What’s Really Worth Sustaining: Issue Introduction

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Thirty-five years after the Brundtland Commission Report introduced the concept, sustainability has become the leading global discourse of environmental and social concern.¹

Businesses and industries all have sustainability plans by now, as do colleges and universities, elementary and high schools, towns and cities, national governments—and yet the future seems more compromised, and less bright, for more people every day.

Why is this so?

One reason is that sustainability remains such an empty concept that it’s easily coopted and bent by corporate interests towards further environmental and social decline, often in the guise of “development.”² If anything can be sustained, why not profits? Another is the lack of serious attention among policymakers and the general public to critical and Indigenous perspectives on education, community, and place.³

This issue of the *Journal of School & Society* seeks to intervene in this discursive muddle with specific stories about what’s worth sustaining and why and the role that education might play in all of this.

We invited stories from place-based educators, community-based educators, culture-bearers, carriers of tradition, progressives, policymakers, administrators, teachers, students, and learners of all kinds—anyone and everyone who is concerned with the sustainability of something, someplace, or someone.

The essays featured here are by authors who responded to our call, and generously so. Each essay offers a clear sense for what’s really worth sustaining. Taken together, they offer a vision for a new kind of society—a more just, humane, and sustainable society—the kind of society that emerges when legacy systems of oppression are gone and care for one another and the land become the guiding principles of education and schooling.

We hope that readers of this special issue will be inspired to think more clearly, more deeply, and more carefully about what their own work is sustaining and how that sits with their soul’s longing for a much better world.

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