

Series Preface

We are all experiencing every day that globalization has brought and is bringing far-flung places and people into ever-closer contact. New kinds of supranational communities are emerging at an accelerating pace. At the same time, these trends do not efface the local. Globalization is also associated with a marked reaffirmation of cities and regions as distinctive forums of human action. All human actions remain in one way or the other regionally and locally contextualized.

Global environmental change research has produced unambiguous scientific insights into earth system processes, yet these are only insufficiently translated into effective policies. In order to improve the science-policy cooperation, we need to deepen our knowledge of sociocultural contexts, to improve social and cultural acceptance of scientific knowledge, and to reach culturally differentiated paths to global sustainability on the basis of encompassing bottom-up action.

The acceleration of globalization is bringing about a new world order. This involves both the integration of natural-human ecosystems and the emergence of an integrated global socioeconomic reality. The IYGU acknowledges that societies and cultures determine the ways we live with and shape our natural environment. The International Year of Global Understanding addresses the ways we live in an increasingly globalized world and the transformation of nature from the perspective of global sustainability-the objective the IYGU wishes to achieve for the sake of future generations.

Initiated by the International Geographical Union (IGU), the 2016 IYGU was jointly proclaimed by the three global umbrella organizations of the natural sciences (ICSU), social sciences (ISSC), and the humanities (CIPSH).

The IYGU is an outreach project with an educational and science orientation whose bottom-up logic complements that of existing UN programs (particularly the UN's Post-2015 Development Agenda and Sustainable Development Goals) and international research programs. It aims to strengthen **transdisciplinarity** across the whole field of scientific, political, and everyday activities.

The IYGU focuses on **three interfaces** seeking to build bridges between the local and the global, the social and the natural, and the everyday and scientific

dimensions of the twenty-first century challenges. The IYGU initiative aims to raise awareness of the global embeddedness of everyday life; that is, awareness of the inextricable links between local action and global phenomena. The IYGU hopes to stimulate people to take responsibility for their actions when they consider the challenges of global social and climate changes by taking sustainability into account when making decisions.

This Global Understanding Book Series is one of the many ways in which the IYGU seeks to contribute to tackling these twenty-first century challenges. In line with its three **core elements** of research, education, and information, the IYGU aims to **overcome the established divide** between the natural, social, and human sciences. Natural and social scientific knowledge have to be integrated with non-scientific and non-Western forms of knowledge to develop a global competence framework. In this context, effective solutions based on bottom-up decisions and actions need to complement the existing top-down measures.

The publications in this series embody those goals by crossing traditional divides between different academic disciplines, the academic and non-academic world, and between local practices and global effects.

Each publication is structured around a set of key everyday activities. This brief considers issues around the essential activities of Communicating, Networking and Interacting, as fundamental for survival and will complement the other publications in this series.

Jena, Germany
May 2016

Benno Werlen

Preface

An essential part of everyday life is communication. Interacting with our nearby neighbours helps sustain human existence. Exchanging ideas through contacts with other communities can lead to lifestyle improvements and enhanced knowledge about the world.

Teach thy necessity to reason thus;
There is no virtue like necessity.

William Shakespeare *Richard II, Act I, sc. iii*

In 2016 we celebrate the life of William Shakespeare who died 400 years ago. His legacy in countries around the world is testament to the power and quality of his vast collection of plays, poetry and other writings. Much of his appeal is the connection in the texts to daily life and themes that are universal. Nevertheless, such recognition is given to few individuals. Whilst village and local communities remain at the core of our lived experience, nowadays technologies contribute to a broadening social horizon for everyone—regardless of personal circumstances. Digital networks and satellite navigation are making communications with distant places possible for people anywhere and anyplace. Location, language and education are diminishing barriers. People and places are connected via affordable networks, quite often using sustainable energy sources such as solar power. Access to mobile phones means previously considered remote locations for human settlement are able to make contact with neighbouring settlements far removed from their home. The global penetration of digital devices means everyday life, present and future, is inextricably linked with information technologies. Reaching into remote villages of the poorest nations, access to global knowledge repositories is becoming the norm. In just 10 years the world figure has risen from 33.9 mobile phones per 100 in 2005 to 96.9 per 100 in 2014 (The World Bank 2016).

The result is that on the ground lived reality locally reflects opportunities and affordances for improving everyday life that are innovative and remarkable. Local government agencies, financial and economic interests, and NGOs are using mobile applications to extend their reach into regions where ground networks are limited and/or remain non-existent. In brief, the twenty-first century is shaping up to be the

historic moment when the entire world's people can both receive information and contribute to knowledge making almost instantaneously. The World Bank dashboards suggest progress towards the global development goals of reducing poverty has been made but the challenges are far from over.¹

Recognizing that agency is the key for success the impact of technological advances provides hope and optimism for all the world's people. Basic needs and services such as health and education are the beginning of what should be the transformative process. As well, productivity is enhanced with greater affordance to global markets and new networks for distribution of goods and services. These are wealth creating for generations, now, and far into the future.

Local knowledge, customs and values, intersecting with leading edge innovation and practices, can, and are, facilitating better education access; improved health outcomes, and lifetime opportunities aimed at transforming human existence. Issues considered in separate chapters of this publication demonstrate a world entwined with digital technologies at every level of communications. Developments bring expert global knowledge to local communities. In turn, local communities have the tools for disseminating knowledge that is actively improving their lives. Ranging from crowd-sourcing using social media to big data sets, the intersections between these extremes are unique.

The chapters that follow highlight how policies for health, education, social and community enterprises work best when they are responsive to local and traditional knowledge bases. They provide a sample of views that are illustrative of the outreach of communications across diverse fields of endeavour and scholarly activity. Importantly, however, it needs to be stressed that this is an open dialogue reflecting the dynamic and fluid context of global communications in an e-networked world. Many more chapters are needed for future publications.

Contributing authors provide information, ideas and challenges in three sections. Part I provides an overview of the three major variables in this discussion. With its focus on natural systems in the chapter titled *Our Natural Systems: The Basis of All Human Enterprise* reminds us that whilst planet earth is life sustaining and the foundation of human existence, it is also vulnerable to human abuse. Nevertheless, it is through applications of data monitoring and recording technologies that humans are able to measure the impact of their activities and behaviour changes needed. In the second chapter of this trilogy in the chapter titled *Technology Trends: Working Life with 'Smart Things'* overviews the current e-landscape including trends noted for future innovations. The human connection in the trilogy is considered in the chapter titled *Citizenship, Governance and Communication* in the form of citizenship, personal identity and what it means to be socially responsible.

Part II includes two examples of how innovative uses of communication technologies are assisting poorer nations face challenges for a better life. Overcoming the human tragedy of the Ebola Crisis in Sierra Leone through health and education

¹See <http://data.worldbank.org/mdgs>.

is the focus of the chapter titled [Changing Cultures: Changing Lives—Mobilising Social Media During a Health Crisis](#). The chapter titled [Bridging the Digital Divide: Everyday Use of Mobile Phones Among Market Sellers in Papua New Guinea](#) considers the agency of knowledge as a means towards enhance agricultural productivity in Papua New Guinea. Taking a different perspective, and representing a slightly outlying angle in this section, in the chapter titled [Business, Commerce and the Global Financial System](#) focuses on the mobility of finance and how this reflects economic development. The relevance can be in part explained by the universal measure of development success, or Gross National Product. Monetary measurements provide a standard for successful economic transformation. Connections to development theory highlight the connections between economic advancement and community well-being.

In Part III there are two chapters which examine the power and agency of e-literacy, respectively, for transformative health and education policy. The focus is on Hong Kong and the broader Asian context. However, the issues raised for education are designed to pose questions for communities across the globe. Finally, some recommendations for strategies to broaden and enhance this collection of essays.

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Margaret E. Robertson

Communicating, Networking: Interacting

The International Year of Global Understanding - IYGU

Robertson, M.E. (Ed.)

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