



oikos



STUDENTS
TRANSFORMING
ECONOMICS AND
MANAGEMENT
EDUCATION

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Introduction

Economics and management education has become a subject of increasing scrutiny in light of pressing environmental, economic, and social challenges. Some authors detail infamous and unethical corporate scandals as well as the 2008 global financial crisis to emphasize shortcomings in economics and management education, and the negative role business leaders might play in contributing towards global climate change and financial as well as social calamities (Colander *et al* 2009, Giacalone and Wargo 2009, Waddock and Lozano 2013, Swanson, 2004). Similarly, the discipline of economics has received ample criticism for relying on tools and theories that are poorly suited to deal with the mounting problems of the 21st century (Hodgson *et al* 1992, Keen 2002, Fullbrook 2004, Krugman 2009). This has led many scholars to also point to the need for reforming both economics and management curricula (Barone 1991, Giacalone and Thompson 2006, Reardon 2009, ISIPE 2014, Earl *et al* 2016).

This study specifically details how students have emerged as one of the key advocacy groups for economics and management education reform. Since the late 1980s, they have called for the better understanding of ecological responsibility (Barkawi 2000), and more recently, for the introduction of a pluralist curriculum informed by diverse schools of economic thought and “real world” experience (The Post-Crash Economics Society 2014). Hence, the question we address is “*How can a student organization help transform economics and management education?*”.

oikos, the case study presented here, is an umbrella organization founded in St.Gallen, Switzerland, in 1987 with a goal to fortify student efforts to incorporate sustainability in business schools and economics departments. Today, *oikos* reaches out to over 50,000 young people every year through the efforts of 1,200 members in approximately 50 chapters across 24 countries. The *oikos* mission is to transform economics and management education by empowering student change agents, raise awareness for sustainability opportunities and challenges, and build institutional support for curriculum reform.

The first section of this article introduces the current fundamental problems associated with business school education, and provides a short literature review that gives a wide-ranging overview of the context and pressing needs for transforming the economics and management curricula. Several questions are explored: why achieving institutional change is so difficult,

what is the role of students in tackling the status-quo, and why bringing about change is important. The second section introduces *oikos*, and the organization's mission to transform economics and management education is presented in detail. A short conclusion summarizes the obstacles faced and successes achieved while also looking ahead towards the future.

Background and Literature Review: The Pressing Need to Transform Economics and Management Education

The Anglo-Irish philosopher and political economist Francis Ysidro Edgeworth declared in 1881 that "The first principle of Economics is that every agent is actuated only by self-interest" (Sen 1977). This assumption has greatly influenced economic theories (*Ibid.*) and largely remains an underlying premise in economics and management education worldwide (Ghoshal 2005). As Ferraro, Pfeffer, and Sutton (2005) further suggest, this notion "strengthens beliefs in the pervasiveness, appropriateness, and desirability of self-interested behavior" among students of economics and management. Some authors note that students in this field are often motivated to take increasingly egotistical decisions (Carter and Irons 1991, Cadsby and Maynes 1998, Marwell and Ames 1981, Frank, Gilovich, and Regan 1993). This type of behaviour is additionally normalised by an organization-centered worldview, whereby materialist, profit-driven values tend to be held in the highest regard; and people and ethical considerations are only taken into account as long as the financial needs of the organization are fulfilled (Giacalone and Thompson 2006). Ghoshal is unequivocal when stating that, "by propagating ideologically inspired amoral theories, business schools have actively freed their students from any sense of moral responsibility" (2005, 76). Indeed, several studies have demonstrated that economists tend to be more positively disposed towards greed and avaricious behaviour (Wang, Malhotra, and Murnighan 2011), and are significantly more corrupt than people working in or studying other disciplines (Frank and Schulze 2000).

In the recent past, business schools have been accused of "not asking students to confront the factually impossible notions of unlimited growth in a world of limited resources, the questionable consumerist ideology based in materialistic goals, and the ecologically unsound tactics that may bring planetary suicide" (Giacalone and Thompson 2006, 268). Examples of our planet's decay are abundant and range from deforestation, ozone depletion and soil erosion, to air pollution. Many scholars also claim that economics and management education is at least

partially responsible for corporate scandals involving unethical executive proceedings (Swanson 2004) and the 2008 global financial crisis (Colander *et al* 2009, Giacalone and Wargo 2009, Waddock and Lozano 2013).

Efforts to transform economics and management education to contribute to sustainability have not always been successful nor resulted in deep, long-lasting change. In hindsight, many business schools have acknowledged that, “the crisis cannot be solved by the same kind of education that helped create the problems” (Orr 1992 in Kolb, Fröhlich and Schmidpeter 2017, 83). Only in the past 10 to 15 years have universities given increasing importance to the issues of ethics, responsibility, and sustainability, and their integration into the curriculum (Moon and Orlitzky 2011, Hart *et al* 2015). Nevertheless, Painter-Morland *et al* (2015) specifically point to the failure of “systemic institutional integration” of ethics and sustainability in management education. The same sentiment is echoed by Driscoll *et al* (2017), who after examining sustainability inclusion and communication in Canadian MBA programs, concluded that while the topic has become a mainstream concern and the legitimacy of sustainability in academic institutions has increased, there has been a lack of substantive integration of sustainability in the core curricula.

It is clear that institutional change in economics and management education is difficult to achieve, considering the very structure of a higher education that favours tenured faculty representing well-established disciplines and that grants promotions according to publications in top-tier peer-reviewed journals that mostly focus on orthodox concepts (Sharma and Hart 2014). It seems that faculty have little incentive for integrating sustainability into their work (*Ibid.*), and that many university deans overestimate their institutions’ success in integrating sustainability-related issues into teaching practices (Painter-Morland *et al* 2015).

In light of these institutional hindrances faced by faculty, students appear to be key agents in bringing about desired change to economics and management curricula (Lozano 2006). Three reasons stand out. First, students are not bound to the same hierarchical and structural confines as faculty. Therefore, they can reach out to a broad group of actors including other students, academic staff, university administration, and businesses (Drupp *et al* 2012); and at the same time advocate for bolder reform. Second, students normally focus on local university issues and engage in relevant problem-solving activities (Bacon *et al* 2011), thereby setting and anticipating very concrete outcomes. Third, when students demand more integrated

sustainability-related issues into the curriculum, they also might create incentives for unmotivated faculty members (Duram and Williams 2015).

There is growing academic literature on the role that higher management education should play in fostering sustainability leadership and to create quality student change agents for sustainability (Tichy 1974, Kanter 2000). A change agent can be described as an “internal and external individual (...) responsible for initiating, sponsoring, directing, managing or implementing a specific change initiative, project or complete change programme” (Caldwell 2003, 139-140). Hesselbarth *et al* note that in the specific context of sustainability, a change agent “is an actor who deliberately tackles social and ecological problems with entrepreneurial means to put sustainability management into organizational practice and to contribute to a sustainable development of the economy and society” (2014, 26). The authors additionally point out that change agents also transfer the vision of sustainable development to a wider group through cooperation, motivation, and public relations.

Herrndorf *et al* (2014) position student entrepreneurship at the center of what can help universities adapt to new challenges. Advocating for sustainability and raising awareness for sustainability opportunities and challenges is also very important. Hesselbarth *et al* point out that for higher education and sustainability, the commonly mentioned competencies needed include “skills, motivations and effective dispositions for the successful solving of real-world sustainability problems and the identification and realization of opportunities” (2014, 27). The authors note that, “Although the mandate of sustainability education to contribute to transforming unsustainable structures, processes and behavioral patterns into sustainable ones is commonly mentioned” within the academic literature, “the competence profile of a change agent for sustainability is not in the center of the debate” (*Ibid.*). It seems that initiatives that call for an integrated understanding and promotion of sustainability within teaching and research are the most successful ones.

Besides supporting student change agents and raising awareness of sustainability challenges and opportunities, building institutional support for curriculum reform can also play a major role in transforming economics and management education. In this role, as will be demonstrated in the case study below, *oikos* works within a much larger ecosystem of academics and students who are working to build the resources and institutions needed to push economics and management education in a different direction. The academic side has seen the creation of a large number of teaching materials (Hill and Myatt 2010, Chang 2014, CORE 2017) and even

a journal titled the *International Journal of Pluralism and Economics Education*, while students have organized into a number of complementary networks and associations to press for change.

oikos: Transforming Economics and Management Education Through the Empowerment of Student Change Agents and Institutional Support for Curriculum Reform

Dynamics of oikos as a student organization

The publication of the United Nations Brundtland “Report of the World Commission on Environment and Development: Our Common Future” in 1987 triggered a worldwide interest in sustainability. This phenomenon was visible among students of economics and management at the University of St.Gallen in Switzerland even as early as 1970, though, when a student committee for the economy and environment, Das Studenten-Komitee für Umweltökonomie, was established (Milz 1995). The University of St.Gallen students wanted to sensitize academia and future graduates to sustainability issues. As a result, *oikos* was brought to life, an organization that further developed throughout the years, always driven by students pursuing novel solutions to incorporate sustainability in business schools (Figure 1). Innovation and reinvention are the hallmarks of the subsequent *oikos* phases of development.

Figure 1. Milestones



Early years

From the very beginning, *oikos* was a meeting platform for entrepreneurial students who were change makers in their own environment. Since its inception, the organization has focused on inspiring, engaging and empowering students as well as sustainable development issues and their implementation in business school curricula. *oikos* St.Gallen remains one of the most developed chapters of the organisation. It holds a number of regular projects, such as the *oikos*

Conference that includes alumni, academia, and business, a thesis competition for students writing on sustainability, and the “*oikos* and Pizza”, a social event with influential speakers.

Becoming international

The next significant step for *oikos* was expanding to an international level. In 1998, *oikos* International, the “Student Organization for Sustainable Economics and Management” was founded. The organisation initially consisted of five chapters, including St.Gallen, Cologne, Prague, Stockholm, and Vienna. Later that year, two more chapters in Warsaw and Ljubljana joined. *oikos* International coordinated and co-organised a wide array of projects that fluctuated throughout the years, following global trends in sustainability. Major initiatives included the Spring and Autumn Meetings in local chapters for the entire student community. The Winter Schools followed. The *oikos* FutureLab has been taking place in Switzerland since 2011 and brings together the entire *oikos* community once a year. *oikos* also supports chapters through targeted projects fostering leadership and fundraising skills. In 1990, the *oikos* Foundation for Economy and Ecology was set up with the purpose to enhance the integration of the ecological dimension into the teaching and research of economics and business administration, particularly at the University of St.Gallen (University of St.Gallen 2018). Many of *oikos*’ activities relating to building institutional support for curriculum reform, such as the PhD fellowships and the cases programme, have administratively been managed under the Foundation.

Internationalization did not come without challenges, and the organisation underwent major structural changes with shifting terms of presidency, altering the composition of the Executive Board, and finding new modes of financing. *oikos* partnered with other global players such as Avina, Movetia, and Mercator. It was also supported by a number of public and corporate sponsors, such as UBS. *oikos* additionally managed to survive challenges related to discontinuity in governance and financial complications. By overcoming these issues, the students and alumni involved brought stability to the organization, enabling further growth. Groups of students join *oikos* in various ways: organically and by merging local student initiatives with the organization as well as through targeted action from *oikos* International.

oikos vision and mission; looking towards the future

oikos celebrated its 30th anniversary in 2017, reaffirming and redefining its vision and mission. The organisation's vision calls for economics and management education purposed for a sustainable world. The *oikos* mission is to transform economics and management education by empowering student change agents, raising awareness for sustainability opportunities and challenges, and building institutional support for curriculum reform. These three actions constitute the pillars of all *oikos* activities. Looking towards the future, the organization hopes it can hinge on its greatest asset: *oikos* members and their university experience. *oikos* aspires to gain inputs from its members in order to understand dynamics of economics and management education in different parts of the world. It also aims to provide students with relevant skills and knowledge that would enable them to advocate at their home universities for an economics or management curriculum that is reflective of and responds to pressing local sustainability challenges.

Figure 2. Three pillars of *oikos* activities



Pillar I: Fostering sustainability leadership (empowering student change agents)

Capitalizing on the central role that business schools can play in cultivating responsible leaders, *oikos* was grounded with the goal to educate change agents for sustainability through the implementation of student initiatives. The success of the organization lies in the support that it provides its members and local chapters so that bottom-up projects can flourish and be replicated. *oikos* tries to provide the necessary guidance and institutional support to its members while enabling students to be actively engaged with the processes of change, allowing as much as possible for them to take on a leadership role. It is clear that *oikos* is committed to educate future decision-makers. Another reason why *oikos* continues to lie at the forefront of student initiatives is its ability to renew itself, its commitment to always go one step further to include sustainability in education.

From its inception, and already from the first conference organized, *oikos* considered the potential for students to be change makers. Alexander Barkawi, one of the earliest members, established the idea that, “To enact [student initiative] strategies, winning actors of change is crucial” (2000, 259). *oikos* International provides all the necessary assistance to students wanting to open a local chapter by working closely together with them in the initial phases, permanently providing the groups with organizational know how, organizing skills seminars as well as coordinating common projects.

Herrndorf *et al* feature *oikos* in their study as an example of student entrepreneurship promoting innovation within the educational system. The authors assert that the support that *oikos* members receive position them to become more entrepreneurial, “The availability of

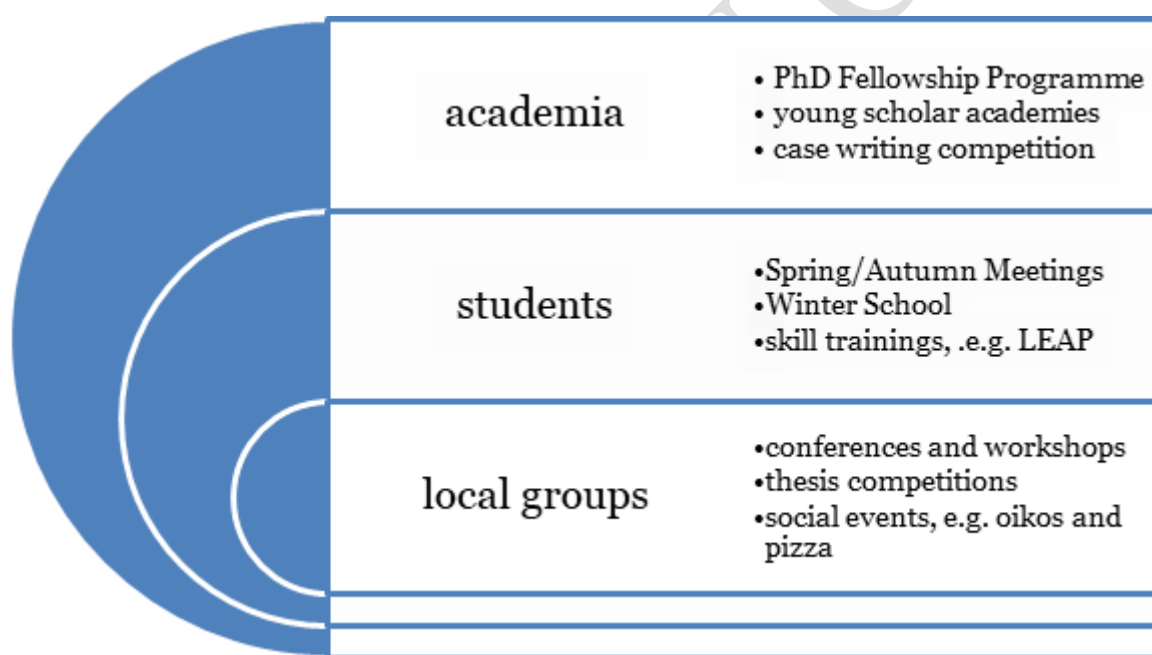
resources' and easy access to information ...enable students to give up their status as 'education receivers' to become entrepreneurs who pioneer and expand new learning formats" (2011, 402). For students to thrive in innovative spaces and new models for management, education should entail "raising awareness for sustainability issues, fostering an entrepreneurial spirit among students, and providing them with the ability to analyse long-term economic, environmental and social trends, and to implement sustainability-driven innovation" (398). The authors discuss student entrepreneurship and entrepreneurial activity as a "process of social change", a term that Steyaert and Hjorth (2006) coined. Thus, *oikos* members can act as change agents in their universities. Nevertheless, students are only one dimension in a complex system. "To promote sustainability-oriented innovation in the university system as a whole, students acting as entrepreneurial agents are just one piece of the puzzle" (Herrndorf *et al* 2011, 407). *oikos* consistently finds ways to engage students in an enduring and successful manner, while helping them to have an empowered voice and to encourage them to be proactive about change. *oikos* designed a Leadership Program (LEAP) to foster responsible leaders and change agents who then empower their chapters and influence change towards a more sustainable world. LEAP aims to equip participants with insights, knowledge and tools that embed sustainability in their decisions and actions. The key characteristic of LEAP is that it allows participants to take ownership over their own development (Negri and Troxler 2016). There are three LEAP tracks (Basic, Presidents and Advanced) where participants can co-create content along with program managers, taking into consideration the challenges participants face in their personal and professional lives. In addition, participants design and lead workshops in their areas of expertise during on-site meetings. LEAP creates a unique atmosphere where each participant is simultaneously a teacher and a student. Three methodological concepts of "exploring, sharing-practicing and reflecting" guide the LEAP program: exploring signifies a strive for internal and external discovery in order to grow; sharing-practicing allows to implement lessons learnt by disseminating learning outcomes among peers in local chapters to further learn and improve impact; and reflecting refers to the practice of taking time to think and to question own decisions, actions, and practices (*Ibid.*).

LEAP sets a platform to inspire participants. During on-site meetings, they learn about activities and projects organised in the *oikos* chapters from across the world. These novel ideas galvanize participants into taking action and implementing new projects in their own communities. Online discussions ensure that the process continues and serves to update the community as a whole on new developments. The LEAP webinars encourage participants to reconsider conventional ideas on leadership and to bring about positive impact. Intensive workshop sessions to gain

better understanding of areas such as communications, project management, impact measurement and fundraising are held regularly. This allows participants to better develop and implement their chapter projects and gain hands-on experience. “Peer-2-Peer” groups represent a support system for participants. Perhaps the most rewarding outcome of the program is the change in participants’ behaviour and perception. They become more action-oriented and aware of the influence they have on their milieu and environment.

Pillar II: Advocating for sustainability (raising awareness for sustainability opportunities and challenges)

Figure 3. Sample of *oikos* projects



Student initiatives related to sustainable development generally open learning spaces for the entire university and promote “communicative arenas in which participation of several actors enable[s] a reflective and discursive re-definition of aims and meanings” (Drupp *et al* 2012, 738). The *oikos* events particularly are intended to bring different stakeholders together in an atmosphere that is conducive to learning and sharing, and that facilitates face-to-face networking. The *oikos* chapters organise a wide range of projects, including but not limited to,

conferences, workshops, field visits, simulation games, competitions, and social events. A great majority of these projects bring together students, faculty, university staff, and industry representatives to encourage dialogue on sustainability. During these events, students gain knowledge on the sustainability challenges that different industries face in their daily work; they also learn about opportunities that new sustainability projects provide to corporations, employees, and customers. Furthermore, students interact with faculty and staff not only during the days that events take place, but also throughout the entire organization process. Therefore, students gain first-hand experience on the realities of how universities function. For industry representatives, events provide the possibility to inform students and universities on the specific knowledge and skills set they expect graduates to have upon graduation. Universities can also use these public forums to discuss the most pressing sustainability issues and attain insights into what sustainability topics should be included in curricula.

The *oikos* chapters worldwide concern themselves with local needs and regional interests. For example, in the USA, *oikos* New York City provides a platform for experienced and aspiring researchers to share their work on various sustainability-related topics by offering “Speakers Series” and “Community Lunches”. Chapters in Germany and Switzerland are concerned with sustainable fashion (e.g. *oikos* St.Gallen’s “Un-dress”) and consumption (the main topic of the Spring Meeting in Hamburg in 2017). *oikos* St.Gallen and *oikos* Hamburg also developed the EcoMap platform to enable consumers to learn about sustainable businesses in their area. One of the French chapters, *oikos* Reims, hosted a regional meeting dealing with sustainability, biological standardization, and champagne production. Chapters in Belgium and Poland often undertake topics on sustainable finance (e.g. the Sustainable Finance Conference in Brussels in 2017). In Azerbaijan, climate change and energy issues are considered crucial for *oikos* Baku. *oikos* events in India are often clustered around the topic of entrepreneurship. Themes fluctuate with time and current innovative trends, as the chapters bridge the local with the international.

The *oikos* Winter School is an intense training platform that enables a select group of international students to embrace social entrepreneurship and sustainability at higher education level by developing projects and business ideas. In a weeklong series of workshops, lectures, networking activities, and intense discussions, participants are provided with skills that empower them to think in global and holistic contexts. They learn to identify practical ways in which to realise projects to make a positive social impact in their local or regional environments. Students from all over the world also travel to attend the Spring Meeting, which is hosted by a

different chapter each year on different sustainability related topics. Each local chapter is independently responsible for the logistics, content and financing of events.

The *oikos* FutureLab is the annual flagship event to gather the global *oikos* family of student members, alumni, advisors, faculty and partners. It is not only a meeting to share perspectives on the future, but also a “laboratory” to design initiatives and engage the *oikos* community in pursuing them. *oikos* invites inspiring speakers and workshop leaders to engage students during the two-day event. Keynote speakers, panel discussions, and participant driven workshops offer a platform for chapters to learn from each other and be inspired by the multiple *oikos* projects.

The knowledge and insights students gain from organising local projects and interacting with stakeholders in their communities enrich the international *oikos* programs and events. Herrndorf *et al* write about what has helped *oikos* adapt to new challenges. They detail the organization’s “multilayer approach [that] allows *oikos* to stay connected and be aware of the diversity of the challenges on a micro level, feeding back to the organization’s macro level strategy, and providing better support to student entrepreneurs from a skills as well as from an institutional and research perspective” (2011, 401). Local and international events are fundamental to nurturing the culture within *oikos*, and to allow new chapter members to personally experience the energy and spirit of the organization.

Pillar III: Building institutional support for curriculum reform

Curriculum reform is at the heart of the *oikos*’ mission and its theory of change. As a student organization, *oikos* understands that it does not have the ability to personally teach every student in the fields of economics and management about sustainability, nor can it train them all to be effective and responsible leaders. However, by working with other organizations to change the core of what is taught in economics and management degrees, *oikos* believes that it can have a serious impact on the world. To amplify student voices and deal with the problems caused by a rapid university-lifecycle, the student movement to reform economics and management education has organized itself into various networks and associations: *oikos*, Rethinking Economics, the Netzwerk Plurale Oekonomik, PEPS Economie, and the International Student Initiative for Pluralism in Economics, to name a few. These networks have learned to share

resources, pass on knowledge, and build institutions that can place each new cohort of students ahead of where their predecessors started.

Via these organizations, students have created a large number of resources to build evidence for reform and to create content-specific materials that can be used to press for change. In particular, student groups have published a number of curriculum reviews and surveys that show detailed data on the types of courses being taught, the content of those courses, and students' opinions regarding their education. Some of these studies are focused on a particular university (Svenlén *et al* 2018, The Cambridge Society for Economic Pluralism 2014, The Post-Crash Economics Society 2014, Ciccotosto 2018), while other reviews cover an entire country, as is the case with the reports done for France, the United Kingdom, Germany and the Netherlands (PEPS-Economie 2014, 2015, Earl *et al* 2016, Yurko 2018, Beckenbach *et al* 2016, Tieleman *et al* 2018). One report attempted to be truly international, with over 400 universities surveyed across 13 countries (Jatteau and Egerer 2017). These studies not only provide useful data for future students to corroborate arguments for reform, but also create blueprints for those looking to create their own review or survey. The student movement has spawned distinct learning material such as educational websites, pamphlets, workshops, and books. Three notable examples are: *Rethinking Economics: An Introduction to Pluralist Economics* (Fischer *et al* 2017), a book edited by students that gives short introductions to different schools of thought; *The Econocracy*, a book authored by three students outlining the crisis in economics education (Earle, J. Moran, C. Ward-Perkins, Z. 2016); and *Exploring Economics*, a website that serves as a hub for learning about different perspectives in economics.

Over the past decade, *oikos* has been particularly active in creating content-specific resources that are useful in pushing for curriculum change. Perhaps the most visible contribution has been through the *oikos* Case Writing Competition, an annual call which collects the best case studies on topics related to sustainability. Run since 2003, the case competition has sponsored and curated dozens of cases and corresponding teaching notes, on topics such as social entrepreneurship, sustainable management, and sustainable finance. These cases are listed on the *oikos* website, and have been edited into four published volumes (Hamschmidt 2007, Hamschmidt and Pirson 2011, Gabriel 2014, Pirson 2015). The cases are used both by local *oikos* chapters and by the broader management education community in universities worldwide.

oikos also has a tradition of keeping academics on staff through its PhD and (more recently) associate positions. These appointments connect PhD students and recent Master's graduates with the *oikos* community to exchange expertise on a given topic such as sustainable finance or pluralist economics. The *oikos* PhD fellows have traditionally organized “academies” to gather other PhD students for in-depth presentations and discussions that link sustainability with topics as broad ranging as development, energy, entrepreneurship, and finance. The associate program, started in 2016, has seen associates publish materials on the digital economy and pluralist economics (Rappitsch 2017, Proctor 2018), and then share their work with *oikos* students and the larger student movement. The report on pluralist economics was accompanied by a workshop that has been presented over 20 times with more than 600 student participants. The goal is to standardize similar workshops so *oikos* members can run them at their universities and reach ever greater number of students.

Finally, *oikos* also supports local initiatives, such as a recent book published (in German) by *oikos* Leipzig on the crisis of the capitalist “growth society” (Becker and Reinicke 2018). *oikos* also encourages student research by maintaining the *oikos*-PRME Research Hub in partnership with the Principles for Responsible Management Education (PRME). The Research Hub allows students and researchers to publish and promote work related to sustainability, giving an easy route for students to create and share their own content-specific materials related to sustainability.

Conclusion

This study has demonstrated how the *oikos* network contributes to student initiatives that influence sustainability in higher education by taking student engagement seriously and understanding that change agents need a lot of support. *oikos* consistently finds ways to engage students while helping them to have an empowered voice as well as encouraging them to be proactive about change.

At the beginning of this article, we asked the question “*How can a student organization help transform economics and management education?*”. To help answer this question, we provided the context and literature review in the first section to address the pressing need to transform economics and management education. We also outlined the importance of renovating higher education in these fields, and posited the belief that in light of institutional hindrances faced by

faculty, student change agents appear to be key in bringing about desired change to business school curricula. In the second section, we highlighted the three pillars of the *oikos* mission: transform economics and management education by empowering student change agents, raise awareness for sustainability opportunities and challenges, and build institutional support for curriculum reform. Here, we expanded upon the role that *oikos* plays in empowering student change agents through its Leadership Programme (LEAP) by helping students align their values and purpose to unleash their leadership potential. The second pillar of the *oikos* mission to raise awareness by bringing together various stakeholders and creating a platform for sharing and enhancing knowledge regarding sustainability was explained through a number of local *oikos* chapter projects in different countries. Lastly, concrete examples of how *oikos* contributes to new curricula and university institutional change was given. Namely, the engagement of young scholars and faculty and the Case Writing Competition to foster research in sustainability-related topics were described in detail. In essence, *oikos* helps to educate future decision-makers through self-empowerment and the organisation's enduring, committed engagement to implement more sustainability in business school curricula.

One important inference from this study is that student initiative projects tend to be more successful when they call for an integrated understanding of economics and management education, and student change agents receive a lot of support. Further research should explore how an international student organization can better tap into local chapters to achieve larger scales of impact to make progress towards bigger goals akin to changing educational paradigms. Further research on the actual impact of student organizations in changing university teaching and content would also be beneficial. To conclude, this study shows that student organisations such as *oikos* can foment activities that can contribute to the transformation of the education of business schools and promotion of sustainability within higher education teaching and research where it is most needed, in the fields of economics and management.

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Appendix 1. The global *oikos* Network



Appendix 2. *oikos* LEAP Activities

LEAP activities	Description	Basic	Presidents	Advanced
Open webinars	Webinars on skill-oriented and directly implementable topics	X	X	X
Exclusive webinars	Webinars on sustainable leadership featuring leading experts in the field			X
On-site meetings	Meetings in Fall and Spring, that engage participants in intensive		X	X

	workshop and discussion sessions			
Written reflections	A series of exercises that encourages participants to reflect on their values and purpose, and change behaviour accordingly			X
Peer-to-peer calls	Online meetings where 3 to 5 participants share their challenges and achievements			X
One-to-one coaching sessions	Online calls with a personal coach where participants are encouraged to open up about their concerns			X
Discussion area on Podio	Online space where participants engage in discussions		X	X
Resources	Online tools and readings that facilitate participants growth	X	X	X