GLOBAL RISE IN ENVIRONMENTAL CONCERN

World population waking up to the ecological crisis
Glocalities global trend analysis report
Amsterdam, 29 august 2019

Martijn Lampert
Sander Metaal
Sheng Liu
Laura Gambarin

www.glocalities.com
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## About Glocalities

Glocalities provides global insights based on values, lifestyles and psychology. Social research is all about curiosity and the desire to understand the world, society and the motivational drivers behind the behavior of people. Technologies that grow exponentially and new media mean a continuously faster distribution of knowledge, experiences and ideas across the globe. The challenges for international organizations are increasing and it is crucial to have the best understanding possible of current and future developments. A necessary condition for success in a time of rapid international change is a refined understanding of trends, cultures and population segments.

In the international Glocalities surveys, we incorporate several research instruments that provide a deeper understanding of people, such as values segments, trends and values cards.

These instruments make it possible to obtain a holistic view of groups of people and gain knowledge of their drivers and behaviors.
GLOBAL RISE IN ENVIRONMENTAL CONCERN

Four waves of Glocalities surveys among 189,996 respondents from 20 countries between 2014 and 2019 reveal that the great majority of people worldwide is united by a rise of environmental concern. In 2014, 71% of people globally were worried about the damage that humans cause to the planet. This figure has risen steadily to 77% in 2019.

Rising environmental concern is a topic that unites people from all walks of life. The trend is visible in both advanced and upcoming economies, in all world regions and across the board in all age groups, educational levels, genders and sociocultural values segments.

The Glocalities trend survey shows that the rising environmental concern is accompanied by a rise in eco-consciousness, vitality, taking precautions when risks arise and an increased interest in politics.

The results point to a timely opportunity for a grand coalition for protecting the planet, uniting people from all around the world and from different backgrounds.

The trend survey reveals that protecting our common home is not part of a cultural war between progressives and conservatives, but a fight against a shared adversary: greed, ignorance and reckless exploitation, the deeper causes of the ecological crisis.

Martijn Lampert, Research Director of Glocalities:
“Our international studies show that citizens worldwide are increasingly worried about the fundamental damage that humans cause to the planet, as a result of reckless exploitation and pollution.”

“Scientists have been warning us for a long time, but now the world population at large is waking up to the urgency of the ecological crisis.”
The world we live in is constantly developing and redefining its outlook. Humanity has accomplished great things during the past centuries and decades. Think about the technological and infrastructural developments, the communication innovations, or the progress in education, medicine, mobility and science, that brought humanity well beyond previously set limits. However, the consequences of changing human behaviour and industrialization are oftentimes overlooked.

Understanding individuals’ deeper motivations and trends has always been and represents Glocalities’ expertise. We are an independent company. Based on more than 2 decades of experience in values based research we conduct surveys at our own initiative. With insights from our Glocalities studies we help clients in the commercial, NGO and public sector understand audiences at a deeper level.

In March 2019, the global fieldwork of the fourth wave of the cross-cultural Glocalities survey was completed and it provided the most recent insights into people from 27 countries around the world. The first wave of the Glocalities survey was completed in 2014 in 20 countries. Since then, Glocalities has expanded the number of countries. Between 2014 and 2019 Glocalities has interviewed a total of 228,758 respondents from 32 different countries in the world, which represent 63% of the global population and 83% of the global economy. In 2014 we started by conducting the survey every second year (2014, 2016 and 2018).

Since 2018 we increased the frequency of the survey to every year (2019 and onwards), because the growth of the program. In this report we share our first international trend analysis. By comparing values indicators among 189,996 people in the 20 countries that have been included in all four waves (in 2014, 2016, 2018 and 2019), we have the unique means and data to track and reveal the recent changes that shape our international society. Among these changes, environmental concern about the damage humans cause to the planet and a rise in eco-consciousness stand out. Because the findings are relevant to a larger international audience, we decided to share the results in this report that is freely available at our website. We wrote this report at our own initiative.

The 20 common countries in the four waves since 2014 that are used for the trend analysis are Australia, Belgium, Brazil, Canada, China, France, Germany, India, Italy, Japan, Mexico, Netherlands, Poland, Russia, Spain, South Africa, South Korea, Turkey, United Kingdom and United States.

Furthermore, since 2016, Glocalities surveys have been conducted in Austria, Colombia, Croatia, Czech Republic, Finland, Hungary, Indonesia, Philippines, Portugal, Romania, Sweden and Vietnam. Because for most of these countries we only have one data point in time available, these countries were not included in the trend analyses.
The Glocalities survey includes numerous values indicators, which are defined as socio-cultural phenomena that influence people’s behavior. For example, indicators such as risk seeking, identifying oneself as a citizen of the world, patriarchy or gender role flexibility deeply characterize people around the world. By comparing scores across the last four waves of its global survey, Glocalities is in the unique position to identify socio-cultural trends that have been shaping society in recent years.

Ecological concern represents the most significant and noteworthy global societal change of the last years: in 2019, 77% of global respondents agreed to the statement “I worry about the damage humans cause to the planet”, compared to 71% in 2014. Ecological concern has gained 6 percentage points since 2014. Respondents gave their answer to this statement based on a five-point Likert scale (“strongly disagree”, “disagree”, “neither agree nor disagree”, “agree”, “strongly agree”). Below you find a figure with the average scores of the respondents in this scale in each of the four waves, which clearly reveal a linear trend. (See page 13 for the scores for each of the answering options in the four waves.)

Figure 1: Ecological concern worldwide. Mean global score on the 5-point Likert scale.
A deeper analysis shows that environmental concern is a topic that unites people from all walks of life. The rise in the trend is visible across the board in all age groups, educational levels, genders and sociocultural values segments, in both advanced economies and in upcoming economies and in world regions (see appendix). The steepest rise of environmental concern since 2014 (+0.28 in their average score) is visible among youth from 18-24 years old, however people from 55-70 years are still the highest scoring age group in 2019.
In the last years, numerous academic publications were released about the damage humans cause to the planet and the environment. The examples of environmental degradation are numerous. Think about the wildlife extinction, plastic waste in the oceans, soil degradation, melting glaciers, dying reefs, leaking oil platforms, polluted rivers and increasing CO₂ emissions. Thanks to personal and local experiences, education, news coverage in mass media and social media, people are becoming increasingly aware of the ecological crisis, which is expressed in a global rise in environmental concern and eco-consciousness.

“Nature is declining globally at rates unprecedented in human history – and the rate of species extinctions is accelerating, with grave impacts on people around the world. [...] Around 1 million animal and plant species are now threatened with extinction, many within decades, more than ever before in human history. [...] 75% of terrestrial environment is “severely altered” to date by human actions.”

“Human activities are estimated to have caused approximately 1.0°C of global warming above pre-industrial levels, with a likely range of 0.8°C to 1.2°C. Global warming is likely to reach 1.5°C between 2030 and 2052 if it continues to increase at the current rate.”

“Climate change will have devastating consequences for people in poverty. Even under the best-case scenario, hundreds of millions will face food insecurity, forced migration, disease, and death. Climate change threatens the future of human rights and risks undoing the last fifty years of progress in development, global health, and poverty reduction. [...] Governments, and too many in the human rights community, have failed to seriously address climate change for decades. [...] States are giving only marginal attention to human rights in the conversation on climate change.”
- Climate change and poverty- Report of the UN Special Rapporteur on extreme poverty and human rights, 2019

So what can we learn from the Glocalities survey data with respect to environmental concern? In the following pages we will look into the global trends more deeply.
How can we interpret the rise in environmental concern and what are the consequences? Besides a global increase in environmental concern, the Glocalities surveys reveal that individuals worldwide have come to realize the urgent need of personal action. We identified a number of related trends that indicate how environmental concern goes beyond a feeling of worriedness towards the human impact on the environment and encompasses other societal changes and aspects of individuals’ life as well. What is expressed as a feeling of concern towards the planet, has also become a clear intention to act upon and implement practical lifestyle changes: The statement “I try to live eco-consciously” has gained 8 percentage points between 2014 (60%) and 2019 (68%) at the global level.

This implies that the rise in individuals’ awareness towards the damage caused to the planet leads to an increase in the intention of people to act in everyday lifestyle choices and further social changes.

This is why we used the Glocalities data to understand the preferences and behaviour of people who try to live eco-consciously more deeply. Compared to other people, they are more likely to prefer organic food and eat vegetarian. They more often like nature and gardening as well as watching documentary films. They value health and are more likely to worry about decency and values as well. Eco-conscious people are more likely to have trust in science, but also in common people.

A higher level of information about damage to the environment led to increasing environmental concerns that, in combination with an increasing availability of sustainable alternatives, fuels practical changes in everyday lifestyles and the choices people make.

Consumers are becoming more aware about (the impact of) their purchasing behavior. Business ethics is also gaining importance as many companies embrace environmentally friendly policies and more and more individuals establish new initiatives, companies and organizations based on sustainable alternatives.
The rise in eco-consciousness and environmental concern does not stand in isolation. Concerns about the vitality of the planet at a macro level go hand in hand with increasing risk awareness and aversion at the micro level. Increasingly, people are focusing on health and vitality in their own life: the trend “I make an effort to stay in shape and keep my energy levels high” has gained 5 percentage points between 2014 (54%) and 2019 (59%).

The vitality trend is deeply related to a broader desire to live in a healthy environment. Being healthy requires a healthy environment to live in. People who score high on this trend are more likely to worry about climate change. They tend to prefer organic food and are more likely to be vegetarian. They like physical exercise and also outdoor activities where they can be in contact with nature. These people tend to be proud of their nation and to value responsible consumption and production. Iconic “vitality brands” that fit with the desire to stay in shape resonate with the same trends that their consumers embrace: Adidas, for example, is committed to use only recycled plastic for their shoes and clothes by 2024.

The eco-consciousness trend points to significant changes in the way people live their everyday life, based on an environmental concern and a desire to live a healthy and responsible life. Ecological concern, eco-consciousness and vitality do not only represent the most noteworthy trends of the past years, but represent a deeply rooted phenomenon that will profoundly influence values, behaviors and lifestyles of the global population in the decades to come, with major implications for key stakeholders such as governments, companies and NGOs.

**Vitality:**
“I make an effort to stay in shape and keep my energy levels high”

**Figure 9: Vitality.**
Mean global score on the 5-point Likert scale.
Based on the Glocalities surveys, we have also identified another trend related to environmental concern and eco-consciousness, that stands out. An ethic of moderation and precaution against taking risks is on the rise: people agree more and more to the statement "In order to prevent running any risks, I always take precautionary measures". Taking precautions has gained 8 percentage points between 2014 (55%) and 2019 (63%). The trend points once again to a practical change in attitudes towards the ecological crisis: the Glocalities data shows that people who say they are used to taking precautionary measures also tend to be more responsible when it comes to the environment.

When looking into the profiles of people who score high on this trend, several related traits come to the surface. Eco-consciousness and vitality are some of the higher-scoring trends among people who take precautions as well. These people are well aware of their living environment and the importance of living in a safe ecosystem. Nature and moderation are relatively important to them. They like to live an orderly and frugal life, are more likely to value safety and are more often worried about crime as well.

Messages that resonate well with people who like to take precautions are typically warnings about the damage that will occur if we do not act upon current ecological threats. Increasing media attention for damage to the planet, environment and people in terms of health, species extinctions and disastrous consequences of climate change proves to be an effective communications strategy for the majority of the global population (63%) who are naturally inclined to take precautionary measures when threats arise. These people are likely to support preventive and restorative measures that are needed for countering environmental threats in time.
One more trend has increased in the last few years and it is worthy of note, as it presents a different angle of interpretation in the context of rising environmental concerns. In the last few years, the interest in politics among individuals worldwide has increased: in 2014, 36% of the global population agreed to the statement "I am interested in politics", compared to 41% in 2019. This may come as no surprise in times of increasing polarization, rising populism and global tensions. However, people are much more divided on the topic “interest in politics” compared to the trends “environmental concern”, “eco-consciousness”, “vitality” and “taking precautions”, described earlier in this report. This can be seen in the bar charts in the appendix on page 15. In the trend graphs in the appendix the standard deviations of each of the trend indicators are included, which is a measure of division or unity based on the level of (dis)agreement. The standard deviation of the trend “interest in politics” is much higher than the standard deviations of the other trends.

A deeper look into the data reveals that people who are interested in politics are very diverse in their profiles (also because there is a large variety of topics of ideologies and interests within the realm of politics). People who are interested in politics are, on average, more worried about politics and government, immigration and integration, but climate change also comes up as a topic that these people are more likely than others to worry about.

There is a large variety of ideologies that people who are interested in politics can relate to. At the political stage, environmental concerns are competing against issues such as crime, income and economy, employment, immigration, corruption, terrorism and social welfare.
The world is lagging behind in countering the ecological crisis and global warming. Recently, UN special rapporteur on human rights, Philips Alston, stated that despite that a few steps for fighting climate change were taken by countries, NGOs and businesses, these are “disproportionate to the urgency and magnitude of the threat”. He said that “Even today, too many countries are taking short-sighted steps in the wrong direction”. At the same time, the world population shows an increase in environmental concern and eco-consciousness, which is a significant opportunity for responsible leaders to act upon. Leaders may have been hesitant to take action, but the world population is waking up to the ecological crisis. Before looking deeper into the implications of the global rise in environmental concern, we have to look deeper at the current power dynamics and politics with respect to protecting the planet, because continuing at the current path will unlikely breed new success. Policies, communications and strategies need to be changed fundamentally in order to counter environmental threats. The Glocalities survey results reveal a unique opportunity for doing precisely this.

The rise in environmental concern is visible all across the board and in a multitude of population segments and world regions. The rise goes well beyond the “light” and “dark” green population segments that already have green(-ish) parties representing them. The Glocalities trend data reveals, for example, that among Republican voters in the USA there is a significant rise in environmental concern. Also in countries that elected populist climate change sceptics in office, such as the USA and Brazil, environmental concern has been on the rise since our first survey in 2014.

The rise in environmental concern is present both in advanced economies (+7% from 2014 to 2019) and in upcoming economies (+6% from 2014 to 2019). These findings reveal that environmental concern (and the environmental crisis) cannot (or no longer) be reduced to only a leftish or progressive topic, but is also increasingly important for people with a more conservative or moderate outlook on life. This is a new insight with strategic consequences. Since the international green movement until now has been dominated by progressive forces and progressive narratives, it is rather easy for some non progressive and authoritarian leaders to effectively oppose measures to protect the earth from further damage. This is the current strategic weakness of the green movement in creating a breakthrough in protecting the planet.

Looking deeper into the Glocalities data, we see that environmental concern in the world population is not part of a cultural war (although politicians who deny environmental threats sometimes frame it that way), but about protecting the earth and future generations from further ecological degradation and harm. Protection of children and providing them with a healthy environment is a major topic for all. When looking at people who are more progressive and at people who are more traditional in their values based on the Glocalities data and segmentation model, we discover a common concern and a shared adversary: a harmful focus on greed, exploitation and short-term profit at the expense of the future of life on earth. Destroying the planet and living environment is neither part of a progressive nor of a conservative ideology. On the next page, we will further describe the implications of this finding.
Ecological concern is a potential bridge builder in times of polarization. Based on the Glocalities data and measures of standard deviation (to what extent there is consensus or polarization on a topic), it is clear that on the topic of environmental concern, people are much less divided than on topics such as globalism, pessimism and support for patriarchy. The latter topics are currently polarizing societies and are more culturally and psychologically determined in nature. The environmental concerns cross those boundaries and unite people with totally different values and outlooks on life. The rise in environmental concern encompasses not only different age segments, educational background or gender differences, but also deeper values, lifestyles and political views. Ecological concerns are a unifying topic for humanity as a whole. People increasingly realize that the ecological crisis poses a major threat for our common home and future. This insight has fundamental consequences for working towards solutions for the ecological crisis. Politics sure plays an important role, but due to the mass of this megatrend and experiences until today, politics is very unlikely to be the sole decisive factor. The data reveals that for preventing further damage to planet earth and working towards restoration connecting people and bottom-up movements is vital. The survey results point to a unique opportunity for overcoming division and building a grand coalition for protecting our common home.

This potential grand coalition goes well beyond politics and politicians. And the opportunities are much broader than mobilizing youth alone. A front of common people, youth, parents, grandparents, people from all religions, business and community leaders, inventors, scientists, teachers, caretakers, builders, and workers at local and international non profit organizations has the potential to unite people from all walks of life who share the same rising concerns about harm to the planet. The world needs to tap into the talents, passions and ambitions of people from all backgrounds to overcome the environmental crisis. However, in order to succeed in building this coalition, movement shapers must sincerely watch out for being dominated by progressives only. The movement should proactively represent and embrace people with more conservative, moderate and indigenous worldviews. If it does not succeed in doing this, it will provide authoritarian leaders who sometimes deny and oppose the need for environmental protection and frame it as a leftist issue with continued opportunities to sow division and push majorities away on this vital topic. Only a minority of the world population lives in progressive Western countries. Taking care of our common home takes an inclusive approach towards people from different cultures and world regions. The real challenge for succeeding in building a grand coalition is to let environmental concern show its united and human face for everyone across cultures and ideologies. Protecting the planet is not a cultural war. The common adversary for conservatives, moderates and progressives from all over the world is the combination of greed, ignorance and reckless exploitation, the deeper causes of the ecological crisis of our times.

Martijn Lampert, Research Director of Glocalities:

“It is a strong signal that, in these times of increasing international polarization, environmental concern for our common home is a topic that unites people from all walks of life. The global trend research shows that there is potential and momentum for a grand coalition for safeguarding the vitality of our planet and future generations.”

GLOBAL RISE IN ENVIRONMENTAL CONCERN

OPPORTUNITY: A GRAND COALITION FOR PROTECTING THE PLANET
The first wave of the Glocalities survey was completed in 2014 in 20 countries, and since then, Glocalities has expanded the number of countries. Between 2014 and 2019 Glocalities has interviewed a total of 228,758 respondents from 32 different countries in the world, that represent 63% of the global population and 83% of the global economy. By comparing values indicators among 189,996 people in the 20 countries that have been included in all 4 waves (in 2014, 2016, 2018 and 2019), Glocalities has the unique means and data to track and reveal the recent changes that shape our global society.

The studies were conducted through the online research panels of Dynata and Lightspeed GMI, two agencies that are specialized in international fieldwork. On average, the 20 countries that were included in this trend analysis have an internet penetration of approximately 76%. In 3 out of 20 countries the internet penetration is lower than 55%: South Africa, China, India. Due to the online methodology, lower educated people from these upcoming economies (who are less likely to have access to the internet and to be member of an online research panel) are largely absent in the study.

Quotas were set beforehand and the datasets were weighted according to national census data. Each country has an equal weight in the total dataset when conducting international analyses. The survey samples of 19 out of the 20 countries were weighted to be representative for the populations of 18 to 70 years old with respect to age, gender, region and education. The only exception is India, where we weighted the sample according to the educational distribution of the online population and to the offline population with respect to age, gender and region, due to the very low internet penetration in India. In wave 1 and 2 the age range of the survey was 18 to 65 years old.

The questionnaire for the 20 countries included in the trend study was conducted in 13 languages and was translated from the English source questionnaire by professional translators. The translated texts were then back-translated by other professional translators. Subsequently, researchers from Glocalities compared these back-translations with the English source questionnaire and improved the translations where necessary.

For the trend analyses, we analyzed the mean scores through time on a 5-point Likert scale for the 79 statements that were included in all 4 waves across the 20 countries. The indicators consist of 5-point Likert scales (“strongly disagree”, “disagree”, “neither agree nor disagree”, “agree”, “strongly agree”). The international trends described in this report were selected based on a solid and consistent linear pattern in the average trend score globally and in advanced and upcoming economies. The 5-point scales (see the next slide for the scores) were also recoded into a 3-point scale (“strongly disagree”, “neutral”, “strongly agree”), in order to be able to further explain the trends based on percentage changes (% agree) through time. In this report, we have focused on 5 longitudinal trends indicators that are closely related to sustainability, which turned out to be the main overall trend based on the analyses. Because the age range of the Glocalities surveys was expanded by 5 years (from 18-65 to 18-70 years) after the first 2 waves (2014 and 2016), we also double-checked the trends for people aged 18-65 years old in the last 2 waves (2018 and 2019) and the findings on the trends proved to be consistent.

The margin of error for the global trend analyses in each of the four waves is plus or minus 0.45% at 95% and plus or minus 0.60% at 99%.

### Glocalities surveys wave 1 – 4

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Waves</th>
<th>Wave 1</th>
<th>Wave 2</th>
<th>Wave 3</th>
<th>Wave 4</th>
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<tr>
<td>Fieldwork completed</td>
<td>2014</td>
<td>2016</td>
<td>2018</td>
<td>2019</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sample size</td>
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<td>n = 49,557</td>
<td>n = 46,656</td>
<td>n = 46,853</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>20 common countries in the 4 waves</td>
<td>Australia, Belgium, Brazil, Canada, China, France, Germany, India, Italy, Japan, Mexico, Netherlands, Poland, Russia, Spain, South Africa, South Korea, Turkey, United Kingdom and United States.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

(1) In Brazil, China, Mexico, South Africa, South Korea and Turkey the educational quota with respect to the low and middle educated were combined, due to the very low online presence of less educated people in general and in online research panels.
Appendix - Trend Scores Worldwide

Environmental Concern
“I worry about the damage humans cause to the planet”

Mean global score on the 5-point Likert scale. Standard deviation 2019: 0.91

Eco-consciousness
“I try to live eco-consciously”

Mean global score on the 5-point Likert scale. Standard deviation 2019: 0.89

Vitality
“I make an effort to stay in shape and keep my energy levels high”

Mean global score on the 5-point Likert scale. Standard deviation 2019: 0.96

Taking Precautions
“In order to prevent running any risks, I always take precautionary measures”

Mean global score on the 5-point Likert scale. Standard deviation 2019: 0.84

Interest in Politics
“I am interested in politics”

Mean global score on the 5-point Likert scale. Standard deviation 2019: 1.19
APPENDIX - ENVIRONMENTAL CONCERN IN WORLD REGIONS

Environmental Concern: “I worry about the damage humans cause to the planet”

Mean score on the 5-point Likert scale.

* Attribution of the 20 countries from the survey to the world regions; Africa: South Africa; Asia: China, India, Japan, South Korea, Turkey; Europe: France, Germany, Italy, Poland, Russia, Spain, UK, Netherlands, Belgium; North America: Canada, Mexico, USA; Oceania: Australia; South America: Brazil.
APPENDIX: THE GLOCALITIES TOOLS

Below is a small selection of the more than 2,500 variables available in the Glocalities database:

**Values segmentation**
The Glocalities segments are clusters of people who share basic values and have a common outlook on life. We have leveraged more than 20 years of values research experience to establish the Glocalities values segmentation. Check our [website](http://www.glocalities.com) for more information about the Glocalities segmentation model.

**Socio-cultural trends**
The Glocalities trends are sociocultural phenomena in society that influence people’s behavior and choices fundamentally. Think, for example, about how the sharing trend, the urge for vitality and gender role flexibility are changing societies around the globe. The longitudinal trend analyses in this report are based on the sociocultural trend indicators.

**Values cards**
The Glocalities values cards are visual representations of fundamental human values. Based on values inventories from the work of social psychologist Milton Rokeach and cross-cultural researcher Shalom Schwartz, we have developed 48 values cards that are universal and relevant for social and market research applications.

**Sustainability and consumer behavior**
Sustainability topics and priorities are closely related to the values and lifestyles of people. This is why we incorporated the UN Sustainable Development Goals, numerous charities and charitable issues into the Glocalities surveys.

Brand choices tell a lot about people. Some brands are extremely innovative, certain brands are exclusive and upmarket, and many other brands are more mainstream and accessible. The Glocalities database contains more than 1,000 global and local brands. Consumer behavior is shaped by different considerations that play a role when buying and consuming products. How is, for example, the decision-making process of people influenced by considerations such as price, scarcity, style and social responsibility?

All the variables from the Glocalities database can be related to the longitudinal trends that are described in this report. For more information, see [www.Glocalities.com](http://www.glocalities.com).
Martijn Lampert leads Glocalities, an Amsterdam-based international agency researching values, lifestyle and psychology all over the world. The research program started in 2014 in 20 countries and now covers 32 countries, based on interviews with more than 228,758 people. Multinationals, non-profit organizations and the public sector use Glocalities insights to connect with audiences, based on a deep understanding of trends, people and cultures. Martijn is a TEDx speaker and frequently presents and publishes about international audiences, trends and the Sustainable Development Goals.

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Martijn Lampert
Research Director of Glocalities
m.lampert@glocalities.com