

CONSUMPTION AND RESILIENCE: THE ROLE OF INSTITUTES OF HIGHER EDUCATION

**OCTOBER
27, 2022**

14:00-16:00 (Bangkok Time)

BACKGROUND

The COVID-19 pandemic deeply disrupted global economic and social systems, imposing heavy burdens on many in the Asian region. Global supply chains were fractured and, in some cases, broken, with significant impacts on livelihoods. As countries develop and implement post-pandemic recovery strategies and seek to create buffers against future crises, the promotion of sustainable consumption and production (SCP) patterns must be a central pillar of government and corporate policies, as well as civic action. Similarly, the development of sustainable and secure systems of local resiliency must become a priority, recognising that pandemics are by no means the only crises faced by communities in the Asian region on a regular basis.

The prolonged experience of the pandemic revealed and deepened many disparities in secure access to vital products and services, especially for geographically disadvantaged nations, the economically poor, minorities, marginalised groups, and women and children. These impacts deeply impeded the ability of individuals, families, and communities to move toward realizing sustainable lifestyles and livelihoods. Reconsideration of resource and waste flows thus became a necessary exercise for many during the pandemic.

These experiences emphasise the reality that post-pandemic recovery and long-term sustainable development strategies must account for and reverse these inequities, particularly for issues such as food, waste, health, employment and other livelihood opportunities, and local resilience. These are all essential solution

spaces for both human flourishing and environmental and economic sustainability and resilience. To close the access and security gaps for all and create the enabling conditions for sustainable lifestyles and livelihoods, it is therefore necessary to reconsider standard approaches to sustainable local resilience, including reliance on local, sustainably produced and managed resources. It is further necessary to reframe our thinking about crisis resilience and response to align our plans and actions with the reality that pandemics like COVID-19 are not the only crises we face. Indeed, the triple crisis of climate change, pollution, and biodiversity loss are a growing threat, as well as the recurrent economic and political shocks that cause insecurity and instability.

Institutes of higher education (IHEs) are characterised by a number of features that make them unique actors in the SCP and innovation spaces, capable of playing a key role in such efforts.

To begin, the internal and external governance structures of IHEs, and particularly universities (including varying degrees of autonomy from local, state, and national governments), provides a degree of autonomy that allows for experimentation, exploration, and the investigator-driven pursuit of knowledge. This autonomy results in IHEs ability to innovate within their own structures, take risks, and engage in activities and with partners that other stakeholders are not capable of. Indeed, IHEs have a long-standing public and private mandate to sustain knowledge transmission and generation across generations. The experience of various crises throughout

history and across locations demonstrates that the combination of this mandate and governance structure lends itself to innovation in times of crisis, with inter- and intra-disciplinary developments pushing technological revolutions and context specific innovations.

Institutes of higher education (IHEs) are also uniquely capable of attracting, generating, mobilising, and maintaining a wide range of capital from within the institution and from across the various networks that IHEs convene. Many forms of capital are represented, including the standard four economic capitals: physical, financial, natural capital, and human capital. IHEs are able to stretch beyond this private sector model to include what are termed 'community capital', which includes less tangible but no less impactful resources that can be leveraged to move the dial on SCP, particular with regard to innovation, sustainable lifestyles, communications, and behaviour change. These types of capital include cultural, social, political, and built capital. IHEs are capable of channelling these various forms of capital in ways not easily available to other actors, and thus driving innovation that emerges from the investigator-driven pursuit of knowledge and the unique governance structures of IHEs.

Finally, IHEs play a central role in convening, building, and maintaining networks of local community cohesion and trust. IHEs leverage a unique set of mechanisms to convene and build community (including the long-term building of relationships of trust and collaboration with local business and civil society actors). They are often perceived as good-faith actors in the system, less entangled with other interests or motivations. As such, they are able to convene local actors in ways that provide mutual-legitimacy between, for example, the university and business community actors. IHEs thus can play the role of neutral (if not disinterested) brokers, convening

OBJECTIVES

This 2-hour workshop webinar, *Consumption and Resilience: The Role of Institutes of Higher Education*, organised by the SWITCH-Asia SCP Facility, will bring together Asian and global experts on sustainable local resilience, educational institutions, and lifestyles to exchange perspectives, experiences, and learning that can support the creation of a sustainable and resilient 'next normal(s)'. The goal is to think together about how universities can lead or contribute to efforts to build sustainable systems of consumption and production that are equitable, secure, resilient, and leave no one behind.

The workshop will explore three key aspects of post-secondary educational institutions and investigator-driven pursuit of knowledge that lend themselves to developing just these sorts of systems – particularly with regard to disaster/crisis preparedness, response, and resilience.

and coordinating partnerships and relationships over time to build community capital and trust over time.

All of this demonstrates that Institutes of higher education are well positioned to coordinate efforts to build local resilience across the economic and civil sectors and reduce the harmful impacts of disasters and crises on lives and livelihoods. Their ability to experiment, move quickly, mobilise a wide range of stakeholders and capital through their networks of collaborators, and strategically support risk-taking makes them unique actors in the SCP ecosystem. In these ways, IHEs can contribute significantly to local, national, and global actions to ensure that current recovery efforts result in substantive progress toward SCP and local resilience. Indeed, they can be key players in achieving models of sustainable resilience that align with the central objective of the Sustainable Development Goals to "leave no one behind". This approach places emphasis on eradicating poverty, ending exclusion and discrimination, and reducing the vulnerabilities and inequalities that undermine human flourishing and capabilities.

With these factors in mind, there is a need to convene experts and sustainability practitioners from governments, businesses, educational institutions, and civil society to discuss the opportunity space presented by the post-pandemic recovery to build sustainable local resilience. This discussion must consider how universities can serve as experimental spaces or work with communities to create living laboratories where stakeholders can come together to solve these challenges and ensure that the costs and benefits of the recovery process and emerging post-pandemic 'next normal' are equitably shared across stakeholder groups and leave no one behind.

These topics include:

1. The internal and external governance structures of IHEs (including varying degrees of autonomy from national or local state governance);
2. The capacity of IHEs to attract, generate, and mobilise many types of capital (including human capital, natural capital, social and cultural capital) and to bring them to bear in ways not easily available to other actors; and
3. The mechanisms through which IHEs convene and build community (including the long-term building of relationships of trust and collaboration with local communities).

AGENDA

14:00	Welcome EU SWITCH-Asia Programme
14:05	Keynote Address
14:15	Introductions
14:20	Theme 1: University Governance Structures
14:45	Theme 2: Attracting, Generating, and Mobilising Capital
15:10	Theme 3: Convening and Building Communities
15:35	Open Discussion and Q&A
13:55	Reflections and Closing