

Embodying Tao in the ‘Restorative University’

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Abstract

This paper proposes a new generative metaphor, the ‘Restorative University’ which embodies an associated Taoist human-nature narrative. It aims to counter what is contextualised here as the bio-cultural disconnection of universities despite their espoused commitment to sustainability. This conceptual research draws on multiple disciplines such as environmental psychology alongside Taoist philosophy to open up a reflexive dialogue between multiple organizational actors. Moreover, in order to understand the potential transdisciplinary implications of a particular Tian Tao inspired narrative, the metaphor of the ‘Restorative University’ is critically reflected upon, using illustrative examples of the University in a Garden, in Malaysia and the Schumacher College, in the UK. For universities committed to sustainability, the paper highlights the significance of collective emotional and aesthetic sensibility and agency (embodying Wu Wei), alongside a grounded, local, bio-cultural sensibility (embodying P’u) within the potential enactment of the Restorative University.

Keywords - Sustainability, Tao, Metaphor, Restorative University, Wu Wei, P’u.

Introduction

When we talk about the world as a whole, we are indeed necessarily also talking about our own place in it, about the relation we stand in to the rest of it, and about our own powers of dealing with that relation. These things all need to be considered together (Midgely 1992, p. 101)

This paper concurs with Cortese (2003), who argues that higher education has unique potential to catalyze and/or accelerate a societal transition and transdisciplinarity towards sustainability. While interdisciplinarity integrates methods and concepts from different academic disciplines, transdisciplinarity embraces the emerging field of “sustainability science” (Yarime et al. 2012), in calling for knowledge integration and mutual learning of values and knowledge from across society (Scholz et al., 2000).

This reminds us that the concept of sustainability is not solved by optimizing environmental quality at any price, but by the search for virtuous relations among environmental, social, territorial, economic and political sustainability, harmonizing basic needs, self-reliance and eco-development (Magnaghi 2005 p.42). Similarly, Jerneck et al. (2011 p.70) highlights that sustainability science seeks to be responsive to the needs of and values in society while preserving the life-support systems of planet Earth. They move on to point out that this requires new integrated approaches, in which issues of inter and intra-generational justice and equity are seen as important as environmental considerations.

In this context, the paper also agrees with Birkin et al (2010) who argue the wider case for new models for sustainable development needing to consider the primacy of the ‘natural case’ and the wider systemic ‘societal case’ for sustainability for higher education. Halme et al. (2009) points out that scholars should not lose their grip on broader societal issues, outcomes and context. Therefore, as Barth and Michelson (2013) highlight, the crucial question within the higher educational transition towards sustainability is finding ways to improve the social capacity to guide interactions between nature and society around more sustainable trajectories.

With regard to this societal transition towards sustainability, Stephens et al. (2008) argues that the primary role of institutions of higher education can be viewed in two ways: universities can be perceived as an institution that needs to be changed or universities can be perceived as a potential change agent. Similar concepts of “universities as citizens” (Boyle, 2007) capture this latter potential for universities to be active, contributing, influential, responsive entities in society.

This paper explores the potential of institutions of higher education as a change agent in society, focusing on how higher education can facilitate change both internally and externally. Such movement would require institutions of higher education to model civic responsibility and engagement at the organizational level (Boyle, 2007). As Ferrer-Balas et al. (2009) point out, rather than only integrating sustainability within University activities (curriculum, research, operations, etc.), the challenge here is how to integrate the University in sustainable development paths of societal systems. Sterling (2005) similarly argues that patterns of unsustainability on our current and future prospects is so pressing that Higher Education should not be predicated only

on the integration of sustainability into higher education, because this invites a limited, adaptive, response. Sterling (2005) argues that we need a necessary transformation of Higher Education towards the integrative and more whole state implied by a systemic view of sustainability in education and society. As Ferrer-Balas et al. (2009) argue, universities have to actively participate in societal system transitions, co-evolving with other systems in society.

Of the many challenges to the mainstreaming of sustainability science in higher education institutions, probably the greatest of all concerns is how to identify and implement an alternative core mission of the university (Yarime et al. 2012, p.102). As Gibbons (1999) argue, the need for an alternative mission and ‘social contract’ between academic science and society has never been greater. The importance of reorienting existing education programs to incorporate sustainability-related principles, knowledge, skills, perspectives, and values has been emphasized further by the United Nations Decade of Education for Sustainable Development 2005–2014 (UNESCO Education Sector 2005). It requires higher education institutions to rethink their missions and to restructure their courses, research priorities, community outreach, and campus operations.

Progress on campuses, however, has been rather slow, especially considering the high expectation expressed in major sustainability institutional declarations (Velazquez et al. 2005). Most of the existing assessment systems, underpinned by league tables, evaluate the aspects of education, research, and outreach rather separately, and do not consider integrated and strategic assessment of sustainability at higher education institutions (Yarime and Tanaka 2012). Jones (2012), endeavors to critically surface what he identifies as a predominant ‘greenwashing glass cage’ metaphor, perpetuated by university sustainability league tables. It is argued that such league tables promote a legitimacy mask of engagement, transparency and inclusion, whilst institutionally sidestepping any challenge to the dominant neo-liberal marketplace ideology of higher education institutions. This ideology embraces the utilitarian, singular abstraction of nature now tacitly embedded within international, pragmatic agendas of university management. Such agendas focus on the centralized, efficiency preoccupation of embedding sustainability in management systems, through skills taxonomies, refining auditing and monitoring tools under the mask of such narratives as transparency, whilst drawing up other potential mechanisms for targeting, standardization, measurement and control (Selby and Kagawa 2010). This concurs with Holmqvist (2009), who similarly highlights the possibility that clothing an activity with a seemingly benevolent, legitimizing narrative may be a mechanism of further organizational control and inequity over an organization’s environment and its various actors. As Kearins et al. (2010) argue, the particularly form of control, manifests itself through a managed, goal directed, modernist narrative of nature which does not reveal the contested, materially and social constructed multiple meanings of nature which could potentially shift or re-enchant the various university actors’ relationship with the natural environment. As Starkey and Crane (2003) highlight, current sustainability agendas fail to shift or re-enchant the organization's relationship with the natural environment. They fail to provide any frame-breaking stories that might facilitate new understandings, a new ecological consciousness, and/or a new model of the organization - natural environment relationship (Menon and Menon 1997). More systemically, Barry and Elmes (1997) argue that such a potential de-familiarizing human-nature narrative is located in the space where the natural environment is made meaningful to human identity, experience, and relationships. Potential human-nature de-familiarizing narratives could focus on healing humankind's alienation from nature in terms of a dualistic subject/object split that

permits violence directed towards the earth, justified by the drive for material accumulation (Brinkerhoff and Jacob 1999). As Mathews (2011) points out, such a de-familiarizing narrative needs to avoid this dualistic standoff and to embody an inclusive conception of nature, one that accommodates both the human and the nonhuman components of the greater life system, without collapsing the distinction between them. This narrative could be described as bio-inclusive as opposed to bio-centric, implying that even if it is conceded that our moral reasoning starts within the human circle, this circle needs to be expanded to include the interests of the members of the larger life system.

This paper centrally asks the question whether the Chinese philosophy of Tao could offer such a potential bio-inclusive, de-familiarizing narrative and inspiration. Moreover, following the transdisciplinary ethos of this paper, it introduces a possible environmental psychology inspired metaphor underpinning a Taoist human-nature de-familiarizing narrative, to respond to Jones (2012). In a change context, this represents a response for a systemic, transitional change perspective (rather than a transformational change) which focuses on how universities can help the transition towards a sustainable society rather than purely focusing on the rhetoric of becoming 'sustainable universities' (Kemp and Loorbach 2003). While those who engage in the scholarship of sustainability in higher education have a reasonably common conceptual idea of the attributes of sustainability and what constitutes a 'sustainable university' (Wright 2007), this paper aims to contribute to wider discourse around understanding how universities can become 'sustaining universities' or facilitators or agents shaping change in society by providing a context for action within both its internal and external actors (Kemp et al. 2007; Ferrer-Balas et al. 2008; Svanström et al. 2008). More specifically, through metaphor it asks the question of how higher education could promote and enhance bio-cultural engagement between individuals and institutions both within and outside higher education to re-situate universities as transdisciplinary agents, highly integrated with and interwoven into other societal institutions? It thereby asks a fundamental question of whether a radical rethink is needed within universities (e.g. van Weenen 2000; Lozano 2006), not only in terms of their internal organization, operation and interaction with external actors but the whole *raison d'être* of universities committed to tackling sustainability. It thereby follows Küpers (2013) call for a social ecology of knowledge beyond a limited circle of local in-siders, to overcome the separation of metaphor and narrative. It further concurs with Küpers (2013), who points out that it would be worthwhile to consider how 'green metaphors' and 'green narratives' (Starkey and Crane 2003), enable co-evolution towards a shared and more eco-centric perspective.

A Rationale for a Taoist Bio-Cultural Narrative

By proposing an overarching Taoist narrative for universities, the paper also responds to Broadhead and Howard (2011), who argue that encouraging inquiry into the seemingly intractable problems faced today, such as ecological deterioration and social injustice across society, requires a humility and an openness to learn from others who have a long history of holistic inquiry into the workings of the natural world. As well as focusing on indigenous, Native American approaches to nature and knowledge, they also argue that Tao reflects a cultural preoccupation with balance, seeking optimum harmony with the natural order offering such a humility.

Focusing on Eastern philosophies more broadly, as Waistell (2012) argues, Buddhism and Taoism possess certain similarities, both seeking to control desire through non-attachment to material things, thus encouraging contentedness. The traditions are also similar in their emptying of self to develop a non-anthropocentric unity with nature, achieved through meditation. Nature features prominently in Japanese Buddhism, so much so that “nature became the Absolute through which people could seek salvation” (Asquith and Kalland, 1997, p.3). However, Buddhism can learn from Taoism’s focus on nature as the way. Lau and Ames (1988) particularly focus on Taoism as they argue that it is a philosophy of action that describes humanity as inescapably part of nature rather than in any way separate from it. At a time of catastrophic loss of species, Taoism proffers the remedy of acting in mutually beneficial ways towards other species. The overriding emphasis is on working in harmony with nature, not exploiting it in a narrow-minded pursuit of profit. As Waistell (2012) argues, Taoism even shifts our very notion of wealth to the number of different species and the health of their diverse habitats.

However, as Lau and Arnes (1998) argues, it is in the West that an appreciation of this sacred human-nature connection will bring the greatest potential. Religion in the West, and in particular Christianity, has been criticized for the separation of humans from Nature and for its anthropocentric approach. According to Sessions (1995, p.159), ‘religious traditions became more anthropocentric as they changed to reflect changes in ways of life from hunting and gathering to pastoral and urban...while Taoism and certain other Eastern religions retained elements of the ancient shamanistic Nature religions, the Western religious tradition radically distanced itself from wild Nature and, in the process, became increasingly anthropocentric’.

Of course, this paper must recognize that Taoism is not always wholly in accordance with sustainability. For example, not all Taoist texts support deep ecology and non-anthropocentrism (Birdwhistell, 2001). Paper (2001, p. 12) criticizes deep ecologists who seek support for their views from Taoism, arguing that their stance is an ahistorical, overly literal, modern, western interpretation that relies on two enigmatic texts and states “that a Western Taoism can solve a crisis assumed to be brought on by and unredeemable through Western thinking implies a logical contradiction.” Furthermore, although nature is a sacred space for Taoists, it does not necessarily follow, in the immediate term, that they act in an environmentally positive way (Miller, 2003). However, Taoism’s focus on a particular spiritual, aesthetic and emotional pathway towards bio-cultural reconnection could have major implications for universities in their long-term pursuit of sustainability.

In the context of the current significant environmental crisis, Taoism offers a radical proposition that we should take no action that is contrary to nature. As Waistell (2012) pertinently argues here the tradition is commensurate with Darwin’s theory of evolution in that it privileges adapting to but not competing with the environment (see later discussion). Unlike many other religions, the philosophy underpinning Taoism can sit comfortably alongside emerging scientific and non-scientific disciplines. Renewed interest in the human-nature connection is gathering momentum. From quantum physics, complexity theory and systems thinking to eco-psychology, deep ecology, bio-mimicry and a revival of indigenous wisdom, a shift is slowly taking place. According to Goodwin (2007, p.32), “...consciousness is definitely on the scientific agenda, qualities are now emerging in various areas of scientific study”.

In summary, drawing from its distinctive differentiating perspective of ‘nature as the way’, Tao could be pertinent here as it has been considered as the way or essential pathway in which the Tian (Universe) evolves (directly translated as ‘Sky’). Although Tao has become a key concept in discussing Chinese philosophy in relation to organizational studies (see Durlabhji 2004; Chen 2002; Rahschulte 2010), Tian remains as a concept seldom touched in academic research despite Tao being merely the reflection of Tian’s progress. In fact, Tao, in Chinese, is also called Tian Tao to reflect the importance of understanding the universe (Tian) and natural environment. Tian is so important in social practice that the Emperors in Chinese history have been called as TianZi, (the son of the Sky), to demonstrate their authorities. Not surprisingly, Tian Zi leads rituals to worship the universe and confirm that their management of the nation is to merely execute the way Tian progresses, which is Tao. Tian Zi shall meet the expectations of Tian by following Tao.

Structure and Conceptual Methodology

In order to conceptualize the ‘Tian Tao’ human-nature narrative within an organizational context, the initial section of this paper introduces and argues a case for a pertinent primary, root organizational metaphor (Cornellison and Kafouros 2008). This metaphorical focus reflect arguments by Starkey and Crane (2003) who highlight that de-familiarizing narratives require compatible conceptual hooks around narrative language, structure and content in order to gain transdisciplinary legitimacy and engagement. In order to gain this sensemaking and transdisciplinary currency, it is argued here that this metaphor draws on the spirit of forging a stronger link to an analysis ‘outside’ the field of business management and organizational studies. This paper particularly draws upon the current plethora of research in environmental psychology and introduces the complementary, topophilic notion of Attention Restorative Theory (ART) within an organizational context (Kaplan and Kaplan 1989).

Moreover, the paper will then centrally explore how different Taoist sub-narratives of ‘Wu Wei as Flow’ and ‘P’u’ (Xing and Sims 2012; Kraemer 1986), could be embodied through the reflexive enactment of this heuristic metaphor within a university context. It will critically reflect upon various educationally inspired initiatives which appear to embody and typify particular elements of these sub-narratives, such as the ‘The University in a Garden’ (in the Universiti Sans Malaysia) and the Schumacher College (in the UK).

The former was chosen as it has been recognized internationally by the Global University Network for Innovation (GUNI) for the University in a Garden initiative, which complements the Tian Tao human-nature underpinning of this paper. Moreover, the Universiti Sans Malaysia was acknowledged as a Regional Centre of Excellence on Education for Sustainable Development by the United Nations University in Nagoya University, Japan, on 29th June 2005.

The Schumacher College was chosen as it shares a similar bio-cultural ethos to this paper around, ‘transformative learning for sustainable living’ (Schumacher College 2012). Whilst Taylor (2007) admits that there are relatively few examples of educational settings where such transformative learning has been central to intent, the Schumacher College represents one well-known example, outside the mainstream. The Schumacher College situated on the Dartington

Hall Estate in Devon, was founded in 1991, as a small independently-run institution, on the conviction that a new vision is needed for society around its bio-cultural connection. Much of its unique character comes from the College community each day creating an expression of a sustainable lifestyle. Alongside immersing themselves in course material, participants share in essential activities, including cooking, cleaning, housekeeping and gardening. Food is vegetarian and primarily local.

A Rationale for the Human-Nature Metaphor of the ‘Restorative University’

This paper endeavors to complement the work of such authors as Starkey and Crane (2003) by initially offering such a conceptual hook around a particular environmental psychology perspective in shaping a re-enchantment of nature (Griffin 1988). This parallels ecoscientists’ search to integrate the natural sciences and the social sciences—to extend science beyond the realms of knowledge into a deeper sense of meaning (Barlow 1997, p. 6). Although these ecoscientists urge us to consider the biosphere in its cosmological context, Wilson’s (1978) focus on re-enchantment through an alignment of social theory and natural science is the core inspiration here.

Within this environmental psychology perspective, the paper specifically focuses on ‘Attention Restorative Theory’ (ART) as it explores the spatial context in which an involuntary or non-directed, absorbed attention is fostered or restored in which an individual’s non-directed attention is effortlessly engaged, intrigued and captured without mental fatigue (Kaplan and Kaplan 1989). ART offers a theoretical basis for restoring the human relationship with the natural environment, as it identifies the underlying spatial form and related attributes shared by specific natural environment– person interactions which could foster not only psychological and physical restoration but more specifically what Hartig et al (2008) describes as bio-cultural restoration. More importantly for this paper, research on natural environment settings exhibiting ART factors or attributes highlight how they not only restored directed attention, reduced stress, improved physical and emotional well-being and reflection but also increased pro-environmental behavior (Kals et al 1999; Hartig et al 2007; Herzog, Maguire, and Nebel 2003; Health Council of the Netherlands and Dutch Council for Research on Spatial Planning 2004). With respect to this paper, the question becomes how can such underlying natural environment–person interactions be translated into an organizational socio-spatial context, not only in terms of the natural environment and setting but the different built and cultural environment–person interactions as well? Whilst studies have consistently demonstrated that natural environments are more restorative than urban or built environments (e.g. Berto 2005), as Ouellette et al. (2005) point out, despite the growing literature on restoration, there appears to be few empirical studies on the restorative benefits of organization settings.

ART research has begun to investigate possibilities for more permanent restorative settings such as museums (Kaplan, Bardwell, and Slakter 1993), favorite places (Korpela, Hartig, Kaiser, and Fuhrer 2001), and a monasteries (Ouellette et al. 2005). ART researchers have also begun to focus their attention on people in their everyday contexts, such as in the residential and workplace setting, where they could ordinarily and regularly find possibilities for restoration over an extended period (Kaplan 2001; Kaplan 1993). Although these studies have focused on restorative experiences supported by solely natural features, such as proximity to nearby trees

and vegetation, what they do indicate is the importance of long term exposure to an everyday context, such as organization settings. Furthermore, organizations have the possibility of acting as enduring potential Restorative Spaces considering the length of time spent within organizations for many actors. As Kaplan and Kaplan (1989) point out, besides the spatial aspects of a restorative experience, the amount of time spent in these spaces is also a critical variable.

This paper attempts to add value to this literature and represents viewing the central purpose of universities to be one which fosters a 'Restorative University'. With this in mind, the Restorative University metaphor is defined as:

A university which restores an emotional affinity with the natural environment.

By opening up an alternative metaphorical conversation for universities, it is hoped that it assists in answering the more fundamental systemic, transitional change question, posed by Jones (2012), for particular universities which espouse their commitment to ecological sustainability:

To what extent do our universities emotionally disconnect us from the natural environment & if so, how and why could this emotional affinity be restored?

Following this systemic change focus, we now turn to exploring how this potentially restored emotional affinity with the natural environment could be possibly enacted within leading education institutions, using the reflexive embodiment of Taoist sub-narratives of P'u and Wu Wei.

Embodying 'P'u' & 'Wu Wei' in the Restorative University

Sustainability should entail aesthetics every step along the way. The people who live in a place should have the opportunity to make it their own through ephemeral and permanent artistic installations. This has the great virtue of making a campus a more vital and dynamic place. Even better, every art project contributes to the sense that the campus is a place in space and time, a living and working environment that creates an aesthetic mark in the bioregion. (Thomashow 2010, 9)

Embodying P'u in the Restorative University

Looking for clues of how the Restorative University could possibly be enacted, it is pertinent to note that Kaplan and Kaplan (1989) have postulated that the restorative experience has four levels of development- each taking increasing amounts of time: The first level represents 'clearing the head', the second is 'the recovery of directed attention', the third is 'the recovery of cognitive quiet' and the fourth level of a restorative experience represents 'reflections on one's life', which may include 'a concern for meaning, for tranquillity and for relatedness.' (Kaplan and Kaplan 1989, pp.196-197).

In order to focus on how universities could satisfy the different reflexive, relatedness and cognitive quiet dimensions of ART, it is pertinent to reflect on one of the basic Taoist principles

of 'P'u'. Kraemer (1986) adds that P'u is one's natural identity – the natural instinct one possesses before language, machinations, stress, exploitation, uncertainty and socialisation. It is the presence one senses when one takes a deep relaxed breath. It is not putting on airs or pretending to be something one is not. To understand P'u, the metaphor of uncut wood or un-carved block is helpful. One can imagine being an accomplished woodworker looking at a block of un-carved wood, knowing that there is uncreated potential in it. As an un-carved block, it can be anything – the possibilities are infinite. P'u means that things and people in their original nature and simplicity contain their own natural power (Toropov and Hansen 2002). Taoists believe that all we experience and all we are taught to 'carve' away pieces of our original simplicity. Taoists try to regain that early sense of unlimited possibility that children have by trying to 'unlearn' things until everything becomes a new experience (Toropov and Hansen 2002). Kraemer (1986) adds that such a beginner's mind is an empty mind, not full of preconceived notions and prejudices and thus ready to experience the world. P'u is a symbol for a state of pure potential and perception.

The underlying notion of P'u is that by developing such cognitive quiet and having an empty mind, it is easier to work with new impressions. The idea is to un-clutter one's mind and in doing so reach a clearer vision of things (Heider, 1985). Taoists observe that people have a tendency to acquire theories and techniques until their minds are cluttered with knowledge and options. They recommend people to allow techniques and theories to recede into the background and allow consciousness of the present moment to come forth (Heider, 1985). In the state of P'u, there is no right or wrong, beautiful or ugly. There is only pure experience, or awareness free from learned labels and definitions. The idea that thinking must precede action, is strange to the Taoist. The Taoist believes that thinking should accompany action naturally, in the sense that by intuiting and acting, thinking will naturally 'come along'.

In summary, Kardash (1998) argues, Taoists believe that one must be quiet and watchful, learning to listen to both one's own inner voice and to the voices of one's environment in a non-interfering, receptive manner. In this way one also learns to rely on more than just one's intellect and logical mind to gather and assess information. One develops and trusts one's intuition as a direct connection to the Tian Tao. The intelligence of one's whole body is used, not only the brain. And one learns through one's own experience. All of this allows one to respond readily to the needs of the environment.

Therefore, in order to embody the notion of P'u in a university context, using the language of P'u, the 'natural identity' or the *raison d'être* of the University could be stripped back to its contextual, bio-cultural reflexive relationship to the local natural environment (conducive with the spirit of ART). A pertinent example of such a relationship is the 'University in a Garden' concept, as conceptualized by the Universiti Sans Malaysia (USM) in 2001-02. This represents the core university identity for the generative ambiguous space of The Universiti Sans Malaysia. As the university highlights (USM, 2012), the 'University in a Garden' metaphor, '...is designed to depict the close affinity between the role and function of the University as an institution of higher learning and nature as part of the global ecological setting. The flora, fauna, aquatic elements and other natural creations are dynamically linked in the exploration of knowledge into the nature of existence. The concept is an invitation to value, preserve and nurture the campus ambient as part of the efforts to create and sustain an intellectually conducive

setting in order to kindle the spirit and practice of symbiotic co-existence. It is about touching the hearts and minds of each campus citizenry in the appreciative of the natural surroundings as a source of inspiration....'. It explicitly argues that the 'University in a Garden' would allow it to deepen and translate its main mission as 'a pioneering university, transdisciplinary and research-intensive that empowers future talents and enables the bottom billions to transform their socioeconomic well-being.' Furthermore it points out that this is in line with its vision of 'Transforming Higher Education for a Sustainable Tomorrow.' It also relates this mission and vision to reflection, 'in the search for answers to further illuminate the questions of - who we are, how we attained insights, and how we should fashion our future survival.' Operationally, one example of placing the importance to the local natural environment of the campus, is that USM has been able to register all the trees in its campus and locate them in an interactive map, which includes 27 different species. On a wider point, so as to raise the awareness of all actors about these efforts, various elements were accorded specific attention. This includes the existing philosophy of development, taking into consideration the prevailing natural beauty such as the lakes and its surroundings as well as the inhabitants, the inter-relationship with design and architectural features, and also lifestyles of the campus community.

This initiative is pertinent considering the fact that it has been recently suggested that the university campus natural environment setting can be regarded as a place 'where learning occurs' but which is, itself, 'the source of no useful learning' (Savanick et al. 2008, p. 668). However, through the process of assigning the campus's natural environment as a central experiential and generative space, the campus built environment, teaching, research, outreach etc. could all contribute towards the generative Restorative University as a whole through fostering a bio-cultural engagement of its different actors. This argument recognizes other researchers who emphasize the relevance of lived experience for enhancing the transformative capacity of education for sustainability and note the importance of how the physical campus impacts on behavior (Hopkinson et al. 2008). It also concurs with Lozano et al. (2011) who argue for on-campus life experiences to be integrated systemically in universities participating in the sustainability transition. This research draws on critical findings that only three university institutional declarations, charters and partnerships out of eleven consider on-campus experiences. This is despite such campus life experiences helping to reduce the time taken for the integration of sustainability into the entire university institutional framework (Lozano Garcia et al. 2006).

Embodying Wu Wei in the Restorative University

The notion of P'u has a parallel with another basic Taoist principle of 'Wu Wei'. Kardash (1998) defines Wu Wei as behaviour that arises from a sense of oneself as connected to others and to one's environment. If one is to follow Tian Tao, it is necessary to adopt the modality apposite to Tao, namely that of Wu Wei, meaning non-action. Moreover, it means not to take action that goes against nature. As Porter (2003) argues, Wu Wei is the cardinal tenet of Tao. Wu Wei, as set forth by Laozi in the Taodejing, proceeds by harnessing forces or patterns of energy already at play in the natural environment, and letting them carry us to our destination: 'Non-action' denotes not inactivity but activity taken with rather than against the grain of existing aesthetic conativities.

Pursuing activities with this central aesthetic sensibility under the tenet of Wu Wei, it is appropriate to take account of Hancock's (2003) warning of the danger of an over-stimulation of the aesthetic which could numb our faculty of experience and judgment. Welsch (1997, p.25) recognizes: 'our perception needs not only invigoration and stimulation, but delays, quiet areas and interruptions too... Total aesthetization results in its own opposite. Where everything becomes beautiful, nothing is beautiful anymore; continued excitement leads to indifference; aesthetization breaks into anaesthetization.' This paper endeavors to avoid total aesthetization and the associated anaesthetization. It also moves beyond such calls for 'delay and quiet' or inactivity, and conceptualizing what is argued by ART as the 'soft fascination' aesthetic (Kaplan and Kaplan 1989), in an organizational context. This concurs with the selective, low intensity, reductive palette of how a few aspects of nature are absorbing or fascinating to the eye (Krinke 2005). In other words, it avoids trying to develop the 'Beautiful Organization' (refer to above section on P'u) where everything becomes beautiful and focuses on the 'Restorative Organization', focusing on a particular 'aesthetic as [bio-cultural] connection', as described by Taylor and Hansen (2005). The metaphorical focus on restoring the connection with the natural environment, represents an organization as a space where the primacy of the embodied tacit aesthetic/sensory knowledge (Polanyi 1958) around this bio-cultural connection offers fresh insight and awareness and enables us to see in a new way (John 2001). This form of aesthetic experience (Collinson 1992) is action-oriented, where one is emotionally absorbed in the task or activity rather than being passively absorbed in contemplation of an object or person. It develops the soft fascination aesthetic by engaging particular senses through the task as chosen by the person. Such aesthetic experiences place a strong accent on the affective involvement in a task (Taylor and Hansen 2005). This could be seen as developing notions of 'flow' (Csikszentmihalyi 1990) and timelessness (Mainemelis 2001). Flow refers to 'the state in which people are so involved in an activity that nothing else seems to matter; the experience itself is so enjoyable that people will do it even at great cost, for the sheer sake of doing it' (Csikszentmihalyi 1990, p.4).

By emphasizing the importance of flow, this paper concurs with a particular Wu Wei perspective highlighted by Xing and Sims (2012), 'Wu Wei as Flow'. Csikszentmihalyi (1996) describes Wu Wei as being completely involved in an activity for its own sake. The ego falls away. Time flies. Every action, movement, and thought follows inevitably from the previous one. One's whole being is involved, and one is using one's skills to the utmost. Wu Wei, from this perspective, is a condition that you enter when you feel that you do not act intentionally, but the actions that you take happen spontaneously and effortlessly, almost as if they happened of themselves. This is the creative flow or 'Wu Wei as Flow' as the Taoists call it. The idea with Wu Wei as Flow is that the action itself is the goal of action i.e. the primacy of the non-instrumental is key. Aesthetics for the sake of aesthetics (rather than in the service of instrumental goals) may be hugely important in the long run, particularly with respect to restoring our bio-cultural connection. This particular aesthetic turn concurs with Bateson (1972) who suggested that by aesthetic he meant experience that resonated with the pattern that connects mind and nature. In order to restore the connection with the natural environment, Bateson (1972) argued for a shift towards an experience of deep participation in the processes of the planet. Bateson claims that through the aesthetic process, is both 'part of man's quest for grace' (1972, p. 129) and a way of recognizing and re-accessing the sacred. He makes the case for humans to live aesthetically within nature, rather than to relate to the beautiful in nature and in art-works..... for Bateson, 'the aesthetic' and 'the sacred' became almost synonymous. It can

reveal ‘a world in which personal identity merges into all the processes of relationship in some vast ecology or aesthetics of cosmic interaction’ (Bateson 1972, p. 306). Bateson wanted to access the lost sense of interconnectedness and intimate interdependency; and he calls this the ‘Recovery of Grace’, the sacred dimension of our being. This of course reminds us of the fourth level of a restorative experience representing ‘reflections on one’s life’, which may include ‘a concern for meaning, for tranquillity and for relatedness.’ (Kaplan and Kaplan 1989, pp. 196-197).

To enact Wu Wei in universities is of course a major paradigm challenge, with the dominant belief and reliance on the ‘performative’ and ‘cognitive’ to inform and engage around sustainability. Could the metaphorical notion of the Restorative University have the potential to expand the process of knowing beyond its cognitive limits to all senses, reintroducing ‘the body, the emotions, the affective mode of understanding, intuition, receptiveness, empathy, introspection and aesthetic understanding’ (Gherardi 1999, p.110). In fact, this supports Foucault’s (1997) notion that universities could focus more fundamentally on how one is transformed by one’s sustainability knowledge and reflect on one’s ‘metamorphosis’ as an aesthetic experience. However, the focus here on the aesthetic/experiential does not mean that the rationale, cognitive forms of knowing are neglected, merely slowed down i.e. in the cognitive sense. Moreover, it reflects that this experiential or aesthetic knowing is not only a separate way of knowing, but that other forms of knowing such as those derived from rational thought depend on, and grow out of aesthetic experiences (Gagliardi 1996). This is in fact at the core of ART, as it asserts the importance of non-directed attention in restoring our directed attention. In other words, aesthetic experiences are constantly spilling over and being integrated into other activities, enhancing and deepening them (Shusterman 2001). These aesthetic experiences are restorative in a wider sense as they facilitate an arsenal of highly sophisticated processes, such as learning, mastery and creativity, which are useful to individuals and organizations, in the context of the challenge of sustainability (Richards 1999). Similarly, Segalas et al. (2010) argue, multi-methodological experiential active learning education increases cognitive learning of sustainability. Rather than negating the importance of the cognitive, Shrivastava and Ivanaj (2012) argues aesthetic inquiry allows us to study and to develop some ignored aspects of organizational sustainability, such as sensory and emotional experiences. Furthermore, aesthetic practices offer pedagogical techniques (from music, dance, painting, photography, etc.) for teaching and training on sustainability issues.

A pertinent example of how Wu Wei could be embodied within an educational context, is the Schumacher College. In the Taoist context of this paper, it is pertinent to note that Reason (2007, p. 37) highlights the significance of collective emotional and aesthetic sensibility and agency (of Wu Wei), alongside a grounded, local, bio-cultural sensibility (of P’u) for the central ecological sustainability narrative of the Schumacher College:

We start the workshop with a night walk in the local woods, inviting participants, as their primary visual means of orientation is denied or reduced, to open their other senses—touch, hearing, smell, intuition. We walk gently, pausing to listen to the owls and ravens, the dropping of water, the wind in the trees; and to the intrusion of manmade sounds, such as church bells and traffic. After talking about deep ecology we invite students to spend an afternoon sitting by the local River Dart, simply being with what is there—and

they are often amazed at the richness and complexity of life they find. We spend a day walking down the upper reaches of the Dart as the river comes off the moor, fitting ourselves into the natural world: scrambling over rocks and under branches, helping each other through bogs and over torrential streams. We experiment with deep ecology exercises: imagining how the world we sense is also sensing us; guiding each other in pairs on a blindfolded experience of the trees, rock and mud; identifying with beings in the natural world and exploring through imaginative meditation how we are part of Gaia's cycles.

Such a pedagogy could represent a restorative heterochrony (Foucault 1997), a transitional time when people break free from their traditional chronological western view of time and where different actors, experience a psychological distance from one's usual routines i.e. where space and time could be collaged at will? As a 2012 Brazilian student, Tabata Marchetti Villares points out,

This transition is happening inside and outside. My values are changing and what is important in life is becoming clear. Having this experience is the best thing I have chosen in my life. I knew that coming here would be a transition and that it would help me to take a step forward. Now I'm here, there's no way back. It's choosing a new life, something that's more real than life was before. (Schumacher College, 2012)

The Restorative University: The Potential for Institutional Change

In order to enact this new generative metaphor, this paper has endeavored to show how compatible Taoist notions of 'P'u' and 'Wu Wei as Flow' could be reflexively embodied. The emerging question is whether a university could combine the contextual, embedded bio-physical quality of the University in a Garden, with the aesthetic, experiential integration of the Schumacher College and be able to foster wider systemic, bio-cultural institutional reflection and challenge. Although, this broader question cannot be answered here, it is pertinent to critically place the notion of the Restorative University within a wider systemic context. According to Bradbury (2003) 'fostering a sense of personal relationship with the natural world' is only one out of four systemic perspectives. Using the distinction of external and internal worlds along with those of personal and multi-personal/ global concerns, Bradbury (2003) presents a four-celled matrix, inspired by Wilber's (1996) work on integrating external and internal approaches to the study of phenomena. By taking such a whole systems approach to sustainable development, means attending to both relevant information about the external world of natural and social systems out there as much as to the individual's personal and interpersonal world. She makes the wider systemic argument that ultimately, living at a time when all living systems are in decline, it is both a personal and organizational imperative that we become better systems thinkers to understand the interdependence of phenomena over time. More specifically, Bradbury (2003) similarly argues, as well as restoring a sense of personal relationship with the natural world, three other perspectives need to be tackled:

- 1) an understanding in basic concepts of sustainability (defined in its most holistic and systemic sense, accounting for both ecological and intra-and inter-generational equity issues);
- 2) how we use natural resources and the social systems that make them available and

3) how pro-environmental behaviour is linked to affecting the larger system in which we live.

Whilst acknowledging the limitation of this paper to tackle all four systemic perspectives, future research could of course explore the relationship between these different perspectives. Emphasizing this point, this paper recognizes authors such as Svanström et al. (2008) who propose that fostering sustainability behavioural change through education, requires systemic and holistic thinking, the integration of different perspectives, the promotion of skills such as problem-solving, critical thinking, creative thinking, self learning, communication and teamwork and becoming an effective change agent. This is explicitly reflected upon by Barth and Michelsen (2013) in this journal, when they outline the contributions of education to sustainability science: individual action and behaviour change, organizational change and social learning and inter- and trans-disciplinary collaboration.

For example, reflecting upon the possible wider systemic impact of the Schumacher College, representing a non-mainstream educational provider, is now reflected upon. As Blake and Sterling (2011) argue, radical establishments such as Schumacher College need to play an engaged role in advancing, testing and mapping out new purposes, research and pedagogies that higher education could bring on board more centrally. As Professor Patricia Shaw, a visiting tutor at the Schumacher College points out,

Everything at the college conspires to invite the kind of educational experience I have always wanted and found so often a disappointment elsewhere. I have been involved here for 20 years on and off and still find it stretches and transforms me to teach here.
(Schumacher College 2012)

What appears to be a common tension is how such institutions relate to the wider society, including more mainstream universities. Do they act as utopian role models based upon a relatively exclusive but driven set of actors or do they engage on a much more reflexive, trans-disciplinary and heterotopic fashion (Stephens et al, 2008)?

Reflecting on future wider transdisciplinary engagement, it is pertinent to note that the Schumacher College is embracing on-going partnerships relating to the Transition Movement and their relationship with the town of Totnes in Devon. The Transition Movement aims to relocalize food production, goods, and services (and even create local currencies) in response to worries about “peak oil”, the inevitable decline in oil supplies and the breakdown in social, economic, and other systems that peak oil will entail. More pertinently for this paper it is also developing partnerships with the University of Plymouth, representing a leading mainstream UK university around sustainability. On-going partnership initiatives are beginning to focus pedagogically upon a growing joint masters course portfolio in Holistic Science, Transition Economics, Ecological Design and Sustainable Horticulture.

What is the nature of such an emerging partnership? Put in another way, how could mainstream universities, such as Plymouth University and more specifically here, the Universiti Sans Malaysia (or The University in a Garden), engage with such non-mainstream providers to leverage their own organizational and wider institutional change.

What makes the choice of the partnership between Plymouth University and the Schumacher College a pertinent one, is that Plymouth University has consistently topped the U.K.'s People and Planet's University "Green League Table", whilst simultaneously questioning the degree to which it is actually internally engaging the various actors across the university, above and beyond meeting the criteria of such league tables. Moreover, it has consistently scored highly around engagement and was overall ranked No. 2 in 2007, No. 2 in 2008, No.6 in 2009, No.1 in 2010, No. 4 in 2011 and No. 2 in 2012 and 2013. In 2010, the "Centre for Sustainable Futures" at Plymouth University, one of the leading government funded (through Hefce) Centers of Teaching and Learning published an ethnographic research report, which "unanimously reported that at present, students felt somewhat excluded from contributing to a dialogue about sustainability at Plymouth" (Cotton, Dyer & Winter, 2010, p.2). Could Plymouth University's self-confessed lack of student engagement and involvement represent an opportunity for organizational change through the relationship it is developing with the Schumacher College?

Future research could explore this relationship beyond such course offerings and focus on whether the Schumacher College could offer a different mirror space and time that reflect, expose and contest the rhetorical narrative of Plymouth University in their instrumental, sustainability league table agenda (Jones, 2012). Could the Schumacher College act as a restorative heterochrony, a time when people break free from their traditional chronological western view of time and where actors experience a psychological distance from one's usual routines i.e. where space and time could be collaged at will?

Such engagement could include building on partnership platforms which bring together universities committed to the wider sustainability agenda. It is pertinent to note that the Universiti Sans Malaysia and Plymouth University are part of such a network, the Global University Network for Innovation (GUNI). Such international networks respond to research such as by Yarime et al. (2010) whose bibliometric analysis of collaborations for sustainability revealed, the creation, transmission, and sharing of knowledge on sustainability tends to be confined within geographical clusters, with specialization in each country and bilateral collaboration. Other examples of such international networks which emergent notions such as the Restorative University could be expanded, are the Alliance for Global Sustainability (AGS), the International Sustainable Campus Network (ISCN), the Copernicus Alliance, the Sustainability Transitions Research Network (STRN), the International Network for Sustainability Science (INSS) and the associated Integrated Research System for Sustainability Science (IR3S). Of course the IR3S is particularly pertinent as it launched this academic journal along with the United Nations University. As Yarime et al (2012, p.108) point out, these and similar journals play a significant role in institutionalization by providing opportunities to demonstrate as well as accumulate academic findings and achievements. There are also regional networks such as the Pacific Network of Island Universities; the Japanese Higher Education for Sustainable Development Network; the Australasian Campuses Towards Sustainability network; Association for the Advancement of Sustainability in Higher Education (US); the Mexican Consortium University for Sustainable Development (COMPLEXUS) and Mainstreaming Environment and Sustainability in African Universities (MESA) Partnership. Their annual meetings confirm that universities are increasingly recognizing the need to work together to share common issues but also learn from new emerging best practices, such as the examples provided here and to combine scarce resources to address the sustainability imperative. Tilbury (2012) argues that it is also

government support combined with the reach of these international partnerships that are playing a critical role in promoting the innovation needed to reorient higher education towards sustainability. In recognition of this institutional support, wider transdisciplinary platforms have been developed, such as the Partnership for Education for Sustainable Development in the U.S.A., established in 2003 with the remit of bringing together schools, science and research, faith organizations, NGOs, government agencies and youth advocacy groups to support implementation of sustainability initiatives. Similarly, an example from Japan is the Urban Reformation Program for the Realization of a Bright Low Carbon Society, which includes the University of Tokyo, local government authorities, a think tank, local enterprises, NPOs, and citizen groups. Although these trans-disciplinary networks represent promising examples of various types of stakeholders in society involved in social experiments, Yarime et al. (2012, p.110) highlight that difficulties sometimes arise from the differing visions, values, and approaches of the various research groups involved, and collaboration and information sharing between these separate research communities is at times challenging. As Wiek et al. (2012) argue, there is a common degree of uncertainty regarding expected results, and the long-term sustainability of such projects around the world. In response to such institutional barriers, could the metaphor of the Restorative University provide a common conceptual vision or narrative bridge for such trans-disciplinary dialogue and collaboration, around building a bio-cultural connection within different university initiatives, such as the University in a Garden in the Universiti Sans Malaysia and Plymouth University's relationship with the Schumacher College?

More specifically from an institutional change perspective, could the trans-disciplinary dialogue and engagement around the Restorative University be able to effectively contest the dominant centralized and compartmentalized management systems approaches, such as ISO 14001, carbon reduction strategies measured and rewarded institutionally through sustainability league tables? Preliminary research by Jones (2014) indicates disengagement problems with this dominant institutional agenda. This research conducted a review over a five year period where he deconstructed the engagement narrative arising from the aforementioned U.K.'s People and Planet league table since its inception in 2007 and looked specifically at the leading universities in terms of their activities related to gaining a high league table position. The findings highlighted that many universities and college actors, such as students and local community groups, are struggling to meaningfully contribute to sustainability (Lozano et al., 2010; Huisingh and Mebratu, 2000). Moreover, such initiatives tend to engage particular privileged groups, including university management, failing to reach the core of staff, students and local community or indeed influence the culture of the institutions (Bekessy et al., 2007). In fact, much more critically, the research by Jones (2012) highlights that universities and colleges are currently seen by many university actors as contributing to the sustainability crisis and reproducing the paradigms which underpin our exploitative relationships with people and environment (Huisingh and Mebratu, 2000; Mochizuki and Fadeeva, 2008; Sanusi and Khelgat-Doost, 2008). These preliminary findings point towards an increasing dissatisfaction with the current institutional context and an ensuing opportunity for transitional change to decrease our exploitative relationships with people and environment, which could emerge from new metaphors such as the Restorative University.

Conclusions

This paper moves beyond the descriptive and deterministic and introduces the Restorative University, as a new root metaphor, or *raison d'être* for universities on the basis of its potential to engage within and between different psychological and philosophical levels and thereby offers a possible trans-disciplinary change perspective towards sustainability. By enacting the Restorative University primary metaphor, emergent organizing and disorganizing may highlight people's opportunities for not only bio-cultural restoration but psychological and ecological restoration. More specifically, by placing bio-cultural restoration as central to an organization's core mission, could it fundamentally challenge the performative priorities, political hegemony and mediocrity of universities which are seemingly rising or falling within sustainability league tables, implementing centralized management systems and carbon management approaches and espousing behavioral and cultural change rhetoric towards 'sustainability'.

Looking through the lens of the Restorative University metaphor, future research could explore the implications for the future of organizational agendas and discourses for sustainability within mainstream universities. Could mainstream universities incrementally change towards the Tian Tao narrative of the Restorative University, whilst maintaining their grip on current legitimizing activities or do they need to fundamentally change direction and place the role of arts, bio-regionalism, aesthetics and emotional engagement, as core to their approaches. This of course, has a wider implications around the 'new higher education' performance management agenda (Jary and Parker 1998) and responds to the recent call for metaphorical alternatives proposed by Bristow (2012). Such metaphors at least act as a reminder to keep our eyes peeled to the seductive power of the institutionalised worldview that becomes totalising once parallel worlds are forgotten (Nkomo 2009). More ambitiously, by refocusing university agendas on how they could restore our emotional affinity with nature, could such enacted metaphors counter the 'loveless' (Clarke et al. 2012) instrumental rhetoric of excellence, productivity, performance and competitiveness (Bristow 2012).

Of course, future research around this paper, could empirically explore the extent to which different national higher educational contexts and their respective multiple actors enact and embody such Taoist and topophilic narratives and metaphors. Drawing upon national comparisons, future empirical research could not only focus on the West but satisfy the increasing need from China, the spiritual home of Tao, for contextually pertinent higher educational models for sustainable development. This would complement Birkin et al.'s (2010) argument for research that does not simply endeavor to export western models to China. As they point out, although the determination of the Chinese government to create and follow its own sustainable development pathways is a significant force for change, the extent to which these changes draw upon Tian Tao, deep-seated cultural values and beliefs of its people is more than a matter of idle speculation. As Alexander (2006) points out, Taoism in China is in fact in ascendance and should not be discounted from such sustainable development pathways. As Birkin et al. (2010) ponder, if ancient Chinese beliefs can be revisited and merged effectively with the demands of a competitive, hi-tech industrial system the world as a whole stands to benefit. It is hoped that this paper has added to such a trans-disciplinary notion by the way it has proposed an organizational metaphor of the Restorative University, which is complementary to Tian Tao. Of course, the Restorative University, in a Chinese university context could be enacted quite differently to say a UK university context, depending upon the process of transdisciplinary interaction between say the government, university management, local

community and students. In fact, this paper argues that only through the generative, reflexive notion of the Restorative University, different actors could possibly embody a 'Restorative Experience'. It is this corporeal notion of Attention Restorative Theory (Kaplan and Kaplan 1996) that is crucial in achieving change towards sustainability (Leach 1998). As Lefebvre (1991, p. 59) argues, 'Change life!' 'Change society!' These precepts mean nothing without the production of an appropriate space...new social relationships calls for a new space, and vice versa'.

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