of the Vietnam conflict, calling on the establishment to put an end to the war. In “Give Peace a Chance” Lennon’s lyrics addressed the UN directly and lamented its bureaucratic practices:

Ev’rybody’s talking about …
…regulations, integrations,
Mediations, United Nations,
Congratulations

At Woodstock in 1969, Jimi Hendrix played a distorted version of the American National Anthem which incorporated war sounds of gunfire and explosions. Michael Lang, the concert promoter recalls that when Hendrix “played the ‘The Star-Spangled Banner’, it was shocking to everybody.” In fact, there was a great deal of social disapproval of the “unorthodox” approach to the national anthem which included hate mail sent to the Dick Cavett Show to coincide with an interview with Hendrix. Since then, numerous critical interpretations of Hendrix’s intervention have been published each focussing on an aspect of his perfor-
mance [see for example recent online articles: *The Many Sides of ‘the Star Spangled Banner’* (2009) *The And of One* (2009), Jimi Hendrix’s ‘Star-Spangled Banner’ *The Epitome of the Countercultural Experience* (2014)] but all agreeing that his artistic interpretation encapsulated the spirit of the anti-war movement.

In the following decades, rock songs of protest continued to address politics and social injustice with bands such as Scorpions, Black Sabbath and Neil Young (to name a few) tackling topical problems ranging from the fall of the Soviet Bloc, to poverty and racism.

The wind of change  
Blows straight into the face of time  
Like a stormwind that will ring the  
Freedom bell  
For peace of mind  
Let your balalaika sing  
What my guitar wants to say

I grew up in the 1980s listening to this music. Often, many of its references were too obscure or too foreign but I identified with its sentiment and the rawness of the emotions it depicted. In addition to its political and social concerns, rock music turned my attention to the environment we live in, and challenged me to engage with the ways in which our behaviours impact it. This form of art has continually re-invented itself and renewed its mission; it reflects back to us our hypocritical, selfish and self-serving behaviours. The rawness of its lyrics, which often include offensive and controversial expressions, may shock us, disturb us and challenge our sensibility; the powerful sounds of electric guitars and the driving rhythms of drums compel us to raise the volume and share its message as widely as possible.

Nowadays I am still moved by the mission of rock music and I still identify with its calls for social change. As a form of artistic expression, rock music’s haunting sounds and seemingly chaotic rhythms have the power to move us emotionally and physically. With great fervour and zealous commitment to the cause of sus-
tainability, bands such as Disturbed and System of a Down warn us about the state of the planet, the consequences of our addiction to materialism and the inevitable demise of humanity if we continue to ignore the destruction and devastation that we cause.

In one of their most recognised songs, “Another Way to Die”, Disturbed lament the state of the world, observing that

The indulgence of our lives
Has cast a shadow on our world
Our devotion to our appetites
Betrayed us all

An apocalyptic plight
More destruction will unfold
Mother Earth will show her darker side
And take her toll

It's just another way to die

There can be no other reason why
You know we should have seen it coming.
Consequences we cannot deny
Will be revealed in time

Glaciers melt as we pollute the sky
A sign of devastation coming
We don't need another way to die
Will we repent in time?

The time bomb is ticking
And no one is listening.
Our future is fading
Is there any hope we'll survive?

Still, we ravage the world that we love
And the millions cry out to be saved
Our endless maniacal appetite
Left us with another way to die…

Their message coincides with that of System of a Down whose songs “Aerials”, “Chop Suey!”, and “Toxicity” and “Science” compel us to confront the reality of the disorder and destruction that surrounds us. In contrast to Disturbed whose provocative question “will we repent in time?” suggests the possibility of redemption and reconstruction, System of a Down see little hope for humanity to recuperate its pre-Industrial Revolution stasis. In “Toxicity”, they bemoan the dominance of computers in our lives and the ways in which they mediate our perception of reality:

Conversion, software version 7.0
Looking at life through the eyes of a tired hub

…

The toxicity of our city, our city
You, what do you own the world?
How do you own disorder, disorder

Elsewhere in “Chop Suey!” they reflect on our spiritual decline, “I cry when angels deserve to die” at the cost of our absorption with the routine of everyday:

Wake up (wake up)
Grab a brush and put a little make-up
Hide the scars to fade away the shake-up
Why’d you leave the keys upon the table?
Here you go create another fable

Rock musicians’ protests are expressed in their songs as well as in the covers and titles of their albums.

The cover of Ten Thousand Fists reflects Disturbed’s hope that humanity will unite, “fists raised in unison, as symbol of unity, strength and defiance”. The hope that underlies this image is not shared in the album covers of System of a Down where apocalyptic visions of the Earth’s doom dominate.

Whatever our attitude to the social, economic and environmental state of the planet we cannot but be moved by the sobering message that rock music has been conveying to us for the past 8 decades. Growing social injustice, escalating political turmoil, intensifying natural destruction and the global disregard of our duty to be stewards of the world around us have all contributed to a dangerous state of instability and insecurity. We cannot surrender to pessimism. Con-
scientious, intentional and purposeful interventions are needed, and these can only be accomplished through sustained and strategic rejection of the existing inefficient, crooked and social, economic and environmental systems. We can start by educating a generation of young people to see through the façade of existing bureaucracies and enabling them to create alternative systems that seek to address this disordered world. I belong to the generation that inherited a fraught post-war world and did not know what to do with it. If anything, my generation sang along to the music, rocked and rolled at concerts, but refused to either acknowledge or respond to the music’s warnings. Kurt Cobain mocked us in his haunting refrain to “In Bloom”:

He’s the one
Who likes all our pretty songs
And he likes to sing along
And he likes to shoot his gun
But he knows not what it means
Don’t know what it means…
Dr Alastair Smith

Senior Teaching Fellow

Following an undergraduate education in History and Politics at York University, I worked in Central and South America on micro-business/income generation projects for rural communities. Upon my return, I completed an interdisciplinary MPhil research master’s degree at the University of Oxford, learning the additional disciplinary approaches offered by Anthropology and Economics. I then furthered my interests through PhD research that critically investigated purchases of rice for use in Scottish schools as a tool of international sustainable development.

Following my academic apprenticeship, I worked at Cardiff University, being involved in a wide range of externally and institutionally funded projects, covering issues of market creation for fair trade products in Europe and the developing world (Brazil, Kenya and South Africa), microfinance access and governance (Africa and India), and food security in the ecologically fragile context of Caribbean islands. I have also regularly undertaken consultancy work for national and international NGOs and the UK Government Department for International Development (DFID), building resources for development practitioners promoting sustainable urban livelihoods.

I became increasingly involved in teaching and completed a Postgraduate Certification in University Teaching and Learning (PCUTL), leading to a Fellowship of the Higher Education Academy (HEA). In order to develop my experience, I spent time outside the UK, working as Resident Lecturer at an independent research and teaching centre (administered by the US based not-for-profit the School for Field Studies) in the ecologically and socially fragile area of Bocas del Toro, Panama. Here I developed my understanding of place-based and holistic research-led teaching and learning.

In addition to my role as a Senior Teaching Fellow with the GSD program at Warwick, I am a Research Associate of the Global Drugs Policy Observatory (Swansea University, Wales, UK) and a Member of the Board of Directors at Fair Trade Wales (Wales, UK).
In order to achieve more sustainable forms of human development – often, and very usefully, defined as creating a world in which every single individual has the maximum opportunity to live a life they have reason to value – we talk a lot about the urgent need for wholesale and radical transformations in the way we get things done. One of the key areas of life that is constantly referred to as key in bringing about holistic change to many different human practices is education, and over the years I have found myself becoming fascinated by the relationship between the practices of teaching and learning and the demands of more environmentally and socially sustainable development trajectories.

At the basic level, awareness of the complex relationship between human populations and sustainable development is of great importance in identifying where changes need to be made; and understanding existing ‘best practices’ and alternative, more environmentally and socially desirable options, is an absolute must in supporting wider transitions. In this sense, we can identify reasonable progress in developing ‘education for sustainable development’, as learning increasingly builds awareness of how human activities are directly and indirectly undermining the foundational ecosystem services on which they are premised.
In this sense, alongside other institutions of learning, universities have played a critical role in creating essential understanding. Indeed, universities are defined by the simultaneous creation and subsequent teaching and learning of cutting edge knowledge, and one of the key themes is to develop knowledge about more sustainable practices. However, while many universities have begun to include both specialist programs and integrate themes into other existing modules (see here for an analysis of progress at the University of Warwick), there is still much scope to embed the imperative issues of sustainability right across academic disciplines.

Having said this, there are other important developments open to reform in Higher Education, and will require us to go well beyond the technicalities of subject content and to simultaneously address more fundamental issues of how sustainability, and other themes, are taught. This is because traditional university teaching and learning often focuses on ensuring that students learn the received wisdom of previous research. While students must appreciate the value of existing knowledge – as completely reinventing the arched bridge each time you want to cross a river is both a terrible use of time and rather dangerous – a radical transformation of global thinking will, by its very definition, require a break with past patterns of thought. Here the ability of students to engage critically with existing knowledge will be essential: and the leaders of future generations must equip themselves with the ability to decide what to take forward and
what to leave behind.

The focus on promoting *students’ own abilities* to learn for themselves and from one another – and students should take note of the italicised emphasis – is critical to creating more sustainable forms of learning, both at university and then beyond. It is true that university teachers have often balanced the presentation of information with some level of expectation that students acquire new knowledge for themselves. Indeed, this is already well embedded in teaching and learning at Warwick, as many of the university’s modules involve lectures (where information is presented), student reading (where other ideas are found by students directly) and then seminars, where new knowledge can be actively assimilated as students are required to apply this in new contexts. However, only when teaching focuses on educating students to maximize their potential for self-learning will learning itself be sustainable. Moreover, in order to facilitate the necessary breaks with ‘business as usual’, teaching must focus on promoting critical and creative skills that will drive students to make use of existing academic knowledge for the needs of the future, rather than passively accepting this in a way that acts as an intellectually constraining force.

One of the key tools in creating sustainable education is likely to be ‘assessment’. While this is often thought about as a way to test student acquisition of existing knowledge, with some scope for creative students to achieve high marks with original thinking, the need for ‘authentic assessment’ is increasingly accepted. Indeed, developing assessments around the real world problems presented by current development trajectories offers excellent opportunities to require students to use problem solving skills as a fundamental part of submission. In taking this step, assessment moves beyond being a test to see if students know about sustainability, and simultaneously promotes their continued learning through the application of existing ideas to new situations—as well as offering the opportunity to see how well they might be doing this. With a focus on requiring students to address real questions, we also move closer to a more genuine synthesis of research and teaching, in which student are directly and meaningfully involved in the creation of new knowledge.

In far too many cases those concerned with sustainable development work on issues that are ‘out there’ and spend the majority of their time undertaking critical appraisal of the actions of others. As students and educators of sustainable development we are clearly involved in creating critical personal and collective knowledge about many other areas of human life. However, it is also essential that we think long and hard about how our own daily practices of teaching and learning can themselves be better suited to the dealing with the significant challenges that now confront our world.
Mrs Julia Gretton  
*Departmental Administrator*

I was born and have lived for most of my life in the Midlands region of England. I graduated from St David’s University College, Lampeter in Wales with a First-Class Honours degree in English.

After graduation, I worked for a short time at the University of Wolverhampton before moving to Wiltshire to take up a job with a rural district council as a Committee Clerk. I serviced the Council’s planning committees. Whilst working at the council, I also studied part time via a correspondence course for a professional company secretarial qualification.

Three years later and missing the Midlands, I returned to take up a post with the King Edward VI Grammar Schools in Birmingham where I ran the annual selective entrance test for the five schools sat by 4,000 children each year.

My career in education administration continued when I got a job with the OCR examination board where I was the Subject Officer for Media Studies, responsible for all aspects of the public examinations for GCSE, A level and OCR’s vocational courses in Media Studies. I learned a lot about the administration of formal assessments in my role at OCR and this, combined with my previous experience of committee work, enabled me to progress to working at the Registry at Birmingham City University where I serviced several of the University’s committees, including Senate.

I came to Warwick in 2008 to join the Department of English and Comparative Literary Studies as its Departmental Administrator.

In September 2014, I was fortunate to be offered a role helping Professor Cathia Jenainati to develop the University’s new courses in Liberal Arts and Global Sustainable Development which were already progressing through the various approval stages – yes, it really does take that long to set up new courses!

I live in south Derbyshire in a converted barn with my husband. Away from work, I enjoy gardening, baking and going to the gym.
For Tom and Barbara it was getting out of the rat race, becoming self-sufficient by producing their own food: growing fruit and vegetables, churning butter from their goat’s milk, making their own clothes using a loom, building their own generator fuelled by their animals’ waste and bartering and foraging for things that they couldn’t make themselves. In short, ‘working at the job of life itself’. They were trying to live sustainably, that is, in a way that minimised their potentially harmful impact on the environment and creating self-replenishing systems by reducing, reusing and recycling products wherever possible. They faced challenges along the way – failed crops and a malfunctioning generator – but as the title of this 1970s British ‘sitcom’ suggests, their life was Good and their choice to ‘go green’ increased their sense of well-being and personal happiness – and made us laugh at the same time!

But how realistic is this kind of lifestyle in the modern world and should we bother trying to live in a more eco-friendly way? In our fast-paced, technologically dependent consumerist society, we are all in pursuit of the sort of things that were not even dreamt of in Tom and Barbara’s time. For instance, how could you survive now without your mobile phone? Acquiring possessions has become a primary goal in the developed world, and the more you have, the more successful – and the happier – you’re assumed to be. If you’re earning enough money to be able to afford that luxury designer handbag which makes you feel happy, then where’s the harm? The answer is that the happiness derived is probably not going to last because the stresses involved working overly long hours, undertaking long daily commutes and consequently not having time to prepare and eat proper food, exercise regularly or spend time with family take their toll. According to Pilar Gerasimo, the founding editor of Experience Life Magazine, far from helping us to lead better lives, the pursuit of ‘stuff’ means we’re further away than ever from the Good Life: “From an economic standpoint, we’re more productive than we’ve ever been. We’ve focused on getting more done in less time. We’ve surrounded ourselves with technologies designed to make our lives easier, more comfortable and more amusing. Yet, instead of making us happy and healthy, all of this has left a great many of us feeling depleted, lonely, strapped, stressed and resentful. We don’t have enough time for ourselves, our loved ones, our creative aspirations or our com-
And the impacts are not just on the individual. As Colin Beavan, spokesman on environmental issues, consumerism and human quality of life and the so called ‘no impact man’ puts it, “the idea is that we work really hard to buy as much stuff as we can, and that’s what’s screwing up our world. The resources involved in that mean that we have climate change, we have deforestation, we have oceans depleted and so the roots of unsustainability and the roots of certain types of un-

happiness are actually the same. So if we do it smartly, at both the individual and the societal level, quality of life and sustainability are completely in line with each other.”

This link between the happiness of individuals and a sustainable planet means that trying to live in a more sustainable way will not only enhance your level of happiness but is also good for the world!

There are many sustainable elements of my life which make me happy. To begin with, there’s the sustainable activities that directly improve my health and well-being, thus contributing to my overall happiness. Growing food, including apples, pears, plums, gooseberries, walnuts, strawberries, rhubarb, raspberries,
damsons, potatoes, tomatoes, cucumbers, courgettes, and a range of herbs, reduces food mileage and improves diet by eating, fresh organically grown produce. It allows me to cook meals from scratch instead of buying ready-made or convenience foods, reducing food waste and avoiding the use of non-biodegradable packaging. Furthermore, preserving produce into jam, chutneys, relishes and damson gin ensures that none of the food I grow is wasted. To reduce food mileage and support the local economy, I also make an effort to buy from the local Farmers’ Market.

The other side of the coin is the activities that reduce stress and unhappiness in a slightly indirect way. For example, using a compost heap allows me to live in a cleaner environment – it reduces garden and as much kitchen waste as possible, which is composted down and then put back on the garden to nurture crops, thus creating a sustainable system. Another personal choice I make is to sometimes work from home, which reduces fuel consumption, pollution, traffic jams (good for the environment) and personal stress (good for me!).

These activities contribute to personal happiness and, hopefully, have a positive impact on the planet as well – even if only in a small way. It means that I have a pretty ‘Good Life’, but is it enough? Although it would be great if everyone grew their own food, rode a bicycle and lived off renewable fuel sources, that isn’t likely to happen for a very long time – if ever – but I believe that these small actions do count. No-one is perfect and, inevitably, there are many other aspects of my life with my husband which are more Margot and Jerry than Tom and Barbara, but it’s a start. For the rest, it’s over to you!

¹ (The Better Good Life: An Essay on Personal Sustainability in Experience Life magazine, April 2009)
I was born in Liverpool, where I studied for my first degree, receiving a BA in History from the University of Liverpool. An MPhil and PhD in History at Magdalene College, Cambridge followed, and I spent a year at Harvard University as Kennedy Scholar in History. I also read BA Theology at Exeter College, Oxford, specialising in the study of Islam and Catholicism. I have taught widely in universities, teaching History and Politics at both Oxford and Cambridge, Politics, Political Science and International Relations at the London School of Economics (for the Hansard Society) and in the Department of Political Science and International Studies at the University of Birmingham. I also taught education at a number of institutions, and was the founder of the Centre for Education Policy Analysis.

I worked in Westminster politics for a number of years as a speechwriter and political adviser, and I also have a background in journalism. My research draws on this diverse range of experiences; my writing of political history/contemporary political analysis is indebted both to my original training as an empirical historian and my subsequent work in politics and the media.

I have appeared in a range of broadcast media, and in May 2015 contributed election commentary to CNN and BBC local radio. In June-July 2016 I appeared in a range of media discussing the EU referendum and Britain’s vote to leave the union.

My forthcoming monograph, Socialism, Education and Equal Opportunity, focuses on the role of Anthony Crosland’s contribution to the politics of post-war British education policy begins a critique of state intervention in education within the context of a ‘moral economy’ of social fairness in the post-war period. This will be followed by a second book, The Birth of the Knowledge Economy, which interrogates the political economy of the post-war state in relation to British higher education. The two books taken together will offer a significant new interpretation of post-war British educational politics and its place in the wider life of the nation.
One of the issues I find myself increasingly addressing in my work is the tension between democracy and expertise. Democracies don’t come in standard sizes; Britain is formally a constitutional monarchy, and as such its democracy is uneven. Over half of British legislators are unelected (the House of Lords), as is the head of state (the Queen). Even amongst that part of the legislature which is elected, the House of Commons, there is often a considerable gulf between the share of the vote a political party receives and the numbers of MPs it gains – something which has affected a number of political parties from the Liberal Democrats and the Greens to UKIP. Finally, the power of the Prime Minister is huge – because the UK’s executive and legislative branches are fused, there is little a Prime Minister with a good majority can’t do, leading to a system of government which the former Conservative education minister Lord Hailsham once called ‘an elective dictatorship’.

Britain didn’t have a great revolutionary democratic moment in the way the United States or France did. Whereas in the US the rebellion against British rule led to the birth of a new nation and a codified constitution, Britain’s internal ructions such as the Civil War in the 1640s and the Glorious Revolution in 1688 were more modest. Though Charles I was executed and monarchy ended in the former conflict, the Crown was restored in 1660. The dispute in 1688 – the Glorious Revolution – was fought to limit the power of the monarchy, not to replace it. Apart from brief flashes of inspiration – such as the Levellers – popular democracy wasn’t seriously countenanced.

So Britain became its own peculiar sort of democracy gradually and unevenly. Different groups in society got the vote at different points due to a series of Parliamentary Reform Acts between 1832 and 1928. When my grandmother was born, she could not have expected to have had the vote on the same terms as men (even in the 1918 Representation of the People Act the vote was limited to women over 30). To make matters worse, Britain has historically been a class-ridden society; academics themselves are often seen as part of an elite ‘Establishment’ that has access to power, set apart from wider society. The historian Noel Annan once characterised academic influence in British life as that
of ‘an intellectual aristocracy’.

What’s this little historical detour got to do with sustainability, you may ask? The answer is a great deal. In Britain, as in other Western societies, political populism is a growing force. The rejection of established institutions and political narratives has been evidenced by a variety of developments from the destruction of the Scottish Labour Party, the election of Jeremy Corbyn as Labour leader, and, ultimately, the vote for the United Kingdom to leave the European Union. The public are, put simply, fed up with a political system that doesn’t seem to offer real change. British politics – and many of its constituent institutions – are facing a crisis of legitimacy.

One of the targets of populism is ‘expertise’. In a country where ‘expertise’ is so tightly associated with class privilege, Michael Gove, former Education Secretary and a leader of the Brexit campaign, was able to say that ‘this country has had enough of experts’. This is bad news for sustainability – because the consensus amongst experts on the environment is that man is the determining factor in climate change. But if the public deride experts, seeing them as privileged and out of touch, then will they listen?

In a recent YouGov poll, only 10% of the British public felt that the environment was a pressing issue. By contrast, 60% of the public felt immigration was. Whilst Britain has experienced high levels of net migration in recent years, few economists (to cite one academic example) would agree with this. But as populism has risen, so politicians – perhaps sensing the weakness of their own position
as an entitled class – have ceased making difficult arguments to an angry public. When David Cameron was elected as Leader of the Conservative Party in 2005, his slogan was ‘Vote Blue, Go Green’. He presented himself as an environmentalist to show that he represented a clear change, a modernisation of the Conservative Party. But as enthusiasm for environmental issues waned in the wake of the 2008 financial crash, Cameron as Prime Minister from 2010 set about ditching the ‘green crap’ and pursuing new energy security agendas through a new generation of nuclear power stations and proposals for widespread fracking. Now only 4% of Conservative members think the environment is a pressing issue facing the UK.

As someone who has worked as a political adviser in Westminster, I can say with some authority that being a politician is tricky. It requires calm judgement, an ability to appreciate the opposite point of view and – traditionally – the ability to make and sell arguments which can initially be unpopular. With the rise of populism and the discrediting of traditional institutions, it can be attractive for politicians to ditch the third part and simply give the public what they think they want. In recent years, there’s been an increasing trend for politicians to act against expert advice. A consensus exists amongst transport economists that road-pricing is the most sustainable solution to the problems associated with congestion and pollution on Britain’s roads. But when the Labour government under Tony Blair considered a scheme, there was an epic backlash with 1.8 million drivers signing a petition against road charges. The government withdrew the proposals.

In a democracy, government should be by the people – but in practice we live in a modified representative format whereby the people’s wishes don’t always get heard. We also live in an unequal society, where it is felt – rightly or wrongly – that a few wield power, often against the interests of the many. When academics, including environmental scientists and transport economists, are included in this ‘few’ the prospects for governments promoting what experts see as necessary courses of action to build for a sustainable future can seem open to question.

There’s no easy answer to this. Academics showed themselves to be out of touch over Brexit; the academic community was near-unanimous that Brexit would be a disaster for higher education and the country as a whole. The public didn’t listen, and academics were, in general, shocked when they didn’t. With climate change and sustainability, the threat could be even more serious. Democratising access to education remains critical if expert voices are to be heeded before it’s too late.
Dr Leon Sealey-Huggins

Senior Teaching Fellow

I joined the Global Sustainable Development programme in September 2016 following a year working in the Department of Sociology at the University of Warwick. Prior to that appointment I worked as a Teaching Fellow at the School of Sociology and Social Policy at the University of Leeds.

My work centres on the social relations of climate change, with a particular focus on the Caribbean region. In my research I consider the sociology and politics of climate change in the Caribbean, investigating what climate justice means in the context of global historical, and present, inequalities. I am particularly keen to bring a sociological lens to bear upon what are often very unsociological, and depoliticised, discussions of climate change.

I completed my PhD in the Department of Sociology and Social Policy at the University of Leeds in 2014. The thesis constituted a sociological investigation into the politics of climate change in the Caribbean. It involved conducting ethnographic fieldwork with actors involved in activism, public engagement and policy-making across the region. The thesis found that while there are indeed trends towards depoliticised, and unsociological, responses to climate change in and around the Caribbean, it is impossible to understand these tendencies without reference to the history of the region as a formerly colonised area. Moreover, the current trajectories of development and climate change in the Caribbean need to be understood in relation to more recent shifts towards forms of neoliberal governance.

My general research interests centre on and around: the sociology of climate change in the Caribbean; the conditions of contemporary higher education; explorations in activist-scholarship; and the impacts of neoliberalism on contemporary societies.

I have a broad range of teaching experience in sociology including having taught on introductory social theory and research methods courses, and more specialist environmental sociology modules.
Last week, borrowing tactics, and possibly personnel, from the UK climate justice social movement, British Black Lives Matter (BLM UK) activists ‘shut down’ one of London’s most exclusive airports. The logic for this action was explained in terms of the fact that the UK is the biggest per capita contributor to global warming, and one of the least vulnerable. While 10 of the countries most vulnerable to climate change are in sub-Saharan Africa. The activists highlighted the fact that most of those who fly in and out of London City airport earn on average over £114,000 a year, while in the London borough in which the airport is housed, 40% of people struggle well-bellow the living wage on £20,000 or less. In short, BLM UK wanted to highlight the fact that: ‘the climate crisis is a racist crisis’.

The next day, the leader of the Labour party, Jeremy Corbyn, promised a ban on all fracking and huge investment in local energy companies as part of a ‘Green Energy revolution’ if Labour were to get elected. In contrast, upon taking office, Prime Minister Theresa May closed the UK’s Department for Energy and Climate Change and restated a commitment to the problematic practice of fracking by offering payments to the local communities who have hitherto objected to its taking place.

Politics and sustainability are evidently inseparable, and yet these politics are by no means straightforward. One of the biggest questions raised by knowledge and awareness of sustainability challenges, such as rising inequality and climate injustice, is how do we respond to these challenges? These are questions of what kinds of social and political action we should take; what kind of world we want to bring into being with different models of ‘development’; and how we should bring those worlds into being.

My own research has focussed on the issue of climate action, especially in terms of what the impacts of climate change mean in and for the Caribbean region. I also consider how responses to climate change are interacting with the region’s existing development demands. A key point to note is that the development of areas such as the Caribbean, is strongly shaped, in sociological terms, ‘structured’, by the history of the region as a site of colonial occupation, with inevitable the wealth and resource extraction that accompanies such occupations.
This has led some actors in the region to try and draw attention to the ‘debts’ that are owed in light of the fact that the very development and wealth of the UK has historically been dependent on the impoverishment of its colonies.

As you might have guessed, one of the sustainability issues that has captured my (sociological) imagination, is that of how we can organise society in a fair and equitable way. All sustainability issues are of course linked, but this overarching question underpins the fact that we have to want to live in the world that we are trying to sustain. It seems that this will only be possible if that world is fair and equitable. A famous sociologist from my former University, Professor Zigmunt Bauman, once remarked that ‘you do not measure the health of a society by GNP but by the condition of its worst off’. When considering whether or not a particular political activity is sustainable, therefore, I am always keen to think about whose interests it appears to be helping or hindering.

Some will be critical of the kind of ‘direct action’ taken by BLM UK because of the disruption it caused, but it is worth remembering that women only won the vote in the UK via the commitment of the radical direct action of the Suffragettes who were prepared to disrupt the everyday sexism of ‘polite society’. Others have criticised the BLM UK activists for shifting focus away from deaths of black people in police custody, a criticism that raises important questions about where
one sustainability issue (e.g. reducing inequality) ends, and where another (e.g. climate change) begins. There are no easy answers to these questions, but on this course we have the opportunity, and responsibility, to work collectively in exploring them.

As junior scholars, you have all embarked on an important stage in your journey towards considering these questions. One of the most exciting aspects of the next 3 years is that we will aim to provide you the space to explore them. Beyond your studies, many of you will also be drawn into activities on campus that have real-world impacts, such as researching, campaigning, educating your peers, and trying to live ethical lifestyles.

I will not pretend to have the answers to the questions that arise, but I am committed to helping you formulate the questions, and it is through asking these questions that we will all collectively move towards a critical account of global sustainable development. On that note, it’s my great pleasure to welcome students to the inaugural year of what will be an exciting, important and ground-breaking interdisciplinary programme!

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**Projected impact of climate change on agricultural yields**

* A key culprit in climate change – carbon emissions – can also help agriculture by enhancing photosynthesis in many important (...) crops such as wheat, rice, and soybeans. The science, however, is far from certain on the benefits of carbon fertilisation.*

This map represents the case of beneficial carbon fertilisation processes.

Source: Cline W., 2007, Global Warming and Agriculture.
Mr Nick Cherryman

*Interdisciplinary Programmes’ Officer*

I’m Nick, hailing from Milton Keynes. I lived there my whole life, until I attended Warwick University from 2009-2012, studying English and Theatre Studies. I was taught by Prof Cathia Jenainati whilst at Warwick (now your Head of School!). I ran away to live in France for a year with my now fiancé, not speaking a word of French (which makes the whole thing significantly less romantic and much more stressful). I returned to Coventry, and have worked at the University for several years now, starting in the English department, then moving to Life Sciences, and now I’ve found a home in Liberal Arts and Global Sustainable Development.

My responsibilities in this job include all administrative aspects of the undergraduate BASc Global Sustainable Development and BA Liberal Arts courses, acting as the first point of contact for enquiries for current and prospective students, visitors, and academic and other colleagues across the University.

I provide administrative support to ensure the smooth running of the GSD and LA programmes to both students and academics, including assisting with student admissions, module registration, assessment processing, and communications.

I am also an MA student at Manchester University, spreading it out over 2 years so I can work at the same time. My studies focus on Gender, Sexuality, and Culture, and I have a particular interest in performance as a means of expression of femininity and the liminal space between what it means to be defined through gender and sex in social constructs. I’m particularly interested in the work of Michel Foucault, and hope to do a PhD after my MA in gender and queer theory and how implied sex is employed unconsciously in society and how this interaction differs in an artificially constructed performative act.

Aside from that, I occasionally play the guitar, love cooking, and am currently busy organising a (sustainable!) wedding.
Small Steps to a Global Goal: How Can the Little Guy Be Sustainable?

When I was asked to write this article, I wasn’t entirely sure what I would talk about. Sustainability is such a broad, diverse, and interesting topic: there are whole degrees devoted to it (as you well know!), so what on earth could I say in my little article space?

For me, sustainability is a big issue that the individual can tackle in smaller bite-size issues personally, and then locally and globally with the help of the community. This is not to say that governments, think tanks, policy advisors, the UN can’t tackle the big problems. In fact, the UN have their 17 Sustainable Development Goals, but I, a part-time student working in an office, can also make small changes in my own life that might help towards the bigger social drive for sustainability.

To begin with, I try to adopt sustainable practices in my own personal life. I own
chickens (named after singers and drag queens, as they are fabulous and can throw shade like you wouldn’t believe) and consume fresh eggs instead of buying them from the store. The chickens keep the insect levels low in the garden, and devour scrap vegetables surprisingly well, meaning that we have less food waste. My hermit crabs (called Surf and Turf) also eat scraps, albeit on a much, much smaller scale (about half a grape a day). My dog, Mia, gives me the excuse to walk to the shops instead of drive, so I reduce my carbon footprint, and keep fit. I have cats, Phoebe and Rocky, which are less ‘walkable’ but I did have to get one down from a tree the other day, so perhaps that can count for physical activity?

My fiancé and I grow our own herbs, and spend most of our time in the garden keeping the chickens away from the mint, sage, and chives. We have a strawberry plant, and I cook with the plums and apples that grow in the garden and pick the blackberries from the bushes down the road (and attempt to make cocktails of questionable quality with them).

Secondly, once sustainable practices are taken up in one’s personal life, they can then be encouraged by word of mouth amongst neighbours, family members and colleagues. One of my cousins has been involved in doing a no-plastic month (http://www.plasticfreejuly.org/) for two years in a row now, and, inspired by his dedication, I have decided to become a part of the initiative from next summer. It’s significantly harder than it looks, but it forces you to address the ways you can help contribute to society’s move to sustainable practices on a day-to-day basis.

I find that in order to ensure you lead a sustainable life and encourage others to do so, it’s important to choose a workplace/study environment that makes sustainability a priority. Our campus is increasingly choosing more sustainable methods of commerce: for example, if you bring your own cup to the cafes, you get 10p off your purchase. Considering that 10,000 coffee cups are used and thrown away every 2 minutes in the UK (2.5 billion a year!), a campus this size can make a small, but worthwhile, dent into this figure: 23,570 students x 5 cups of coffee a week during term time (30 weeks) = 3.54 million cups per academic year!

Finally, once sustainability is consciously adopted in one’s life personally and locally, it is time to get together and implement it globally. I was visiting Iceland recently (the country, not the frozen food supermarket…), and saw some graffiti that made me think: 47 million plastic bottles are sold and 70 million plastic bags are thrown away every year in Iceland. Considering that Iceland’s population is approximately 323,000 people, and the UK has 65 million, you can imagine the
difference in numbers and how quickly they spiral into incredibly unsustainable practices. Interestingly, Iceland is an example of how a country can take control of its own sustainability: it is the only country in the world whose electricity is entirely sourced from domestic renewable energy, and about 85% of its entire energy is renewable. They are obviously fortunate in the sense that the scale of the country, the low population, and geographic location can help here, as hydroelectricity and geothermal are the main energy sources. Nonetheless, I believe we should push for the inclusion of more renewable sources of energy in the UK and across the world where possible.

So what can we do to tackle the bigger issues, such as the introduction of renewable energy across the UK? We as individuals are relatively quiet and ineffective in the grand scheme of things if we do it alone, but together we are much louder and can make a big scene. We can implement all of our day-to-day changes in our personal lives to contribute towards our own sustainability whilst collectively making noise to convince those with the power to make the bigger decisions. People are the key to making a difference, so keep making small changes in your life to become a more sustainable person. Lots of little changes make a big one!
Dr Gavin Schwartz-Leeper

Director of Student Experience

I was born in New York City and was educated at The Oxford Academy before attending Bard College at Simon’s Rock, where I obtained a BA in Liberal Arts with dual majors in East Asian Religious Studies and English Literature.

Having developed an interest in historical Englishes while a visiting student at Oxford University, I undertook an MA in English Language and Literature at the University of Sheffield. My MA dissertation considered the role of hyperbole in the holograph correspondence of Thomas Cardinal Wolsey, and subsequently I was awarded a studentship to pursue doctoral research on sixteenth-century literary representations of Wolsey at Sheffield and published a revised version of the thesis as a monograph (From Princes to Pages: The Literary Lives of Cardinal Wolsey, Tudor England’s ‘Other King’) with Brill in 2016.

Following on from my PhD, I was appointed the inaugural research fellow for the Sheffield Centre for Early Modern Studies. In 2014, I came to Warwick as the Project Officer for the Migration, Identity, and Translation Network, part of the Monash-Warwick Alliance. In February 2015, I was awarded a Warwick Transatlantic Fellowship to undertake research at the Newberry Library in support of my new book, The Art of Richard Grafton: The Cultural Networks of a Mid-Tudor Printer (Brill, 2019).

As the Director of Undergraduate Studies and Student Experience for the new BA Liberal Arts program at Warwick, I have a strong interest in developing creative pedagogical approaches to transdisciplinary education. I have also taught for the Institute for Advanced Teaching and Learning (IATL) at Warwick in collaboration with colleagues at Monash University, Melbourne. In 2015, I was awarded a JJ Kidd Fellowship by the European Colleges of Liberal Arts and Sciences (ECOLAS) consortium and an IATL Strategic Research Grant to pursue research into liberal arts teaching and learning methodologies.

In my wider life I am an enthusiastic scuba diver, video gamer, snowboarder, and pet obsessive.
Recently I was having a conversation with a colleague about sustainability and student satisfaction, and he aptly described undergraduate students as the most imperfect customers imaginable: emotionally engaged and financially committed, but with no experience and little knowledge of the ways in which higher education programs operate. In essence, they are asked to make a largely uninformed choice with life-long consequences, and are likely to complain if they feel unhappy with the reality of that choice. While we still see high levels of student satisfaction in tools like the National Student Survey (NSS), it is clear that the current state of affairs will not continue indefinitely—we need a more sustainable approach to collecting and integrating student feedback. This is particularly relevant in the new wave of liberal education programs now on offer in the UK: we tell our students that the central skill they will develop is a deep and flexible approach to critical thinking and problem-solving. So what happens when students turn a critical eye towards their own programs?

Thanks to funding from the European Colleges of Liberal Arts and Sciences (ECOLAS), the Institute for Advanced Teaching and Learning at Warwick, and Liberal Arts at Warwick, I have been working on the ways in which students perceive strategic decision-making and the cultivation of transferrable skills as part of a liberal education. This functions at two levels, affecting both how an individual might structure their studies in a flexible course, and how an institution shapes a course in response to student perceptions. One of the objectives of this project is practical: to establish a flexible system for incorporating student feedback into the BA (Hons) Liberal Arts at Warwick. It is crucial that this system be a sustainable one: able not just to incorporate useful feedback, but also to engender the creation of useful feedback by students. But what helps students to contribute useful feedback (and what does ‘useful’ mean)?

To find out, over the past year I travelled to a number of leading liberal education programs in the EU and the US. I organized undergraduate focus groups with between 2-20 current undergraduates at mixed levels, from diverse backgrounds; teaching observations (primarily of required ‘interdisciplinary’ classes); individual interviews with teaching staff from the humanities, sciences, and social sciences; and interviews with administrative staff with strategic responsibility...
(i.e., dean-level faculty). I asked them all a series of questions and open discussion prompts addressing two central points: did students understand the structure of their program (e.g., did they understand why particular core classes were required in first year), and did students feel they were able to identify how that structure and its components enabled them to develop transferrable skills? These sessions afforded an excellent opportunity to ask students about satisfaction and reflection: were they able to provide feedback on their course? Did they feel that their feedback was taken into consideration? What did their feedback look like?

As it turns out, very little student feedback from traditional sources (including module feedback forms and course evaluation surveys) provided deeper responses. Feedback tended to focus either on personal issues (e.g., ‘I couldn’t understand the lecturer’s accent’) or was too vague to be of much use (e.g., ‘this was a bad module because it was boring’). Students I spoke with expressed dissatisfaction with a lack of visible engagement with their feedback. At a broader level, students often perceived a disconnect between their feedback and changes in their program because they were not familiar with the ways in which feedback was processed at their institution. Some of this is attributable to the types of feedback solicited from students, as quantitative feedback mechanisms (like multiple-choice questionnaires) were seen by students to be too restrictive or only used by institutions at a macro level. Some may be attributable to the pace of departmental planning. These factors, combined with a sense of ‘survey fatigue’ led many students to provide only cursory feedback (if any feedback was given at all).

Some feedback was useful, which was encouraging. Student feedback tended to be more detailed and useful when students were able to take up departmental leadership positions: this includes student ambassadors, representatives, and part-time workers. There is a clear relationship between high-quality feedback and student engagement, fostered by students who feel they have a personal stake in the program (beyond simply participating as a student), that they are...
working with faculty as colleagues whose input is valued, and crucially, that they are well-versed in the strategic and administrative processes that shape the program. Feedback from these students was almost invariably more useful, since it tended to address specific issues with a sense of what potential solutions might look like.

So, what should we do? Our approach is that students should be engaged as quickly as possible upon arrival, so they come to expect that their input will be solicited regularly. At Liberal Arts at Warwick, we have set up a five week mini-module entitled ‘Principles and Praxis’ for all new students. During these five weeks, we will discuss issues like student representation, trigger warnings, and assessment feedback provisions. Practically speaking, this means that we will determine collectively about what an effective student representative might do, or what a well-structured contentious debate might sound like. Faculty will work with students to create an evolving manifesto detailing our collective priorities and commitments. We will place emphasis on the importance of participating in student leadership opportunities: all students will become mentors of incoming students in years to come, and all will have the opportunity to nominate themselves to sit on the Staff-Student Liaison Committee (in collaboration with the Students’ Union). Students need to know the reasons why things are the way they are and how they can change, otherwise we risk alienation and unproductive conflict. A prominent policy of democratic engagement and reflection provides a sustainable process for managing student satisfaction in an honest way, and it teaches students to apply academic processes to practical problems.

As Frank Rhodes—president emeritus of Cornell University—wrote recently in an article for The Chronicle of Higher Education, the critical approaches used to think in terms of sustainability represent the heart of liberal education: critical thinking and holistic problem management. It’s time to bring these two concepts closer together and encourage our students to think about the sustainability of liberal education through engaged feedback.
Miss Susanna Pinkney

Interdisciplinary Programmes’ Officer

I am one of the Interdisciplinary Programmes’ Officers for the GSD and Liberal Arts courses.

Born and raised in Buckinghamshire, I first came to Warwick as a student, studying Classics. After graduation, I decided I wanted to stay in the area and became a Legal Secretary in Coventry, then later returned to Warwick as an administrator in the Law School. And now, of course, I’m excited to be here at the beginning of the GSD and Liberal Arts degrees.

I am responsible for all administrative aspects of the undergraduate BA Liberal Arts and BASc Global Sustainable Development courses, acting as the first point of contact for enquiries about the course for current and prospective students, visitors, and academic and other colleagues across the University.

I provide administrative support to ensure the smooth running of the Liberal Arts and GSD programmes to both students and academics, including assisting with student admissions, module registration, assessment processing, and communications.

Outside work, I like to go to the cinema, play board games and attempt to sew clothes.
It seems that recently we’ve been hearing a lot about millennials and how they are far more concerned with sustainable food, fashion and transport than previous generations. Global companies are changing their practices to appeal to the generation both to win their business as well as to gain employees.

So is sustainability really an issue that has only been recognised recently? I wondered whether this was really the case. Murky memories of my Classics degree told me that the Ancient Romans were pretty hot on the topic of sustainability themselves back in the day, notably in their architecture practices, introduction of sanitation, and implementation of recycling.

**Architecture**

Take a walk around central Rome and you will realise that many ancient Roman buildings still stand amongst the Renaissance churches, Baroque piazzas and Neoclassical structures. The likes of the Colosseum and Pantheon have been standing for nearly 2000 years and can each still boast an architectural record; the Colosseum is the largest amphitheatre ever built, whilst the Pantheon has the world’s largest unreinforced concrete dome.

But the real sustainability of Roman architecture is proven by their architects’ habit to reuse old spaces for new public spaces and buildings through the years. The Pantheon was refashioned into a church in 609 AD and remains as such today. The Colosseum, of course, is today primarily a tourist attraction but it has served many functions over the years. It too was converted into a chapel, with the arena serving as a cemetery while the vaulted arcades became workshops and houses. Around 1200 AD, the Frangipani family ceased the Colosseum and fortified it, apparently using it as a castle.

It is undeniable that the Romans built their public buildings to last, using robust bricks, marbles, clay and their famous concrete.
Sanitation

Apart from its buildings, something else that sprung to my mind that supported the sustainability of Rome’s population was the exploitation of fresh water. Rome's eleven aqueducts and its sewage system sustained the city's many public baths, fountains and public wells. Outside the city, the irrigation water drawn from the aqueducts on its journey through the suburbs supported Rome's food supply.

Altogether the length of the aqueducts which served Rome was over 450 km, and the Romans didn't like to waste a drop of the water which had travelled so far to reach them. Only rainwater or water which had already served a purpose was introduced to the drainage system. Large public toilets—a huge facility for the majority of citizens who lived without piped water—were often placed alongside public baths, so that the dirty bathing water could be used to flush the drains. Conservation of water was also made overnight in large cisterns, to hold back the water until the demand increased at peak times.

Such sustainable use of fresh water meant that Rome could support its large population in comfort and relatively healthy conditions over many centuries. The Cloaca Maxima, Rome's 'Great Sewer', is still in use even now. Of course, several of the imposing aqueducts still stand, including the impressive Pont du Gard in Nice, which continued to carry water until the sixth century.
Roman Recycling

A common view of the Romans is that they lived wasteful and ostentatious lifestyles: this may be a view based on well-known examples such as that of Nero and his Domus Aurea, albeit such examples of wastefulness are rare. In fact, there are many instances of Romans recycling everyday objects.

Think of Roman writing and you may think of papyrus sheets or vellum, and while these were certainly used for official records or literature, most everyday Roman writing was done on a wax tablet, known as a *cera*. The tablets were made of wood, with a recess in the middle to hold the wax, which the writer would scratch into using a stylus. Then, the wax would be warmed and smoothed so that the tablet could be reused. The tablets were used for anything from mundane shopping lists and notes to legal and accounting documents. Ovid also references *cerae* in his *Amores* as the perfect tool in his affairs to pass love notes.

There is also evidence of recycling in ancient Roman glassware. Pieces of colourless glass have been observed to contain hints of colour, suggesting that broken glassware was re-melted with the batch of new material to create new items. Similarly, metals also seem to have been reused. A recent discovery in May 2016 of a sunken merchant ship by Israeli divers suggests that the metal cargo was being transported to be melted and recast. Fragments of statues, drinking vessels and thousands of coins were discovered, believed to have been destined for a recycling depot across the Mediterranean.

So, with the Romans clearly so eager to construct buildings that would stand well into the future, to sustain their current population with the help of thrifty fresh water policies, and to recycle whatever they could to reduce waste, it certainly sounds like early sustainability to me.
Dr David Beck

Director of Student Experience and Undergraduate Studies

I completed my Bachelor’s degree in History, my Master’s in the Social History of Medicine, and my PhD in History all at the University of Warwick, with a PhD thesis discussing the cultural importance of nature and locality at the turn of the eighteenth century.

Upon the completion of my PhD, I lectured in the History Department at Warwick and worked as an Academic Technologist, providing support to academics in their use of technology in Digital Humanities research and innovative pedagogies.

I joined the Global Sustainable Development team as the Director of Student Experience and Undergraduate Studies in 2015. My role is an all-encompassing one which focuses on students. I am responsible for ensuring that, at all stages of the student life-cycle, our students are engaged, stimulated and motivated to take full advantage of the opportunities which these courses offer, so that they gain maximum benefit and satisfaction from their experience. In addition to this role, I am a Personal Tutor and teach on some of the core modules.

Outside Warwick, I co-teach a week-long residential workshop for sixth form students annually for Villiers Park Educational Trust, entitled Modern History: Sexuality and Human Nature from the Enlightenment to the Present.

My research interests include early modern British intellectual culture, digital humanities; sustainability; sexual cultures in the historical and contemporary world; rhetorical and political usage of human nature; nature, landscape and environment; erotic writing, medicine, and politics through the seventeenth and eighteenth century; early modern science and antiquarianism; and the use of digital pedagogies within a traditional academic context.

I have two children, and am now working part-time to be able to spend more time with them and my wife. I enjoy sailing, growing things in the garden, walking, and just about all aspects of DIY home-improvement.
On the Necessity of the Humanities for a Sustainable World

David Beck

For scientists in the majority of fields which model our planet, each individual result is largely irrelevant. It is only at scale that we can see the trends, whether that is in the decline of wilderness spaces, the warming of the planet, or the prevalence of forced labour and human trafficking. While in each of these fields outlying data are important, the contribution of each datum to the overall message is minimal: we’re destroying wilderness at an alarming rate, the planet is warming, and forced labour remains a serious problem. For humanities scholars, on the other hand, explaining the individual within the system is the goal; whether an outlier or a representative experience, what to scientists are individual datum can be the focus of extended works by scholars in the various humanities disciplines.

At the moment, our political discourse is ostensibly “evidence-based”, calling for masses of data on which governors can base their decisions. That’s no bad thing, in that it can help to differentiate between effective policy making and dogma. However, the way we speak about political decisions is also riddled with rhetorical strategies which attempt to evade argument by stating “evidence shows”, or otherwise claiming scientific authority, while ignoring the moral reasoning which led to a decision. The real world is complex.

Evidence-based studies can answer questions, but they cannot tell you which of the many competing issues we face to prioritise, or which policy best fits with the cultural strictures of the time – human values cannot be boiled down to numbers. Secondly, perhaps more importantly given the lack of public trust vested in our political class right now, arguments based solely on the credibility of intellectuals and their work do not resonate with the public at large.
The most persuasive analyses, in humanistic disciplines, are built from observed details at an individual or community level. This is the type of work that can emotionally compel people to think about how they live their lives, how they treat others, and how they treat their slice of the planet. It resonates, emotionally, with the majority of individuals more than an argument based on “data” ever will. The most influential bodies of work are those which situate these details within the context of an articulated position in regard to the most important stories of their time.

I am not joining the call for relevance in an attempt to directly affect governance or “speak to power”, but instead suggesting an attempt by scholars both to encourage individuals to change, on a mass scale, and to try to affect a change in the wider discourse around particular topics.

‘If today we have a public dialogue that gives voice to the traditionally excluded and silenced – women, and minorities of ethnicity, belief and dis/ability – it is in no small part because we now have beautiful histories of small things.’

Tom Hitchcock

This should come as no surprise. While we turn to numbers when dictating what “should be done” by other people about any and all problems; when it comes to our own lives, few of us emplace our decisions within a statistical framework at global scale. Doing so feels, and I would argue is, inhuman. To make meaning of our lived experiences, we think at a small-scale, and we intuit as much as we reason.

This distance between peoples’ lived experience and what they are told “we must” do is one of the key factors in the growing distance between governed and governors which is apparent in much of the West. And a direct consequence of this is that if those in power think they need to instigate change (as
“we” clearly do, in so many areas), their only option is compulsion/regulation/ legislation. This is not a sustainable political situation.

Our contribution as scholars with humanities backgrounds must be to understand the wider situation, to ‘get’ the scientific understanding of the planet around us, and to then emplace our work within that framework. To use the moral and human objects which we study to make a clear case for change in the areas which matter to us.

Where might we start? Which conventions might we challenge, or contradictions might we expose? What might that work look like? The answers to these questions are individual. If I were to spend more time writing and researching, rather than with my family or in teaching-focused work, there are two areas in which my work would concentrate.

Firstly, economic growth and full employment as a target to aim for (goal 8 of the Global Goals). When we zoom in to what this looks like in already developed countries, we find people working more hours to earn more to buy more stuff; none of this is ‘good’ for the long term health of the individuals concerned, their communities, or indeed the planet as a whole. There are plenty of historical and contemporary examples which could be mobilised in order to elucidate the benefits of making, mending, re-purposing, and sharing the things we already have. And even more which could demonstrate that time outside of work has a significance all of its own. Participating in a sharing economy, or simply having more leisure time, can require a conscious choice to take on less work, and reduces our individual contribution to GDP; but is for me unquestionably a good thing to do.

Secondly, and more conceptually, the commodification of nature requires challenge. Our political discourse has moved to viewing nature as a resource which we should view as a limiting factor on our development, something to be “balanced”. Accordingly, we “value” it in financial terms, and factor that into decision-making. Theoretically. What this discourse neglects, in addition to the problematic social implications of making access to nature finances-dependent, is any argument that the natural world is more than a system to be managed.

The world is our world, not in the possessive sense but in the sense of belonging which people feel when enmeshed in nature. Yet, an increasingly urban global population is disconnecting with it at an unprecedented rate. Telling people that going outside is good for their mental health will not work; shifting the discourse around nature to something based on emotion, wonder, and relatable lived experiences might.
Miss Ande Milinyte
Marketing Support and Editor of Globus

I was born and raised in Klaipėda, Lithuania—in a city on the coast of the Baltic Sea. I moved to the United Kingdom to study at the University of Warwick, and I graduated with a BSc in Economics in July 2016. I wrote my undergraduate dissertation on whether young adults’ planning for retirement savings is influenced by their knowledge of parents’ age at which they started saving, inspired by retirement savings statistics in the Western world as well as intriguing observations of parental influence in my social circle.

I joined the Global Sustainable Development and Liberal Arts teams in June 2015 when I was selected for the University of Warwick Internship Programme (UWIP) by Professor Cathia Jenainati and Mrs Julia Gretton. During the eight weeks, I designed the two GSD and Liberal Arts websites, initiated social media marketing for both degree families, and was lucky enough to be allowed to explore my own ideas and implement them. That’s how GLOBUS and the GSD Radio Podcast were born: we now have 9 episodes of the GSD Radio Podcast, and you are currently reading the third issue of GLOBUS.

As the start of my final year at Warwick approached, Cathia and Julia asked me to stay on and continue working for the entire year, and I happily accepted, choosing to balance my studies with my job and continuing my work on the marketing aspects of the degrees.

In October 2016, I will wrap up my work with GSD and Liberal Arts, and move onto a new exciting position: working as a Project Assistant for Warwick in California. However, I am keen to come back and offer my guidance to the students who will be taking over the writing, editing and designing processes for the forthcoming GLOBUS issues.

In my spare time, I like spending time with my friends, doing yoga, going “aww” over every other people’s pets (as mine are sadly back in Lithuania), and listening to everything from Red Hot Chili Peppers to Coldplay.
Ever since Facebook came around in 2004 and the Twitter bird began chirping in 2006, social media has become an integral part of everyone’s lives. It has facilitated satisfying the need to connect with others, has served as a great means to raise awareness, and has pushed businesses to communicate with consumers in a transparent and trustworthy way. Most interestingly, social media has become the modern counterpart of the smoke signal, most notably used by Native Americans when trying to transmit news, signal danger, or gather people to a common area.

I have identified three layers in which social media and sustainability work together—let’s take a look at each of them separately.

The first layer is the most obvious one: social media helps spread the messages of sustainability, and it does it faster, more effectively and to a wider audience. According to a study by the Pew Research Center in association with the John S. and James L. Knight Foundation, “clear majorities of Twitter (63 percent) and Facebook users (63 percent) now say each platform serves as a source for news about events and issues outside the realm of friends and family.” Hence, if calls for sustainability are to reach wider audiences, it makes sense to have those messages delivered through the channels that audiences prefer.

Having a degree in Economics, I am well aware of how being an uninformed consumer may result in you making personally and socially inefficient (and hence unsustainable!) choices. Social media provides opportunities to discuss sustainability on a daily basis and ensure that one is aware of the set of choices they have available to them. On Twitter, the back-and-forth of 140-character interactions is there for all to see, allowing the audience to hear all sides of the story, be it the sustainability of Brexit or the implementation of the UN Global Goals. Just the other day, I found out that drivers using a mobile phone are approximately four times more likely to be involved in a crash than when they don't use it – yes, it’s intuitive, but I wouldn’t actually have known this statistic unless I had actively searched for this information. But because of social media, I don’t have to: this information is regularly supplied to me, hence there’s no excuse for me not to be aware of it. Moreover, I am not the only one to receive this information: if you subscribe or follow the main news agencies, you can be sure that this information will be delivered to thousands, or sometimes even millions of
people. This way, the sustainability message becomes more effective: using my previous example, once people are aware, the percentage of drivers who talk on their phones while behind the wheel falls. I imagine the process works as follows: you read the news headline, get on with your life, at some point get behind the wheel, are about to take your phone out to call someone, but then aha! you remember reading something about phones and car crashes. Of course, not every person will actually choose the more sustainable action, but at least they will be aware enough to consider it. Nevertheless, some of them will make a sustainable decision, hence the statistics will change—even if the change is incremental.

The second layer of how social media and sustainability work together is a way in which businesses use social media to attract customers by communicating their sustainable practices. In a world where the call for sustainability is not just an invitation anymore, but rather a distress signal, it’s no longer all about providing the most reasonably-priced product. Quality is no longer just about durability: a consumer seeks transparency, ethics and innovation increasingly more often. How businesses approach corporate social responsibility (CSR) can become the deciding aspect of which brand a consumer chooses. For example, a 2014 cross-media campaign by Ikea, which consisted of a set of TV ads as well as social media content and videos on YouTube, focused on communicating sustainability, pledging to sell only energy-efficient LED light bulbs by 2016 and sharing stories about people who had incorporated sustainable practices into their lives. As a result, Ikea won a Campaign of the Year award in 2014 and enjoyed an 11.3% increase in sales that year, in addition to a spike in online sales.
of 28.8%. More importantly, it sparked a debate and gathered individuals, businesses and communities to talk about a shared interest: a sustainable future.

Finally, the third layer is all about social media itself. The one thing that social media has over the smoke signal is that it is much more sustainable: economically, it’s free for the consumer; socially, it reaches a much wider audience; and environmentally, it not only doesn’t harm nature, but actually helps spread the word about sustainability actions we need to take. Socially, social media is sustainable for one main reason: it allows people to connect and satisfy the human craving to feel close to someone, even if they are miles away. For those like myself whose families live thousands of miles away, social media has helped connect with them on a daily basis without much hassle. For those too shy to approach someone they like in person, it has helped build the connection by providing a low-stakes environment to express one’s feelings – although it has also facilitated spreading not so positive feelings as well, or, more specifically, annoyance toward a certain orange American politician who shall not be named in this article. What’s important is that it allows people to help one another in any way that they are capable of doing so. When natural disaster strikes and causes devastating destruction, social media is the main channel where people can ask for support or offer it to those who need it. It strikes a global conversation and shows people that they are similar because of the way they feel, even if everything else about them is different.
I was born and grew up in Italy, at the feet of the Dolomites. I obtained my PhD in Development Policy and Management at the University of Manchester in 2014. My PhD research contributed to the understanding of the causes of income inequality and is particularly relevant for developing countries who wish to devise adequate pro-poor policies and address concerns of social justice. My research has received attention from various international organisations, such as the International Labour Organization, the World Bank and the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development. Prior to getting my PhD, I obtained an MA in International Development and an MSc in Economics from the University of Torino, Italy.

I am an applied economist: my research interests lie within the fields of development and labour economics, with a particular focus on governance. I joined the Global Sustainable Development team in September 2016. Prior to that, I worked as a Teaching Fellow at the Department of Economics at the University of Birmingham and as a Graduate Teaching Assistant at the Institute for Development Policy and Management at the University of Manchester.

I have gained a range of teaching experience in economics. In particular, I have taught many topics relevant to sustainable development, including poverty traps and poverty alleviation, rural development, human capital, governance and institutional economics, as well as statistical techniques of impact evaluation of development policies.

In addition to my academic career, I have several years’ experience in economic consultancy and have worked with various private sector organisations and government bodies, both in the UK and in Italy.

I share my free time between long walks, photography, learning languages and discovering new places.
One of the Global Goals of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development is to reduce inequality within and among countries. This goal represents, as Jeffrey Sachs writes (2015), “a conceptual breakthrough for the world community” and an attempt to fill a gap in the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) framework. Many authors, in fact, have argued that one of the most important omissions of the MDGs was the lack of focus on the reduction of inequalities. Critics of the MDGs have also stated that policies aimed at promoting development can only be fully beneficial for the society if they achieve significant change without leaving any particular group behind. For example, it is easy to overlook the ‘poorest of the poor’ when we set targets based on aggregated statistics.

I have always been committed to the importance of studying and measuring inequality. It is therefore encouraging to see that the international community now recognises equity as an important aspect of development. I am an economist and, despite being interested in many multidisciplinary aspects of the issue of widening inequalities, in my research I am primarily concerned with income inequality. A glance at levels of income inequality around the world raise several interesting questions. How can income distribution be explained? Why is income inequality growing in several countries and decreasing in many others? Can policy makers promote economic development in a way that will benefit everyone in the society and not just the rich?

There are vast differences in average incomes across countries in the world and researchers have long tried to understand the factors contributing to this gap between rich and poor nations. However, more recent contributions indicate that striking inequalities exist today not just between but also within countries. For instance, in developing countries huge differentials exist between the rural and the urban population. This has led to adverse consequences in terms of social exclusion and internal migration. In richer economies, instead, a highly debated phenomenon is the polarisation of incomes, with those at the very top experiencing a substantial increase in their incomes over the past 30 years. This was best conveyed by the sentiments of the protesters of the Occupy Wall Street movement in 2011, whose main slogan was “We are the 99 per cent”. In the introduction to one of his latest books, Nobel Prize winner Joseph Stiglitz argues...
that several economies are currently reaching an “intolerable”, or in other words unsustainable, level of inequality (Stiglitz 2012).

Why would the presence of large inequalities not be sustainable? Until just a few years ago, mainstream economic opinion would have argued that inequality, despite leaving a bitter taste in the mouth, was necessary to create incentives, reward ambitions and promote hard work. However, more recent research discovered that an increase in inequality may also produce a variety of negative consequences: social capital and social trust may be affected, leading to a deterioration of social stability and an increase in crime. Also, in the presence of high inequality, people at the bottom of the distribution may invest less in their human capital, reducing overall social mobility.

In conclusion, we should make sure that policy makers are concerned about reducing excessive inequalities when designing development policies. This is not an easy task. Policy makers are typically focused on short-term outcomes (those which are visible over an election cycle) and are generally reluctant to spend on long-term strategies. On the contrary, inequalities tend to be very persistent over time and rather difficult to change in the short-run.

My research attempts to help policy makers in the design of development policies by contributing to the understanding of the causes of widening inequalities. In particular, I study the determinants of one type of income distribution: the distribution of functional (or factor) income, which explains how income is shared between capital and labour. Cross-country data show a general reduction in the
share of labour in national income in several countries, both developing and developed, especially from the mid-1980s onwards. This phenomenon constitutes a major historical transformation, as the stability of the labour share had been described in economics as a “stylised fact of growth” (Kaldor 1961). On a socio-political level, this trend risks creating perceptions that workers are not receiving their ‘fair’ share of the wealth they help to produce. On an economic level, this may jeopardise the sustainability of future economic growth by constraining wage-based household consumption. This phenomenon is all the more significant today considering that these changes are happening in labour markets which are only slowly recovering from the global financial crisis of 2008-09.

With the use of statistical analysis, I have identified some of the causes of the observed variation in the labour share of income. Among the short-run determinants, my research finds that some elements of globalisation, such as FDI inflows and the increased mechanisation in the production process, are negative drivers of the labour share, eroding wages and employment levels and reducing the bargaining position of labour. On the contrary, the level of education and the strength of regulation in the labour market provide positive opportunities for wage earners. Among the long-run and political economy causes, instead, my research shows that democratic political systems allow workers to appropriate a higher share of national income. In particular, democratic institutions generate higher labour shares because of the creation of more pro-worker policies and because of the promotion of income redistribution.

These results are valuable pieces of information for policy makers who recognise the harmful consequences of a decreasing labour share of income. If we know exactly what mechanisms affect the functional distribution of income, we will be better able to design appropriate strategies to address this type of inequality.

References


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I would like to thank everyone on the GSD and Liberal Arts teams who took the time and gave us an insight into their thinking.

I would also like to thank YOU, reader, for sticking with us for three issues and inspiring us to keep spreading the word of sustainability.

Here’s to our first student cohort!

Ande