

2. Are we really doing the “right thing”?
From sustainability imperialism in global supply chains to an inclusive emerging economy perspective

Anne Touboulie

Ehimen Ejodame

Abstract

This chapter suggests a deficiency in the understanding of the complex realities in emerging economies in global supply chains. We question the underlying assumptions that drive current approaches to sustainability in global supply chains. Sustainability as currently defined and approached by large multinational corporations, a large group of NGOs and international institutions attempts to define a normative pathway to improvement that primarily relies on Western values and in some parts is rooted in the vested interests of a minority of players. The chapter draws on a discussion of existing literature and insights from a developing country. It specifically adopts Griggs et al.'s (2013) representation of Triple Bottom Line of sustainability, gets inspiration from the international development and poverty literature and applies Maslow's hierarchy of needs as a theoretical lens. We suggest a multilevel and systemic view of the issue and articulate a number of propositions to guide future research.

Keywords: Emerging economies, Global supply chain, Sustainability, Maslow, Hierarchy of needs, Capabilities

2.1 Introduction

It has become evident for both the private and public sector that there is a need to develop sustainable production and consumption systems (Lebel & Lorek, 2008). However, there is a notable gap between the vast theoretical desires and actual implementation practice. The drawback situation exists in every part of the world with remarkable evidence of poor social and environmental practices in the emerging economies. But why is this the case? And how can we improve the situation?

Understanding sustainability from an emerging economy perspective requires questioning the underlying assumptions that drive current approaches to sustainability in global supply chains. Central to our argument is the view that sustainability as defined by large multinational corporations, a large group of NGOs and international institutions attempts to define a normative pathway to improvement that primarily relies on Western values and in some part is rooted in the vested interests of a minority of players. A common premise for sustainability practices in the developed economies places a premium on the standard of regulatory bodies and the consciousness and influence of stakeholders. In contrast in the emerging economies, regulatory bodies are often non-existent or inherently incapacitated. In situations where emerging economy stakeholders are directly affected by environmental concerns, they are often voiceless or silenced by the hierarchical structure and high power distance. In this chapter, we suggest a deficiency in the understanding of the complex realities in the emerging economies hence rated the least in capacity to manage social and environmental issues.

The chapter seeks to explore the phenomenon of progressing towards sustainability from an emerging economy perspective by exposing the shortcomings of current research, offering some exploratory evidence and building on relevant conceptual lenses to suggest propositions. This hence enables identifying promising avenues for future research. We attempt to address the following research question: *How can we conceptualize global supply chain sustainability from the perspective of emerging economies?*

Empirically we draw from the extensive work experience of the first author in related fields in an African country and who has collected primary evidence on the issue. Theoretically, we propose a multilevel, systemic view of the issue and draw specifically on capability development from an international development perspective (Sen, 1990) and Maslow's hierarchy of needs theory (1970) to understand the implications and ability to deal with environmental and social issues in supply chains involving emerging economies.

The remainder of the chapter is structured as follows. First we provide some background on the questions of corporate sustainability and sustainable supply chain management (SSCM). In this section we identify the key challenges in current SSCM research in relation to addressing sustainability in an emerging economy context, which we call the "imperialism problem". We then present the methodology adopted and some empirical insights gained in Africa. Third, we introduce our theoretical background and discuss the relevance of the lenses adopted to our problem. Finally, we discuss the multilevel practical and research implications of attempting to develop a multilevel and systemic view of global supply chain sustainability from an emerging economy perspective.

2.2 Sustainability, Sustainable Supply Chains and the "Imperialism Problem"

2.2.1 The concept of corporate sustainability and CSR: biased and narrow views?

There are diverse interpretations of the concept of sustainability; however the triple bottom line (3BL) approach has been widely adopted by researchers and businesses to operationalize sustainability. This institutes the environmental, economic and social dimensions (Seuring & Müller, 2008). Dyllick and Hockers (2002) framed these three dimensions of sustainability as the business case (economic), the natural case (environment) and the societal case (social).

The usual representation of the 3BL is three interconnected circles of equal size, each representing a dimension of sustainability. This is in line with the business case for sustainability that views the sustainable development challenge as providing greater business opportunities for creating value and gaining competitive advantage (Carroll, 1979; Hart, 1995; Markley & Davis, 2007). In this sense corporate sustainability is associated with specific measures looking to improve the social and environmental conditions in which businesses operate while maintaining a certain level of profitability (Carter & Rogers, 2008). This approach has been criticized by authors such as Griggs et al. (2013) who instead propose an eco-centric view of sustainability, placing the Earth's life-support systems at the core of their definition. Their representation of the three dimensions of sustainability uses concentric circles to show how the economy and society are embedded within and ultimately depend upon the preservation of the natural system. The argument against the three equal circles is that it makes it look like addressing each dimension is optional, as all of them have the same weight.

Another recent conceptualization of corporate sustainability reasserts the necessity to adopt a systemic and ecocentric view. In this sense sustainability is about envisioning a prosperous future within planetary boundaries (Whiteman, Walker, & Perego, 2013) and the framework proposed by the authors calls for an assessment and a re-embedding of corporate activities' impact within socio-ecological systems. From this perspective, companies are viewed as operating within society and the natural environment and therefore must take into account a broader network of actors within their strategy and not only focus on satisfying the economic interests of their shareholders. According to the authors, understanding firms' impacts on the planetary boundaries is a first step to take action and they encourage a change and action approach to sustainability research.

The persistent ambiguity of the notion of corporate sustainability is largely due the fact that it has been developed and evolved in a context dominated by an economic view of the firm (Angus-Leppan, Benn, & Young, 2010) or technocentric paradigm as described by Gladwin et al. (1995). In particular, despite the proliferation of corporate attempts to address sustainability challenges, the primacy of a narrow stakeholder capitalist framework is obvious. The phrase “as long as it makes business sense” is not uncommon when discussing sustainability with business employees. Whether this is a reflection of their personal values or simply of the system they find themselves in is another debate entirely.

The question is not new, in the international development literature in particular. For example, Joseph Stiglitz' book (2002) is very critical of the ideological foundations of institutions such as the IMF and the World Bank, and openly questions the credibility of their policies that promote a development that is damaging for ecosystems and favours investors. Beyond the context in which the concept of corporate sustainability has emerged and evolved, there is also a concern about the interests that it is serving. Going back to early work on sustainable development such as that report by the Brundtland commission (WCED, 1987)

reveals that individuals and society are key protagonists in this development, in order to ensure that future generations can satisfy their own needs. However, this concern about the role of individuals and society seems to fade when considering corporations as central agents of sustainability. Much emphasis in the corporate sustainability literature has been put on incremental improvements and green metrics (Hassini, Surti, & Searcy, 2012). In many cases, the major human and change implications of sustainability are underplayed and “sustainability initiatives” seem implemented from the top to the bottom with little concern about and consultation with those that it is supposed to affect.

2.2.2 Sustainable supply chains: a tale of control and compliance

In line with current debates regarding the definition of corporate sustainability, Pagell and Shevchenko (2014) argue that current SSCM research primarily reflects a narrow shareholder view and overly focuses on the economic (i.e. profit) implications of being sustainable. In addition, they argue that much research has focussed on investigating how SC could be more sustainable rather than how they could become truly sustainable.

In spite of the growing demands to implement social and environmental issues in supply chains there is a notable gap between the theoretical desires and actual implementation in practice (Andersen & Skjoett-Larsen, 2009; Bowen, Cousins, Lamming, & Faruk, 2001). This gap is apparently more evident in the emerging economies where the focus is more about using available resources to meet the needs of the present rather than considerations about sustainability for future generations to meet their own needs (Linton, Klassen, & Jayaraman, 2007). There are particular references to countries in Africa (e.g. Amaeshi, Osuji, & Nnodim, 2008). This is because the African continent is highly dependent on natural resources, such as precious minerals and fossil fuel; hence issues relating to business and environment are often linked in a complex manner. The continent is widely accepted as the most vulnerable to social and environmental sustainability issues and also rated as probably the least in capacity to manage these issues (Webersik & Wilson, 2008). This research therefore considers it a worthy option to explore the phenomena focusing on the African continent. This has been echoed by other authors in the field of sustainability, who view the African context as particularly interesting to (a) understand how to deal with complex and interconnected issues of environmental degradation and societal development and (b) move beyond the predominant Western rationalist and disciplinary approach to sustainability (Banerjee, 2003; Spence & Rinaldi, 2014; Valente, 2012).

The dearth of contributions related to the interests of developing country or emerging economy stakeholders is actually quite striking. When research deals with a developing country context it is very much from a top down compliance approach and looking at suppliers’ “misbehaviours”. Examples include studies that explore the introduction of codes of conducts or implementation of certification programmes by large multinationals in their global SCs (for e.g. Alvarez, Pilbeam, & Wilding, 2010; Huq, Stevenson, & Zorzini, 2014; Jiang, 2009). A mechanistic view of sustainability implementation in global SCs prevails and it seems that the underlying assumption of all studies is the existence of a “sustainability imperative” which justifies interventions, and taking responsibility for the behaviour of least advantaged players

Nonetheless, there are many examples that discuss sustainability initiatives in the Chinese context (for e.g. Miao, Cai, & Xu, 2012; Qinghua, Joseph, & Yong, 2005; Shi, Peng, Liu, & Zhong, 2008). It remains debatable whether China can be considered an emerging economy

as such. Interestingly most of these studies focus on green/environmental initiatives and remain fairly quantitative. The social inequalities and issues in Chinese SCs also remain relatively under-explored.

Amid the growing literature on SSCM issues, there are few examples of studies that specifically address the question of sustainability from the perspective of the “least advantaged players”. These include Hall and Matos’ study (2010) that explores the integration of impoverished communities in sustainable SCs in Brazil; and Huq et al.’s (2014) recent paper that specifically focuses on social sustainability in Bangladesh and reveals that differences in cultural practices and social priorities affect ability of suppliers to comply with Western buyers’ requirements. Ojo et al.’s (2013) study analysing green supply chain management in South Africa and Nigeria corroborates the lack of understanding of the realities in the emerging economies and therefore called for further research.

Methodologically speaking currently most research reports on organizational activities related to sustainability and limits itself to providing accounts about the control mechanisms that are put in place by large organizations to address the “misconducts” of their suppliers (Pagell & Shevchenko, 2014; Touboullic & Walker, 2015). This distanced and mostly rationalist approach to research very much goes hand-in-hand with the theoretical bias towards top-down SSCM. There is a dearth of research that seeks a deeper exploration of these issues, and in particular that engages with the relevant stakeholders in attempts to change the situation (Pagell & Shevchenko, 2014).

From this brief discussion of the literature on sustainable global SCs it is questionable whether or not corporations’ practices go beyond paying lip service as most of them do not seem to take into consideration the complex socioeconomic context in which their suppliers are operating when developing and implementing their sustainability policies. One of the major shortcomings of current SSCM literature noted by a number of different authors (Ashby, Leat, & Hudson-Smith, 2012; Carter & Easton, 2011; Pagell & Shevchenko, 2014; Touboullic & Walker, 2015) is the predominance of a large buyer firm perspective, to which we could add Western.

It is quite striking that much of the supply chain sustainability literature seems to remain centred on issues that are viewed as priorities in developed economies despite evidence that stakeholders in developed and developing countries do not actually perceive the urgency of these issues in the same way (Hall & Matos, 2010; Walsh, 2011). This point is very relevant when considering global supply chains, which straddle national boundaries and bring together multiple actors in different socio-economic contexts (Alvarez, Pilbeam, & Wilding, 2010; Park-Poaps & Rees, 2010).

2.2.3 Connecting North and South: aspects of global supply chain sustainability

It is valuable to turn to the literature related to geography, international development and global value chains to explore further the connection between North and South on sustainability in global supply chains. In particular this can enable understanding more specifically what progressing towards sustainability in global supply chains may entail.

Having established the top-down and power driven approach to sustainability in supply chains (Spence & Rinaldi, 2014), it is important to note that global supply chains often connect the demands of consumers in the North to suppliers in the global South (Tencati,

Russo, & Quaglia, 2010). In this case, large corporations do act as the intermediary actors through which requirements filter (Gereffi, 1994). A global view of supply chain sustainability therefore implies an interconnected network of actors in different geographies, facing different levels of development and different needs.

The perspective taken on the upstream end of global supply chains has often been one of interventionism in order to promote international development and increased fairness (Jenkins, 2005). Market initiatives tackling issues of poverty and inequality are particularly interesting in this context, as they are often proposed in response to a lack of sufficient and appropriate local public infrastructures. Fairtrade for instance has been viewed as a way to address such issues in global supply chains by specifically providing a premium to producers upstream. From this perspective ethical consumption in the North is hence linked to development in the South.

Arguably, however, such initiatives do still reflect a fairly narrow understanding of the perspective of the weakest players in the chain and are often reduced to bureaucratic certification processes (Tencati, Russo, & Quaglia, 2010). Voluntary standards addressing social and environmental issues in global supply chains have become increasingly viewed as new modes of governance of North-South relations on sustainable development (Henson, 2006; Henson & Humphrey, 2010). Authors have warned of the limits of market-driven approaches to sustainable development in a global context (Fridell, 2007)

It is evident that current surveillance and monitoring approaches to sustainability are a clear reflection of the exercise of power in global supply chains and of the era of supply chain capitalism (Kannngieser, 2013). There are important geo-economic and political questions to the idea of global supply chain sustainability, which need to be taken into account by researchers in the field of SSCM. Concerns about fairness and justice are also an intrinsic part of relations between actors in the North and suppliers in the South (Boyd, Spekman, Kamauff, & Werhane, 2007; Hornibrook, Fearn, & Lazzarin, 2009).

2.3 Methodology: Insights from an African case study

Having established a lack of understanding of an emerging economy perspective on the question of sustainability in global SCs, in this section we present some empirical insights from Africa that can serve to enrich our discussion.

2.3.1 Research context and motivation

The study essentially follows the current growing interest for studies about SCs in developing new economies (Zhou, 2014). There is evidence in the literature that the emerging economies like China, India, Mexico, and Brazil are in fact growing faster than some other established industrial economies of the world (Lee and Lee, 2006). This is in spite of the physical, social and cultural conditions in the emerging economies where managing supply chains have proved to be more challenging than in advanced economies (Sahay and Mohan, 2006). Emerging economies are faced with the situation of how to manage supply chains, coordinate information flows with multiple partners while tackling the associated prevalent socio-economic challenges. At the same time there are expectations to contribute to the social and economic status of the country using SCM concepts and practices (Lee and Lee, 2006; and Zhang et al, 2011). It is worth noting, however, that some emerging countries particularly in

the African continent have been significantly latent in the discussion (Msimangira, 2003). This is notwithstanding that a nation like Nigeria has been identified among the key emerging markets in the world that their public procurement will almost triple by 2030 contributing to a £452 billion worth. Nigeria is ranked first in Africa and eight in the world of the emerging markets after China, Saudi Arabia, South Korea, Brazil, Poland, India and the United Arab Emirates.

Several studies on Nigeria have been justified by the relative dearth of study and shortcomings of management practices observed in the country (Adebanjo et al, 2013). The recognition of the strategic role of Nigeria in the African sub-region is another notable rationale that has influenced the focus of studies on Nigeria. This includes the responsibility of providing leadership and direction to other African nations in areas of technology advancement, improved business and supply chain management practices as well as security and other socio-economic development.

The country's oil reserves have played a major role in its growing wealth and influence. Following the rebasing of her Gross Domestic Product (GDP) from 1990 to 2010, Nigeria became the largest economy in Africa and the 26th largest in the world (AfDP, 2013). The recalculation and rebasing process in April 2014 was supported by the African Development Bank, World Bank and the IMF providing technical assistance to ensure that the results were credible, reliable and in line with best global practices. The country's GDP increased by 89.2 per cent from \$285.56 billion to \$509.9 billion; her GDP per capita almost doubled from \$1,437 to \$2,688. There are enthusiastic reports supporting this statistical indicator championing Nigeria's economic might (Sanusi, 2012). Some have however warned that the statistics should not be viewed as a precise appraisal of economic life in Nigeria. The argument is that 90 per cent of her earnings are dependent on oil export; the nation has not diversified its economy despite its enormous human, agricultural and largely untapped mineral resources. Even though the nation's economy has improved sharply, the general population does not feel the impact. Most of the nation's wealth is concentrated among a small class of people with 63 per cent of its population still living below the poverty line with corruption commonly adduced as the primary reason for the manifestation of this situation (Imhonopi, and Urim, 2013).

The issues about corruption have generated several debates in Nigeria due to its perceived impact and underlying hindrances to socio-economic development. A simplified definition depicted by the Laws of Nigeria describes corruption as including such acts as 'bribery, fraud and other related offences' (The Corrupt Practices and other Related Offences Act, 2000). There is political or 'government' corruption, which refers to practices like embezzlement where government officials exploited their official capacity for personal gains. Corruption however exists in different scales. There is the 'petty corruption', which occurs at the lower scale, and the 'grand corruption', which occurs at high levels of government. Corruption in the Nigerian context is often described as endemic (or systemic). Endemic (or systemic) corruption weakens organizational processes. The situation in Nigeria has reflected several of the factors responsible for endemic corruption: lack of transparency, a culture of impunity, conflicting incentives as well as discretionary and monopolistic use of power (Imhonopi, and Urim, 2013). While there are arguments that Nigeria lacks funds to execute the critical developmental projects, there remains evidence of misappropriated funds by way of corrupt practices. What is certain is that there is economic potential, which is indicative of the nation's capability to join the array of advanced economies in attaining technological

pro prowess. However, its economic situation also reflects an enormous gap between such aspirations and the realities on the ground.

2.3.2 Research approach and data collection

The insights reported in this chapter are those gathered through a preliminary enquiry, and also based on one of the author's extensive experience in the field. The preliminary enquiry aimed to explore and define the problem situation to facilitate the main study. The rationale for this preliminary study was to surface some of the challenges in the field, and confront them with our understanding of the literature.

The methodological approach combines a study process 'on' stakeholders involved with the phenomenon as well as an enquiry process 'with' stakeholders. The preliminary study is akin to an action research-collaborative inquiry considering the position of the inquirer who is involved in the situation with experiences in varied capacity: as a pilot, engineer and procurement officer as well. This approach is consistent with principles of action research. It offers the opportunity to explore the phenomenon within its context, using different data sources (Heron, 1996; Reason & Bradbury, 2001). This flexible and rigorous approach facilitates the development of theory as well as the capture of rich insights.

In addition to the author's perspective, the study involved interviews with six stakeholders in the public sector organization. The stakeholders interviewed are practitioners in a public sector aviation industry in Nigeria. The 6 stakeholders include 2 pilots, 2 engineers and 2 procurement officers who are key stakeholders in the operations and SCM functions in the organization all with over 10 years working experience and a minimum of 2 years international experience in institutions of developed economies. This choice was to ensure for reflexive input from the participants considering their years of experience and their exposure to the workings of the developed economies. The participants were asked an open ended question which sought to get input about their perception of supply chain sustainability practices in their local context. The broad questions in the interviews sought to find their views about the sustainability challenges, to describe their personal experiences in relation to the phenomenon as well as elicit information about strategies aimed at addressing the observed challenges.

2.4 Insights from stakeholders

The views from the participants who took part in the preliminary enquiry were similar to those echoed in previous research (Hall & Matos, 2010; Ojo, Akinlabi, & Mbohwa, 2013), highlighting various shortcomings about sustainability practices. There was a scorching remark calling for the need to redefine sustainability concept from the perspective of the emerging economies. An illustration relating to local means of water distribution involving boys using water jerry cans carried in locally made carts was highlighted. The participant asserts that while this may not be considered a sustainable approach from the perspective of the mechanized developed economies, the local approach was however noted to be void of gas emission and other environmentally damaging problems and perhaps was a more sustainable environmental practice. The proposed idea to redefine supply chain sustainability practices from the perspective of the emerging countries was seen as a potentially viable idea hence this illustration was documented for further review. Other notable remarks from the stakeholders were comments bothering on the conduct of the research. A stakeholder believed that the project was an uphill task, which can clash with the interest of the

political/leadership class. Another remark emphasized was that it was unfortunate that they (stakeholders) were not particularly aware or bothered about the crucial environmental issues. A third notable remark was that the proposed study was particularly relevant in the prevailing situation. This was followed by a question from the interviewee; ‘but where do we start from?’ The question posed by the interviewee underpins the sense of helplessness and inability to cope with the sustainability challenge.

2.5 Towards a needs and capability framework for global SC sustainability

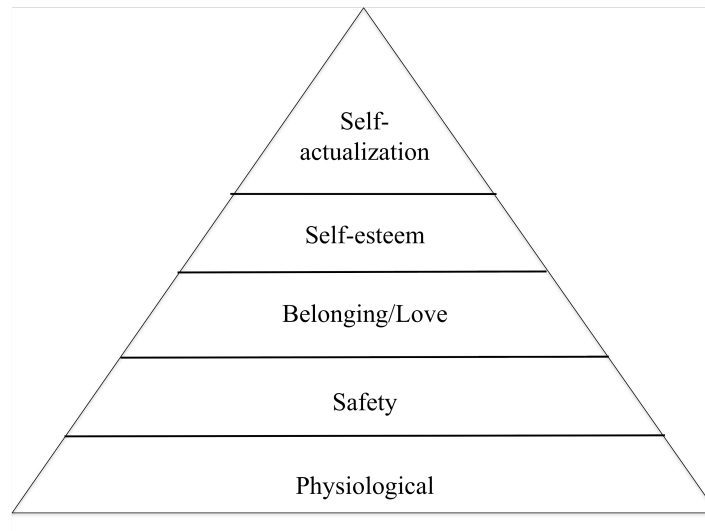
As mentioned previously, the notions of sustainability and sustainable development are contentious and there is much debate on their meanings and scope. It is particularly complex to try and establish a definition, which can encompass both North and South perspectives. The findings from our preliminary enquiry confirm that sustainability and sustainable development may indeed hold different meanings in an emerging economy context where priority is given to issues that seem most critical locally and where infrastructures and systems may be very different from those in developed economies.

2.5.1 Background on Maslow’s theory of needs

In light of our discussion above we propose to draw on Maslow’s hierarchy of needs theory (1970) to theoretically make sense of the question of the sustainability in global SCs. We were motivated to explore this theory in more depth, as it appeared to help us conceptualize the prioritization differential between developing vs. developed economies. In addition we feel that there is a need in SSCM research to further explore the interaction between the national, organizational and individual levels of analysis in order to grasp the complexity of moving towards sustainability. This has already been suggested by a number of authors in the field (Carter & Easton, 2011; Touboulic & Walker, 2015). Maslow’s framework emerging from psychology represents a starting in our attempt to move towards this more multilevel understanding. Furthermore, it can potentially be a step forward in reflecting about the question of perception, values and ethics, and reintroducing the notion of change in SSCM research. A number of authors have already considered the fit of Maslow’s theory to the question of sustainability (Datta, 2013; Walsh, 2011). In particular these contributions do highlight that the theory can be adapted beyond the individual to encompass the community and broader society. In his contribution, Datta (2013) shows that there may be an additional level of needs – transcendent needs – when taking an ecological view of Maslow’s theory. He views this level as the final highest level, which corresponds to the needs to care for beyond the oneself and have a need to address the concerns of the local, national and global communities as embedded in the natural environment.

Maslow suggests that all individuals face different levels of needs from basic to more advanced. He argues that unless the most basic of needs are catered for, individuals will not develop and feel the other needs and hence will not respond to them. Hence there is a hierarchy of needs. Beyond needs identification, Maslow’s theory provides insights into motivational aspects of human behaviour in view of needs satisfaction. The following figure depicts a typical Maslow pyramid of needs.

Figure 2.1 Maslow’s hierarchy of needs (Source: Adapted by authors)



There are five levels of needs according to Maslow, and the pyramid can be viewed as a stage model. The first level corresponds to basic physiological needs such as air, food, shelter, drink, warmth, sex and sleep. The second level relates to safety needs and the need to feel protected, have security, order, law, stability and freedom from fear. The third level corresponds to belonging and love and includes aspects such as friendship, intimacy, affection from family, friends, etc. The fourth level is esteem needs such as achievement, mastery, independence, status, prestige, self-respect and respect from others. Finally, the fifth level relates to self-actualization needs and the realization of personal potential and self-fulfilment.

Maslow's hierarchy of needs theory (Maslow, 1970) can be particularly valuable to understand the motivational implications and ability to deal with environmental and social issues in an emerging economy context and at different levels of global SCs. If we consider the development and implementation of sustainability policies from Maslow's lens we may be able to make sense of why some practices are successful and others fail as they do not address the needs of those they are targeted at. In other words, it is difficult to expect individuals in very poor communities in an emerging economy to care for climate change, as it may seem a very distant issue compared to their immediate needs to feed their families. This means that this theoretical perspective can be valuable in mapping the gaps between different levels of the SC. In parallel, Maslow's theory may be valuable to understand how corporations may fulfil a critical role in addressing the needs of the local communities they work with or have an impact on. For example, this has been described by Pulver (2007). Finally, Maslow's theory calls for an exploration of the individual and community levels of analysis when addressing the question of sustainability in global SCs.

2.5.2 The capability approach to sustainable development in global supply chains

By definition a SC is about the connection between different organizations and actors and about the flow of material, money and information (Carter & Rogers, 2008; Seuring & Müller, 2008). While we have established that much research has explored the role of SC in achieving top-down sustainability, there has been little exploration of the role of SC networks in addressing the concerns of marginalized communities (Yawar & Seuring, 2015).

In recent years, there have been significant developments on the notion of business for the poor in fields such as marketing and strategy, exemplified by the concepts of shared value (Porter & Kramer, 2011) and Bottom of the Pyramid (BoP) (Karnani, 2005; Karnani, 2006; Prahalad, 2012; Prahalad & Hammond, 2002). These have been subject to strong criticism notably for their simplistic view of the poor as consumers and for excluding important power dynamics (Karnani, 2006).

Hence we draw on work in political economics that has considered how to address global development issues such as poverty rather than the BoP. In particular, Amartya Sen's contributions on questions of ethics, justice and poverty (Sen, 1999) have certainly moved the international development debate forward. His ideas have served to question the value of commonly adopted international indicators such as the Human Development Index.

It is widely accepted that inequality is not only defined by objective factors related to wealth distribution but also by normative aspects and ethical concerns that cannot be readily measured objectively (Sen, 1973). Sen has introduced a capability perspective to the development, human rights and poverty (Sen, 1990, 2005), which constitutes a fruitful lens for global supply chain sustainability.

The capability perspective enables reintroducing the notion of opportunity to achieve valuable activities for human and ecological flourishing. While opportunity alone focuses largely on the means that are at the disposal of actors, the notion of capability enables making the subtle distinction between means and ability to achieve the opportunities (Sen, 1990, 2005). While Sen applies this notion to the micro level of individuals, it is possible to see its relevance in the context of global supply chains that connect actors at the macro, meso and micro levels.

Drawing further on Sen's work (Sen, 1990, 2005), we can propose a set of possible reasons as to why there exist differences in capability of actors in the global supply chain, which hence impairs the advancement towards sustainability: (1) inherent characteristics of the actors (whether individuals or organizations, such as physical differences, size, etc.), (2) variation in external resources (such as the nature of public infrastructures, degree of social cohesion, community support), (3) environmental diversities (e.g. climatic conditions, varying threats from epidemic disease or crime); and (4) different relative positions within the network in connection with other actors. Understanding these circumstances can enable a more inclusive view of how to achieve sustainable development goals that are relevant to the actors involved. The four reasons described above can easily be viewed as potential levers for change as well as conditional elements. It is possible to link this additional capability perspective to Maslow's theory in attempting to provide potential explanations as to why actors may find themselves at different levels of the pyramid across global supply chains. Addressing the four identified dimensions above may provide a way to bridge the gaps.

2.6 Discussion: Multilevel practical and research implications

2.6.1 Multilevel research implications

In light of our discussion of the literature, the preliminary findings presented earlier and Maslow's framework, we propose that advancing sustainability in the context of global supply chains necessitates a multilevel and systemic understanding of the salient issues at these various levels. We do not prescribe a "one-size-fits-all" but rather to better contextualize sustainability practice and research. This leads to our first proposition:

Proposition 1: The more significant the difference between the contexts in which sustainability initiatives are developed in contrast to where they are implemented, the higher the likelihood of gaps and discrepancies emerging in global supply chains.

We have noted the importance of going beyond the Western buying firm level and valuing the perspective of emerging economies actors in global supply chain sustainability, in particular as their circumstances are significantly at odds with those of the downstream actors they are connected with. Existing local knowledge and solution may constitute fruitful ways forward. We suggest the following proposition:

Proposition 2: Exploring the perspectives of supplier firms, in particular developing country suppliers, is critical to shed light on under-explored aspects of sustainability and stimulate learning from emerging economy practices.

The capability perspective combined with the theory of needs puts particular emphasis on the need to understand the contextual situations of actors and adopt a bottom-up approach to sustainability. It also emphasizes the connection between the different actors in global supply chains. Several theoretical lenses may be valuable to explore the relation between relationships between actors in a global context and capabilities development for sustainability. Social capital for examples has been viewed as fruitful means through which to enable capabilities development for communities affected by poverty, inequality and dire environmental conditions (Ansari, Munir, & Gregg, 2012; Asadi et al., 2008; Kwon & Adler, 2014). There has been much research in SCM that has considered the development and importance of social capital (Matthews & Marzec, 2012), hence this is a promising lens for future research. We have the following propositions:

Proposition 3: Considering the interactions between the individual, organizational and national levels of analysis will positively impact the way in which sustainability issues are addressed and implemented in global supply chains.

Proposition 4: Making sense of sustainability in global supply chains through a needs and capability framework enables a more inclusive and systemic perspective to emerge.

Considering the interconnection between North and South actors in the global supply chain even further, it is possible to see how tensions between different levels of needs and capabilities are bound to exist as well as tensions between the different sustainability issues (Hahn, Pinkse, Preuss, & Figge, 2014). We argue that these tensions must be embraced in future research. Hence this leads to our fifth proposition:

Proposition 5: Tensions between different sustainability issues as well as levels of needs and capabilities of different actors significantly affect the progression towards sustainability in global supply chains.

Finally, we contend that our chapter does not simply interrogate what we research but how we do research. Our argument is in line with Pagell and Shevchenko's (2014) as we see value in adopting more qualitative, participative and innovative research approaches to explore sustainability issues in global SCs.

Proposition 6a: Qualitative grassroots research approaches can allow developing an emerging economy perspective of sustainable development in global supply chains.

Proposition 6b: Participative research approaches can enable the development of innovative supply chain designs for sustainability that are inclusive of an emerging economy perspective.

2.6.2 Theoretical and practical contributions

This chapter has drawn on Maslow's theory of needs and Sen's capability perspective to support the argument that considerations for the position and perspective of local people and communities is critical in advancing sustainability in global supply chains. This theoretical grounding is particularly original in the field of sustainable SCM, and hence this chapter makes an interesting theoretical contribution.

There are strong implications for practice. In particular, considering the challenges that managers face in going beyond compliance and low-hanging fruits, an emerging economy perspective is topical and pertinent. While top-down approaches may be more straightforward to implement, there is value in considering what a more inclusive and contextualized approach to sustainability may look like in global SCs. Businesses operating on a global scale may seek the support of local communities and actors to ensure that their approaches make a meaningful impact.

2.7 Conclusion

This chapter aims to pave the way for research that seeks to enhance our understanding of global supply chain sustainability practices and in particular from an emerging economy perspective. We suggest that existing conceptual frameworks in the literature are built on perceptions from the developed economies, which are at odds with the realities of emerging economies and do not capture pertinent realities of the complex and inherent dynamics of sustainability issues in this context. As such, existing concepts are considered deficient to drive progress towards sustainability in global supply chains. We encourage research to seek inspiration from literature in other fields such as politics, international development and economics.

The chapter is clearly limited by its exploratory nature and further research is needed to support the proposed framework. An obvious avenue for future research would be to explore the propositions that we have suggested. Further work is needed to refine our theoretical contribution and explore more systematically the connection and relevance of a needs and capability theory to sustainability in global supply chains.

2.8 References

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Dr Anne Touboulic is a lecturer at Cardiff Business School, Cardiff University, UK. Her research interests lie at the intersection of sustainable development and operations management with a primary focus on implementing sustainable inter-organizational relationships and driving change for sustainability in production and consumption networks. She is particularly interested in the links between micro-individual behaviours and inter-organizational practices for sustainability. She is passionate about engaged and innovative approaches to research, which enable collaborating with stakeholders and changing practice. Anne’s research has so far been published in *Decision Sciences*, *Human Relations*, *International Journal of Physical Distribution and Logistics Management* and *Journal of Purchasing and Supply Management*.

Dr Ehimen Ejodame is a Serving Military Logistician with the rank of Wing Commander in the Nigerian Air Force. He holds a Bachelor in Engineering from the Nigerian Defence Academy and Masters in Transport and Logistics from the Nigerian Institute of Transport Technology, Zaria (best graduating student in 2007). He obtained a PhD in the area of Supply Chain Management and Information Systems from the University of Sheffield, United Kingdom. Some roles held in Service include Officer Commanding Supply Squadrons, Grade 1 Logistics Staff Officer and Air Assistants to Air Officers Commanding Tactical and Training Commands. Have also taught logistics and supply chain modules, as a Directing Staff in the Armed Forces Command and Staff College Jaji-Nigeria and as Lecturer at

Nottingham Business School, United Kingdom and the Air Force Institute of Technology (AFIT), Nigerian Air Force, where he is currently the Head of the Supply Management Department.