



## Preface

The United Nations adopted a resolution on September 25, 2015 entitled *Transforming our world: the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development*. The culmination of efforts spanning more than forty years for an integrated approach to development and environment, this historical decision has placed sustainable development at the center of the international development agenda, long dominated by economic concerns. The agenda emphasizes the importance of interlinkages between economic, social and environmental aspects of sustainable development and proposes solving problems by providing concrete behavioral targets. At the core of the agenda lie the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), a list of 17 goals and 169 targets to be achieved by 2030. It presents challenges to humankind over the next fifteen years, as well as some ideas for behavioral solutions to these challenges.

This special issue focuses on the 2030 Agenda and the SDGs. The SDGs are viewed in this issue as an important device for transforming the world towards sustainability. Sustainable development, defined as “development that meets the needs of the present while safeguarding Earth’s life-support system, on which the welfare of current and future generations depends” (Griggs *et al.*, 2013)\*, may not be realized by 2030. It is likely to take a longer-term effort to achieve it. Transformation, however, has to take place within the next fifteen years to enable humanity to keep safe operating space of the Earth’s life-support system.

The articles included in this special issue look at different dimensions of sustainability from different perspectives with different time scales. Some consider fundamental transformation towards sustainability, looking beyond 2030. For example, Murakami *et al.* look into a potential trade-off in the long run between the goals of improving energy access and of efficient use of natural resources, focusing especially on copper supplies. They suggest that managing such minerals in a sustainable manner will be required when constructing energy-related infrastructure. Hashimoto *et al.* examine potential approaches to reducing hunger and obesity simultaneously through fair distribution of energy intake in developing countries by 2050, noting the issue of obesity and overweight has become a challenge in both developed and developing countries.

Other papers focus on shorter-term behavioral change. Yamazaki *et al.* highlight quality education as a critical means of implementation for effectively delivering the SDG, arguing that fostering multiple ‘literacies’ by every human being to deal with complex challenges is key to sustainability. Yang and Managi analyse the degree to which resource use is decoupled from economic growth, emphasizing that factors such as institutions can play a more important role than income level in improving efficiency in developing countries. Reducing vulnerabilities caused by climate change is a critical challenge facing developing countries, and Mori’s paper identifies how different multilateral implementing entities could reduce vulnerability with greater impact through effective implementation of adaptation projects.

In the coming years both developing and developed countries face challenges to implementing the SDGs at the national level. In this special issue we highlight the cases of Japan, Bangladesh and Indonesia for deeper investigation. In the case of Japan, two of the papers indicate people’s preferences in priority areas to be dealt with under national implementation as well as governments’ attempts to use indicators for measuring sustainability and people’s notions thereof. In the cases of Bangladesh and Indonesia, lessons are provided on how environmental governance needs to be addressed for the countries’ preparedness and transition to the SDGs. Countries also need to integrate the three dimensions of sustainable development fully when implementing actions related to the SDGs in order to achieve the transformation toward sustainability, as Kanie *et al.* highlight.

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\*Griggs, D., M. Stafford-Smith, O. Gaffney *et al.* (2013) Sustainable development goals for people and planet, *Nature*, 495: 305–307.