

# The sustainability of the making of global communities

## Functions, dysfunctions, scenarios

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### **Abstract**

Together with the concepts of stakeholder, the one of community has become increasingly salient in future-oriented literature to enlarge the set of stakeholders engaged in the co-design and the co-creation of decision and policymaking and to address sustainability issues. Supplementing an action-based perspective of the introduction of stakeholder analysis in scenario design, we propose a conceptual and methodological framework to assess the sustainability of global communities over time.

The paper questions the governance of global communities that include multi-layer and transnational organizations, as well as the salience of responsibility in innovation and anticipatory governance. The proposed conceptual framework is designed to assess and to scenarize the governance of such communities from strategic, organizational and contextual perspectives. The combination of these three perspectives aim to anticipate sustainability issues from stakeholders' acts, with a global viewpoint as well as the one of the territories impacted by the making of these global communities.

In a longitudinal approach, we develop three case studies of global communities to critically discuss the foresight process engaged in the third case, the two former ones being historical cases. The three cases study in depth the making and the transformation processes of three global communities and examine:

- the diffusion process of the Cistercian monastic order in the Middle age,
- the rise, fall and refoundation of Asea Brown Boveri network organization from early 1980s to 2010,
- the design of action-based scenarios for the future of fair-trade movement to 2030.

We selected these three polar cases to offer a diversity of data and viewpoints over time to explore, through the analysis of stakeholders' acts, critical events as well as long range changes.

The paper highlights methodological and theoretical results.

From a methodological perspective, the sustainability of global communities relates to the future-oriented analysis of a set of three rules (strategic rule, organising rule, contextual rule), which examines their functions and dysfunctions over time from:

- the diffusion and the disuse of the strategic rule,
- the compliance and the transgression of the organising rule,
- the connections and disconnections of the contextual rule.

The cases stress the theoretical issues of:

- the transformations of global communities over time, which raise for policymakers the issues of standardization, of fragmentation and of slow innovation and their impact on sustainability,
- the tensions between global standards designed within the community and local actions, which question the concepts of accountability and transparency.

**Keywords:**

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accountability, community, governance, scenarios, sustainability

## **Introduction. Anticipating the sustainability of communities at work**

Together with the concepts of stakeholder (Wangel, 2011, Cairns, Goodwin and Wright, 2016, Cairn, Wright and Fairbrother, 2016), the one of community (Roberts, 2010, Botta, 2016) has become increasingly salient in future-oriented literature to enlarge the set of stakeholders engaged in the co-design and the co-creation of decision and policymaking and to address sustainability issues. Supplementing an action-based perspective of the introduction of stakeholder analysis in scenario design (Marchais-Roubelat and Roubelat, 2016), we propose a conceptual and methodological framework to assess the sustainability of global communities over time.

The paper questions the governance of global communities that include multi-layer and transnational organizations, as well as the salience of responsibility in innovation and anticipatory governance (Genus and Iskandovara, 2018) and the issues of accountability and transparency (Tonn, Scheb, Fitzgerald and Stiefel, 2012). The proposed conceptual framework is designed to assess and to scenarize the governance of such communities from strategic, organizational and contextual perspectives. The combination of these three perspectives aim to anticipate sustainability issues from stakeholders' acts, with a global viewpoint as well as the one of the territories impacted by the making of these global communities.

In a longitudinal approach (Hassett and Paavilainen-Mäntymäki, 2013), we develop three case studies of global communities to critically discuss the future-oriented action-based scenarios engaged in the third case, the two former ones being historical cases. The three cases study in depth the making and the transformation processes of three global communities and examine:

- the diffusion process of the Cistercian monastic order in the Middle age,
- the rise, fall and refoundation of Asea Brown Boveri network organization from early 1980s to 2010,
- the design of action-based scenarios for the future of fair-trade movement to 2030.

## **Methodological approach: Articulating geographical, historical and future-oriented methods**

*Ruling sustainable futures in a community-based perspective: strategic, organising and contextual issues*

As Kahn noted, scenarios are about “future history” (Kahn, 1962). To explore such a future history, the introduction of the concept of stakeholder in scenario literature suggests considering a broader range of actors (Cairn, Sliwa and Wright, 2010) and exploring disempowered and disadvantaged subjects (Wright and Cairns, 2011), as well as dominance relationships (Marchais-Roubelat and Roubelat, 2016). Such an approach of scenarios invites to discuss the autonomy of decision of stakeholders and how their interactions over time create the future. In this paper, we propose to focus on the concept of community, considered as an organisation form which is characterized by the high autonomy of its members (Watson et al., 2005). The concept of community and the related one of network have become salient to emphasize how

more or less autonomous and heterogeneous stakeholders – individuals and organisations - may interact (Roubelat, 2000, Fuller and Warren, 2006, Roberts, 2010, Botta, 2016). Through these moving interactions, communities and networks can be viewed as the result of an action process, rather than a structure.

Considering communities in an action-based approach attempts to replace them in a longitudinal perspective and thus to provide an exploratory framework to go further with the relationship between history and futures thinking (Flechtheim, 1966, Inayatullah, 1998, Bradfield, Derbyshire and Wright, 2016). The objective is not to find historical analogies to be applied in futures research which would risk anachronism but to propose an action-based model to question scenario planning as one of its critical issue remains to understand how shifts occur and how sustainable communities may be, while sustainability requires an historical and future-oriented perspective (van Egmond, de Vries, 2011).

While futures literature connects the concept of transformation with changes in the rule of the game (Macdonald, 2012), action-based scenarios method (Marchais-Roubelat and Roubelat, 2016) proposes a rule-based approach to futures, in which scenarios are phases of action processes. To find out when and how successive movements will evolve, decision theory offers with the concept of rule a guideline to assess “what-if statements” from a player perspective (Baligh, 1990). Extending such a definition, action-based scenarios define a rule as a constraint on behaviour or a relation between variables, which operates during a scenario. Action-based scenarios are designed from rules that may be transformed by stakeholders’ moves as well as by contextual changes beyond stakeholders’ acts and goals. Such scenarios are part of developmental scenarios (van Notten, Rotmans, van Asselt and Rothman, 2003) as they insist on how scenarios are transformed over time. Four transformation modes serve as guidelines to stress how rules may shift over time: transfer, stalemate, oscillation, phase lag (Marchais-Roubelat and Roubelat, 2016). In transfers, a new paradigm replaces the former one, which questions irreversibility issues, stakeholders’ and communities’ strategies being challenged by the new paradigm. In case of stalemate, stakeholders and communities are trapped by the rules and unable to create new transformations. Oscillations stress the move to and fro two or more sets of rules. In a phase lag, some stakeholders do not play the rule, which means that communities may face heterogeneous and contradictory behaviours.

*Table 1. Ruling communities*

<i>Strategic rule</i>	<i>Organising rule</i>	<i>Contextual rule</i>
The community works to reach a specific and durable aim	Participating members – individuals or organisations - respect a constraint which serves durably the aim	A new connection between assessment dimensions is made as long as the community exists

To examine communities at work, we propose a conceptual framework designed from three rules: a strategic rule, an organising rule, a contextual rule (table 1). The strategic rule gives sense to the action process of the community. The organising rule stresses how the members of the community interact to implement the strategic rule. The contextual rule exhibits how the community interact with its environment. In a longitudinal perspective, we propose to assess the sustainability of the community over time from the evolution of these three rules as they respectively challenge the sense of the action of the community, the governance of the community, including the issues of accountability and transparency (Tonn, Scheb, Fitzgerald and Stiefel, 2012), as well as the relation with the environment of the community.

*Table 2. Research design*

<i>Research steps</i>	<i>Outputs</i>
1. Exploring the emergence of communities	Historical analysis of community rule set: - strategic rule, - organising rule, - contextual rule.
2. Analysing communities at work over time	Longitudinal analysis (Cîteaux and ABB cases): - critical events, - long range progressive changes. Foresight analysis (Fair-trade case): - transfer, - stalemate, - oscillation, - phase lag.
3. Assessing decision and policy-making issues	Rule shift analysis: - use and disuse of the strategic rule - function and disfunction of the organising rule - connection and disconnection of the contextual rule

*Research design: exploring communities at work in a longitudinal perspective*

To explore these three communities at work, we selected three communities as different as possible one from the other: Cîteaux, ABB and Fair-Trade movement. These three cases offer the possibility to adopt different temporal perspectives and to discuss the moving spatiality of the communities over time, which adds a geographical dimension to the historical and future-oriented perspectives. Through a longitudinal analysis, historical analysis attempts to induce from facts, more than from intents, the rules that explain the emergence and the changes over time of the communities for Cîteaux and ABB. For the fair-trade case, a foresight analysis looks for anticipations of prospective changes. The research design is divided into three parts (table 2). First, we explore the emergence of communities from an historical analysis to induce strategic, organising and contextual rules. Secondly, we implement two different methods to analyse communities at work over time: a longitudinal analysis (Hassett and Paavilainen-Mäntymäki, 2013) for Cîteaux and ABB cases to discuss critical events and long range progressive changes, a foresight analysis for the fair-trade case to anticipate prospective transformations of the communities from transfers, stalemates, oscillations and phase lags. Thirdly, a rule shift analysis is implemented to discuss sustainability decision and policy-making issues from the use and disuse of the strategic rule, the function and dysfunction of the organising rule, the connection and disconnection of the contextual rule.

Cîteaux and ABB historical cases are based on the triangulation of different sources:

- historical research works from early XXth to the last decade, as well as medieval texts such as VIth century Saint-Benedict rule or mid XIth century Raoul Glaber's chronicles for the Cîteaux case,
- 1988 to 2015 annual reports and facts reported in Factiva database, as well as research articles from Business source premier and Sciencedirect, for ABB case.

The fair-trade foresight case is based on outputs from 2017 international fair-trade conference, which brought together in Agadir - Morocco academics and decision and policy-makers from the

fair-trade movement. The case is supplemented by related scientific literature and interviews of co-op members from an ongoing research on fair-trade local communities (Marchais-Roubelat, and Benbihi, 2018).

*Interacting rules at work: the making of three global communities*

The making of the three communities can be explored from model of three rules (table 3). For Cîteaux, the strategic rule follows the goal of Benedict to establish a school for Lord service, while Barnevik's ABB is driven by the shareholder-oriented goal to reach a profitable operating margin and the fair-trade movement introduces ethics in global trade.

*Table 3. Ruling global communities: synthesis of the three cases*

	<i>Strategic rule</i>	<i>Organising rule</i>	<i>Contextual rule</i>
<i>Cîteaux</i>	Serving the Lord to be worthy to enter His kingdom through the literal observance of the Benedict Rule	Living according to the Rule of the Order based on individual poverty, manual work and submission to the elected abbot	Connecting spiritual and economic development
<i>Asea Brown Boveri</i>	Reaching an operating margin of at least 10%	Making autonomous operating units responsible for their results	Mixing global and local assessment
<i>Fair trade movement</i>	Introducing ethics in global trade	Certifying fair trade	Connecting economic, environmental and humankind issues

The Cîteaux case depicts the making of a monastic community in a long-range perspective in the XIIth century (1080-1220). The aim of the community was to restore old regular traditions, through the literal observance of Benedict rule, which provide principles to establish a school for Lord service ("constituenda est ergo nobis dominici scola servitii"). The emergence and the diffusion of this global community in Europe and the near East in a context of intense change is characterised by the autonomy of abbeys, their development by swarming of small units, and their role in the diffusion of innovations. In addition to its influence in the religious life, this increasing global community played an important economic part, in particular with regard to grounds clearing and development. The decline of the order, whose first signs appear at the end of the XIIth century, is in particular due to a rigidification of the order's rule, which leads to the rise of new orders in accordance with the society, like the mendicant ones in the XIIIth century, and to a discordance between the ideal of individual poverty and the community's economic success.

ABB case may be the considered as a corporate case rather than a community. But the rise and the fall of this symbol of the slogan "think global, act local" in the 1980s and 1990s decades, as well as the importance paid to autonomy in ABB model of global business (Taylor, 1991), invite to consider the making of ABB by Percy Barnevik as a global community. This community is

based on a network organisation designed to combine competitive advantages on local and global dimensions whereas they are generally incompatible. On the one hand, the network enables the use of technological and R&D support systems on a worldwide scale, but on the other hand its local companies are managed as independent SMEs to the specific constraints of local consumption. The model ends with the arrival of the new president and CEO, Goran Lindahl: in addition to the Management committee's renovation, the regional levels are dissolved in September 1998, and ABB increases its number of markets from 4 to 7, as the company continues its investment-disvestment policy, and decreases its revenues. Barnevik's network will be then called "global matrix" and Lindahl's one "global multidivisional network" (Ruigrok et alii, 2000). In 2002, the company faces the shock of the asbestos crisis of its American subsidiary Combustion Engineering, acquired in 1989.

The case of fair trade could have been analysed over time as a longitudinal analysis from the set of rules that refers to communities of stakeholders such as Max Havelaar, which introduce ethics into global trade (strategic rule), set up certification processes (organising rule) and connect economic, environmental and humankind issues (contextual rule). Rather than on historical facts, the foresight process is based on anticipations about the four transformation modes of scenarios. In this case, we looked for new scenarios for the community from each of the transformation mode (table 4) to be detailed and discussed step 3. Scenarios include anticipations about the shift in community structures and strategies that would lead to an uberization of fair trade, the trap of the standardization of fair trade, the oscillation between artisanal and industrial fair-trade communities, and the fragmentation of fair trade, which would create gaps within and between communities.

*Table 4. Fair-trade scenarios*

<i>Transformation mode</i>	<i>Implications for communities</i>	<i>Scenarios</i>
Transfer	Shifts in community structures and strategies	Uberization of fair trade
Stalemate	Traps from community rules	Standardization of fair trade
Oscillation	Alternative attractors for the community	Artisanal fair-trade vs industrialization of fair trade
Phase lag	Gaps within and between communities	Fragmentation of fair trade

## **Results, discussion and implications**

*Strategy in question: from emergence of the strategic rule to disuse over time*

For decision and policy-making, the key issues of the strategic rule are its modes of establishment, i.e. how the rule occurred during the action process, and its modes of disuse (table 5).

We differentiate two logics of implementation of the strategic rule at a global scale:

- the aim and the constraint to respect appear when the community is growing (Cîteaux): the aim exists because the community is at work, leading to the progressive making of a new global community in response to the surge of vocations in reaction to the easy-going life of existing orders, although the Benedict rule is prior to the making of the Cistercian community,

- the aim is established to transform an organisation that is designed to serve it (management decision): the community turns global because of it.

*Table 5. Establishment and disuse of strategic rules*

<i>Case</i>	<i>Strategic rule</i>	<i>Establishment</i>	<i>Disuse</i>
Cîteaux	Serving the Lord to be worthy to enter His kingdom through the literal observance of the Benedict Rule	Organisational response to the surge of vocations in reaction to the easy-going life of existing orders	Progressive decrease of foundations and of the number of abbeys
ABB	Reaching an operating margin of at least 10%	Strategic decision made by the company President and CEO	Disruption after President and CEO change
Fair-trade movement	Introducing ethics in global trade	Search for fairness in economic relationships with developing countries	Uberization: ethics turns specific Standardization: ethics becomes frozen Artisanal/industrialization: ethics becomes a commodity Fragmentation: ethics varies according to specific markets, local communities, or competing global communities

The importance of individual actions, such as Robert and Bernard for Cîteaux, Barnevik for ABB has also to be emphasized in the making of the strategic rule, even if the analysis of real primitive intents is a difficult exercise as Pacaut noted it for the Cistercian case (Pacaut, 1970).

Two modes of disuse are possible over time:

- a progressive evolution (Cîteaux) which does not lead necessarily to a phase shift as Cistercians will always serve this strategic rule, which however no longer serves the global expansion of the community (figure 1),
- a disruption (ABB), as the rule disappears and is replaced by another one when new President and CEO Goran Lindahl replace Percy Barnevik, although the objective is nearly achieved (9,7 % in 1995).

The fair-trade case suggests that a strategic rule may take various meanings over time, as both developed and developing countries are being transformed and as the different scenarios would not consider ethics as an unchangeable concept. What is unsustainable for a community could become sustainable for a new generation with a new context or with new stakeholders. With uberization and marketplaces, ethics would be reduced to minimum common criteria to be negotiated. In the standardization scenario, ethics would be frozen over time, while oscillation

and fragmentation would propose alternative or competing global or local communities, fair-trade becoming either a commodity or a niche.

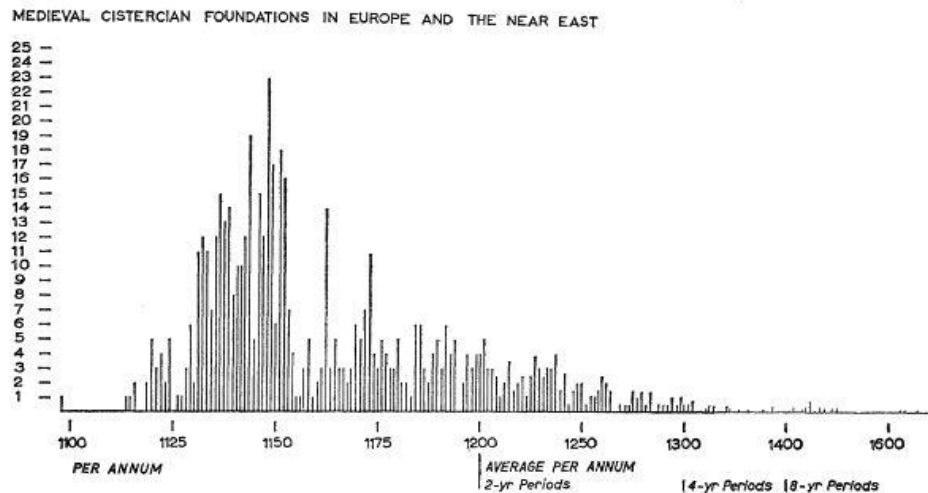


FIGURE 1—Medieval Cistercian foundations in Europe and the Near East: data from L. JANAUSCHEK, *Originum Cisterciensium* (Vienna, 1877).

Source: Dolkin, 1963

*Stakeholders' behaviours within communities: compliance and transgression with the organising rule*

All the stakeholders taking part in the community respect the organising rule. The organising rule marks a separation between the stakeholders who are inside the community and the ones who are outside. The border drawn at the moment of the observation could have already changed the moment later. One cannot thus propose a typology of the organising rules based on the organisations they generate. For the members, two dynamics for joining the community are possible:

- the rule is sought by members who will take part in the community to respect that special one, which makes the community grow (Cîteaux);
- the constraint is imposed on the members: as they are in the community or acquired by it, they have to respect its organising rule (ABB).

The organising rule can emerge from the community progressively during its constitution by a process of self-organisation, but it is not always the case. Some individuals or stakeholders may play a premium role and exert a dominance, either weak and/or strong (Marchais-Roubelat and Roubelat, 2016) over the community. In the case of ABB the organising rule was the consequence of the will of the decision maker (Percy Barnevik). In the case of Cîteaux, Stephen Harding and Bernard of Clairvaux played a great part in the development of the Order so that many members were influenced by their projects and individual actions. In ABB case, a merging and acquiring policy added new members in the community. All members were responsible for their results and were sometimes divided in operating units, such as the German subsidiary of Brown Boveri, which was composed of 54 separate legal companies four years after the 1987 merger (Berggren, 1996). The dysfunction of the organising rule reveals the paradox of success



when local Cistercian communities become wealthy, which challenges the individual accountability of members to the strategic rule. In ABB case, the autonomy of local companies is balanced with an information system that provides accountability to the strategic rule, while the change of CEO will be accompanied by a transparency crisis on Barnevik's pension, as well as the dramatic impact of major local risks on the global community with asbestos crisis. This suggests paying attention to compliance, as well as to transgressions in a longitudinal perspective, as some local decisions may have long range consequences for the global community.

*Table 6. Principles of function and dysfunction of the organising rule*

<i>Case</i>	<i>Organising rule</i>	<i>Principles of function</i>	<i>Principles of dysfunction</i>
Cîteaux	Living according to the Rule of the Order based on individual poverty, manual work and submission to the elected abbot	Individual poverty, which drives the rule of the Order, is sought by the prospective monks to deserve the Lord through penitence and renunciation to the world	Parallel action processes emerge from some leading members, such as Bernard of Clairvaux and his followers  Formally, the rule is followed, but its meaning changed, as abbeys become wealthy. Consequence: it is less and less sought by new participants
ABB	Making autonomous operating units responsible for their results	Financial responsibility is transferred at operating levels, which are controlled through a common information system	The rule is modified by the new CEO: operating units are still responsible but no more autonomous
Fair-trade movement	Certifying fair trade	Development and diffusion of fair-trade global standards and brands	Uberization: competition between local communities and standards captured by global marketspaces Standardization: loss of sense through procedures rather than process Artisanal/industrialization: paradox of success and commoditization of standards Fragmentation: multiplication of local standards either to address local markets or cope with specific local public policies

The fair-trade case suggests that global communities may be extended from the two dynamics, as members would seek for certification processes and related global standards to become ethics or would have adopt standards under the pressure of stakeholders. Uberization stresses

the prospective competition between local communities and global marketplaces that would capture fair-trade standards, with an increased formal transparency, which would weaken the long-range relationships between members within the community. Standardization questions the significance of accountability with the institutionalization of procedures that would replace a real interactive process between stakeholders. The oscillation between artisanal and industrialized standards exemplifies the paradox of success and the prospective shifts over time from artisanal to industry standards, as well as the possible rejection of the commoditization of standards, which would mean a rebirth of artisanal ones. Different standards may however be developed at the same time with the multiplication of local standards either to address local markets or cope with specific local public policies.

*The scale of the community: tactical or strategic issues of the contextual rule*

In action, the community at work produces connections between assessment dimensions of the environment (table 7). These connections may be side effects of the making of the community as in the Cîteaux case or be voluntarily required when the community uses such connections as an explicit background to support the community strategic rule, as in ABB and fair-trade cases.

*Table 7. The contextual rule in action: connections and disconnections*

Case	Contextual rule	Connections	Disconnections
Cîteaux	Connecting spiritual and economic development	Economic dimension emerges as a feedback of spiritual dimension through individual poverty, penitence and manual work	Contradiction: economic dimension becomes incompatible with spiritual dimension
ABB	Mixing global and local assessment	Domestic companies are acquired to develop domestic markets and are then restructured to cut costs	Downgrading: local dimension is less strategic and local costs increase more than sales
Fair-trade movement	Connecting economic, environmental and humankind issues	Growing importance of sustainability issues	Uberization: individuals become more important than the community Standardization: global standards overrule local practices Artisanal/industrialization: the product is more important than the producer/the producer is more important than the product Fragmentation: local communities overrule global ones

The Cistercian case is of particular interest to discuss connections and disconnections over time. At the beginning, the constitution of the Cistercian Order corresponds to the monks' aspirations of withdrawal to the desert, in poverty and work, partly in reaction to Cluniac Order or other Benedictine abbeys in a context of enrichment of abbeys (Parker Mason, 1905), as described in around 1047 Raoul Glaber's *Chronique de l'an mil (year 1000 chronicles)*. Early Cistercian settlements are trying to live out of the world, disconnecting the spiritual dimension from other ones. However, abbeys did not live in complete self-sufficiency and thus were not completely disconnected from their environment. In 1134 order rule, a list of forbidden activities and properties did not include the possibility to sell their products, which was the root of the new connection between economic and spiritual dimension. Manual work was a way of penitence as well as the main enrichment cause of the abbeys. The economic dimension and technology diffusion in farming, which is associated with the rise of the Order (Donkin, 1963, Grubler, 1996), entered in increasing contradiction with the spiritual ideal of the monks. Economic and spiritual dimensions became less and less compatible, added to the new mission of struggle against heresy in late XIIth Century for which Cistercians were unprepared (Pacaut, 1970). ABB case highlights on the other hand the evolution over time of the global-local interaction and the transformations of Barnevik's community of autonomous companies into a more classic multinational firm where the local dimension is less salient.

In the fair-trade case, each scenario stresses new connections that may challenge the previous connections. In uberization, individuals become more important than the community and the importance of some dimensions may decrease over time. In standardization, global standards overrule local practices. The connections being frozen, it turns more difficult to cope with local sustainability issues. In the industrialization of fair trade, the economic dimension becomes more important, while in the fragmentation scenario local dimensions and global niche communities change, even slightly, the balance between the different assessment dimensions. The nature of the evolution of these connections and disconnection over time is also to be questioned, as the sustainability of communities' issues includes a reflection on slow evolutions, as well as meets the one on the ephemerality of scenarios (Roubelat, Brasset, McAllum, Hoffmann, Kera, 2015).

## Conclusions

The sustainability of global communities relates to the future-oriented analysis of a set of three rules (strategic rule, organising rule, contextual rule), which examines their functions and dysfunctions over time from:

- the diffusion and the disuse of the strategic rule,
- the compliance and the transgression of the organising rule,
- the connections and disconnections of the contextual rule.

The combination of the functions and dysfunctions of these three rules over time offers a conceptual framework to design scenarios that anticipate the emergence, the rise, the transformations, and sometimes the fall, of global communities.

The cases stress:

- the transformations of global communities over time, which raises for policymakers the issues of standardization, of fragmentation and of slow innovation and their impact on sustainability,
- the tensions between global standards designed within the community and local actions, which questions the concepts of accountability and transparency. These tensions invite to critically discuss the concepts of accountability and transparency over time and across

territories to avoid misunderstanding and anachronism in anticipating the futures of global communities.

Such transformations and tensions encourage to explore further research linking history, and futures thinking (Bradfield, Derbyshire and Wright, 2016), while historical cases also suggest paying attention to the role of individuals in decision and policy-making.

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