

EDITORIAL

Media Perspectives of Sustainable Development

From state-sponsored public service campaigns to cause-related influencer marketing on TikTok, the idea of sustainability is increasingly difficult to overlook in today's algorithmic, partisan, neoliberal, media environment. A prevailing definition of the concept of sustainability concerns the idea of addressing the challenges of the moment without threatening the uncertain future for oneself and others (Kates, Parris, and Leiserowitz 2005). This understanding is fostered and sustained through the mediatization of modern life which constitutes an accompanying sociocultural logic oriented toward our entanglements with internet-enabled, digital communication and traditional mass media. Often conceptions of sustainability are also accompanied by fears of events of apocalyptic proportions which include climate disaster, economic collapse, and a global breakdown in social order. Through talk and text, sustainability constitutes an ongoing discourse concerning our knowledge of the present time and desirable futures imagined and subsequently realized through our actions in the moments they unfold. However, our concern in this intervention lies in the communication of sustainable development and its challenges, the lived experience of this discourse, the technologies which sustain it and the ways the meaning of sustainability is negotiated by various actors across markets, the state and civil society.

Contributions in this special issue engage with the theme of *Media Perspectives of Sustainable Development* which examines the discursive construction of sustainability as an ethical, political, economic, and social concept. Here the terms of "sustainable development" and "sustainability" are used interchangeably as these denote both intent and strategy. The authors featured in this work have produced interdisciplinary studies which reflects the nature of media and communications as a discipline. Their research considers key areas such as political economy, media ethics, public relations, and representation all grounded in the highly fragmented context of the Philippines. The sociomateriality of this fragmentation is evident in a cursory evaluation of this setting: a postcolonial Southeast Asian nation with a population of over 117 million people, aggregated from over 180 ethnic groups spread across upwards of 7,600 islands. With this starting point, the collection of articles in this special issue offers perspectives that feature divergence and overlap. Yet these contributions resist essentialism or conclusive propositions despite authors holding clearly defined positions in their respective areas of interest.

Research contained in this issue examines articulations of sustainability concerning intersecting issues of public policy, corporate communications, health communications, and community media. In Southeast Asia, a great deal of research has centered on environmental sustainability, which includes renewable energy (Amin et al. 2022; Jahanger et al. 2023) and circular economy (Javed et al. 2024; Herrador and Van 2024). However, there exists a growing body of media studies research from the Philippines highlighting ways sustainability has been conceptualized, communicated, and

consumed within this local environment. The Philippine construction of sustainability as a discourse constitutes placemaking through various forms of communication, including social media (Yamagishi et al. 2021). This consists of a set of “territorial assemblages” that features “environmental sustainability, tourism, and politics” as major elements of this construction (Canoy et al. 2020, 1155). These geosemiotic spaces are reimagined and repurposed for the experience and consumption of sustainability initiatives.

Existing research has also emphasized problematic climate change narratives in mainstream Filipino print media which often politicizes this phenomenon at the expense of providing robust evidence-based information to the benefit of local audiences (Naguimbing-Manlulu 2021). In this case, local journalists appeared to decenter the public from discussions on climate change, raising questions concerning the role of citizen agency mitigating the effects of this socioscientific occurrence. On the other hand, Opiniano and Romero (2019) identify the challenges of sustainable community-based journalism, which provides an alternative to the mainstream. Similarly, the work of Espiritu (2017, 45) underscores the importance of alternative media in spotlighting indigenous groups such as the Lumad and their disenfranchisement because of “co-optation of neoliberal economics.” Historically, the emergence of alternative Filipino news media or “mosquito press” was also in part a response to prolonged media restrictions by the Ferdinand Marcos administration from the early 1970s to the mid-1980s (Opiniano and Romero 2019, 92). The history of Philippine media demonstrates the complexities of the nation's media systems with sustainability initiatives by state and non-state actors.

This growing body of research also highlights tensions concerning the structural conditions that shape the Philippine discourse on sustainability and its institutionalization. Such tensions also concern the agency of the citizenry in negotiating their socioeconomic identities in relation to the lived experience of sustainability. Experts identify the rise of several types of Filipino middle classes since the mid-1990s and the role of cultural capital and social media in shaping conceptions of sustainability and corresponding consumption patterns in this demographic (Never and Albert 2021). Scholars have also observed the framing of ridesharing platforms in Philippine media as one where the local expression of “sustainability values” emphasizes legal and commercial factors (Yuana et al. 2019, 1163). Research by Hernandez (2020) considers the contributions of institutional activism in advancing sustainable development initiatives, while simultaneously contributing to social inequalities among at risk publics. Such cases highlight the ways social actors are “not resistant to existing structural privileges, particularly when these privileges allow them to purportedly achieve their goals” (Hernandez 2020, 224). Examining media representations of conflict-ridden Philippine localities, there exists positive potentials in “sculpting political and emotional engagements of the public” through local media practices (Baquiano and Padilla 2024, 1584). Considering previous research, articles in this collection also address tensions of structure and agency, offering insight into the communicative aspects of sustainable development.

Alyssa Marie Iresare's article centers on sustainability reporting among local corporations and their use of media. This investigation assessed the effectiveness of media strategies in enhancing stakeholder engagement and public perception of corporate sustainability practices. A comparison

of sustainability representations by Philippine corporations is highlighted in addition to various communications strategies.

Drawing on a series of interviews, *Kenneth C. Lisbo, Ralph Darren S. Santillan, and Lianne B. Villanueva* present research on radio-based media in Bangsamoro Autonomous Region in Muslim Mindanao, Southern Philippines. Their work identifies key areas of interest for constituents including religious teachings, advocacy for indigenous rights, and health literacy, as part of the hyperlocalized, multichannel approach to addressing the needs of local audiences.

Kahreïn A. Salvador examines the rhetorical construction of the UN's post-COVID digital news, considering the context of health and science communications in Southeast Asia and the coronavirus pandemic. This study identifies key rhetorical features of digital communications which address public health concerns.

Finally, a study by *Karl Lewis L. Cruz* focuses on the transportation crisis in the Philippines, also identifying this social issue as a communications-based crisis which concerns the interplay between public sentiment and public policy (or lack thereof). Employing qualitative content analysis, an examination of institutional communications from government and private institutions is presented with data interpreted through Image Repair Theory and a care ethics framework.

Contemporary media has contributed to an increased awareness of people's individual and collective actions along with their interactions with the more-than-human world. This has been of scholarly interest to researchers across various fields (Alisdair, Castree, and Kitchin 2013; Kates, Parris, and Leiserowitz 2005). Like the characteristics of awareness and interdependence which characterize globalization, the same applies to the notion of the Anthropocene. This sociohistorical construction of time is marked by widespread consciousness of the interconnectedness of human societies, the natural environment, and the global economy (Cielemęcka and Daigle 2019). Another common and complementary definition concerning sustainable development emphasizes matters of "people, planet, and profit" (Gil-Doménech and Berbegal-Mirabent 2018, 1). This frames sustainability as an ecological concept which often addresses matters of institutional and public policy concerning environmentalism, conscious consumption, and mindfulness practices. However, limited attention has been given concerning the discursive construction of sustainability from the standpoint of media and communications in Southeast Asia. We are pleased to respond to this opportunity in this special issue, featuring contributions from experienced and emerging scholars alike, all centered on the media ecologies of the Philippine context.

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JONATHAN J. FELIX is a transdisciplinary academic at the intersection of various fields including Sociology, Media and Communications, Higher Education, and Cultural Studies. His core research interests lie within the Sociology of Education and the Scholarship of Teaching and Learning concerning education policy and human capital formation in global south contexts. Other areas of his research include Digital Culture and Alternative Media. Also, he is a Visiting Fellow of the International and Comparative Education Research Group with the Universiti Brunei Darussalam (ICE-UBD), an Associate Fellow with Advance HE (AFHEA), and a University Fellow with Chandigarh University. Jonathan currently develops and coordinates courses across a range of disciplines concerning multiliteracy development. His teaching and research philosophy is informed by the Poststructuralist tradition having nearly two decades experience in transnational higher education.

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Original Call for Papers

ISSUE 6.2

MEDIA PERSPECTIVES OF SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT

This open call for contributions for SEAMSJ issue 6.2 on media perspectives of sustainable development invites abstracts—and, if approved, full-paper submissions later—not only from scholars and practitioners presenting at the SEAMSC 2024 conference in Kuala Lumpur but also from all academicians and other experts in the areas of Southeast Asian Media Studies and sustainable development.

Media perspectives play a pivotal role in shaping public perception and influencing societal attitudes towards various issues, including sustainable development. In the context of Southeast Asia, media perspectives on sustainable development are multifaceted, reflecting the diverse socio-economic and environmental challenges faced by the region.

The media in Southeast Asia often highlight the pressing need for sustainable development, emphasizing the urgency of addressing issues such as deforestation, pollution, and climate change. News outlets, both traditional and digital, contribute to the discourse by disseminating information on innovative solutions, government initiatives, and community-led efforts towards sustainability. Documentaries and feature articles shed light on the Southeast Asian region's unique ecosystems, fostering a sense of environmental care and management among the audience.

However, challenges persist in media coverage, including the potential for greenwashing—where organizations present a misleading positive image of their environmental efforts. Additionally, the media sometimes struggle to balance reporting on economic development with environmental concerns, reflecting the delicate balance that policymakers in the region face. Despite these challenges, the media remain a powerful force in advocating sustainable development in Southeast Asia, influencing public opinion and driving positive change.

AREAS OF INTEREST

Submitted abstracts—and, if approved, full-paper submissions later—for SEAMSJ issue 6.2 should focus on media perspectives of sustainable development in Southeast Asian contexts. As such, they could touch on any of the following areas of interest:

Role of Media in Sustainable Development:

- How media influences public perception of sustainable development.
- The responsibility of media outlets in promoting sustainable practices.

Media Coverage of Environmental Issues:

- Analysis of how media covers environmental challenges and solutions.
- Examining the framing of environmental news in different media outlets.

Impact of Social Media on Sustainable Development:

- The role of social media platforms in shaping sustainable development discourse.

- Case studies on successful or unsuccessful social media campaigns for sustainability.

Communication Strategies for Sustainable Development:

- Effective ways for media to communicate sustainable development goals.
- Studying the use of storytelling and visuals to engage audiences in sustainability issues.

Crisis Communication and Sustainable Development:

- Analyzing how media responds to environmental crises and disasters.
- The role of media in shaping public perception during and after environmental emergencies.

Global vs. Local Perspectives in Media Coverage:

- Comparing how global and local / Southeast Asian media outlets address sustainable development.
- Analyzing the representation of sustainability initiatives at different geographic scales.

Media Influence on Consumer Behavior:

- Investigating how media messaging affects consumer choices related to sustainability.
- The portrayal of sustainable products and practices in advertising.

Challenges and Biases in Media Reporting:

- Identifying challenges in accurately reporting on sustainable development issues.
- Examining potential biases in media coverage of environmental and sustainability topics.

Innovations in Media for Sustainable Development:

- Highlighting innovative approaches in media to promote sustainable development.
- The use of technology, such as virtual reality or interactive content, for sustainability communication.

Public Perception and Media Influence:

- Studying the correlation between media representation and public opinion on sustainability.
- The role of the media in shaping public attitudes towards environmental policies.

Media and Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs):

- Assessing how media contributes to the achievement of specific SDGs.
- Case studies on successful media-driven initiatives aligned with SDGs.

Media as a Tool for UN Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs):

- Examining how media can be a powerful tool for promoting and achieving specific UN SDGs.
- Case studies showcasing successful media-driven campaigns that contribute to the realization of sustainable development targets.

UNESCO's Influence on Media Narratives:

- Exploring the role of UNESCO in influencing media narratives related to sustainable development.
- Assessing the impact of UNESCO's guidelines and initiatives on shaping media coverage and discourse on environmental issues.

Media Literacy for Sustainable Development:

- Exploring the importance of media literacy in fostering a sustainable mindset.
- Strategies for incorporating sustainability education into media literacy programs.

Submitted abstracts adhering to one of the themes above or related themes and the SEAMSJ's aims and scope regarding media studies in Southeast Asia will be considered for full-paper submission with eventual publication. All submitted abstracts undergo a quality check by the SEAMSJ editorial team. Authors must await acceptance of their abstracts. All full paper submissions undergo a double-blind peer-review according to SEAMSJ quality standards found here: <https://bitly.ws/32PvE>

ABSTRACT GUIDELINES

- Title: 5 to 12 words
- Length: 200-250 words
- Content: Include major elements such as background, scope, research focus, research method(s), key argument(s), and significance of the study. If already known, include key findings and implications. No in-text quotations.
- Keywords: 4 to 5
- References: Short list of 5 key works to be referenced in the full paper
- Short bio: 150 words
- Language: Excellent American English (or British English)
- Font: Arial, size 11, 1.5 line spacing

PAPER GUIDELINES (for accepted abstracts only)

- Title: 5 to 12 words
- Length: 4,000 to 5,000 words (excluding abstract and references)
- References: 20 to 40 (80% from 2018 to 2024)
- Short bio: 150 words (separate on final page)
- Font: Arial, size 11, 1.5 line spacing
- Paragraphs: One empty line between paragraphs; no indentation of paragraphs
- Pagination: Page numbers in the lower right corner
- Style: Chicago Manual of Style. Follow this guide for in-text citations and the list of references:
https://www.chicagomanualofstyle.org/tools_citationguide/citation-guide-1.html
https://www.chicagomanualofstyle.org/tools_citationguide/citation-guide-2.html
- Figures: A maximum of 3 graphic images (figures) of excellent quality
- Tables: A maximum of 3 tables of excellent quality
- Language: American English preferred (British English also accepted)
- File: MS Word file (no PDFs)
- Samples: See published SEAMSJ issues here: <https://seamsa.org/seamsjournal/>

IMPORTANT DATES

- March 10, 2024: Abstract submission deadline
- March 15, 2024: Notification of accepted abstracts
- May 1, 2024: Full paper submission deadline
- May 15, 2024: Double-blind peer review process starts
- July 1, 2024: Double-blind peer review results and start of the revision process
- Aug. 1, 2024: Revised full paper submission deadline
- Sept. 1, 2024: Layout
- Oct. 1, 2024: Target publication date

SUBMISSIONS AND INQUIRIES

Submit the abstract (one MS Word file, no PDF) and direct all inquiries to SEAMSJ managing editor-in-chief, Dr. Alexander J. Klemm, at eic.seamsj@gmail.com. Put "[SEAMSJ 6.2 Sustainable Development]" in the email subject line.