

Editorial

N. Agya Utama^a, Benjamin C. McLellan^b

^{a,b} Chief Editors of *International Journal of Sustainable Future for Human Security*

^a Swiss German University - Baryon co.ltd

^b Kyoto University, Yoshida-honmachi, Kyoto, Japan

1. Introduction

Welcome to the second issue of the third volume of J-Sustain. This issue rounds-off a significant year in the history of sustainable development at the global political scale. Inside this issue are papers covering: the processes of decision-making at community level, identifying the empowerment of autonomous-decision-making for environmental management projects; the socio-economic impacts of relocation of communities associated with large infrastructure developments; a perspective piece on the correlations of tenets of Islamic faith and philosophy with sustainable development prerogatives; and community-based management of mangrove forests in connection with sustainable tourism. The papers, contextually-based in or with authors from Indonesia, Brazil, Malaysia and the Philippines respectively, are heavily based in the rapidly developing parts of the world where sustainability is a major global consideration that may at times collide with local community-development prerogatives – places in which globally important environmental locations such as tropical an Amazonian rainforests that provide significant proportions of the world's carbon sinks come into contact with industrialization and agricultural expansion. The importance of such areas and the juxtaposition and conjunction of social development and environmental conservation cannot be understated.

The significance of the agreements made this year with regards to the global sustainable development agenda require a proportional response in the editorial of our journal, which is hinged on the need to advance understanding (practical and theoretical) of such issues.

2. Sustainable Development Goals

The United Nations (UN) meeting from 25-27 September (2015), coming together in the year of the 70th anniversary of the UN, agreed upon 17 Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) to follow-on from the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) and take the global human development agenda through till 2030.^{*} The process of developing the SDGs involved widespread consultation and analysis of the successes and failures of the previous MDGs. The message of the SDGs was framed around the elements of: people, planet, prosperity, peace and partnership, and acknowledged the interlinkages and integrated nature of sustainable development in is development. Table 1 shows the high-level 17 goals that constitute the SDGs (each of which has a number of specific targets below it).

Looking over these goals, it is certainly apparent that this journal, in its first three years, has merely scratched the surface of the many issues facing humanity in its development. It also offers

significant scope for research and practical case study contributions for future issues.

It is apparent that these goals cannot be seen in isolation from each other, as with most complex systems, the causal-network is highly interlinked. Hunger, poverty, and health are easily demonstrated as interconnected issues – as are education and equality. However, the crossing of the triple-bottom line, the nexus of issues that seem otherwise quite unrelated, where problems and solutions converge, is another area ripe for research as it is for progress in practical solutions. Such multidisciplinary and cross-over research is welcomed in J-Sustain.

Table 1: The Sustainable Development Goals

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| Goal 1 | End poverty in all its forms everywhere |
| Goal 2 | End hunger, achieve food security and improved nutrition and promote sustainable agriculture |
| Goal 3 | Ensure healthy lives and promote well-being for all at all ages |
| Goal 4 | Ensure inclusive and equitable quality education and promote lifelong learning opportunities for all |
| Goal 5 | Achieve gender equality and empower all women and girls |
| Goal 6 | Ensure availability and sustainable management of water and sanitation for all |
| Goal 7 | Ensure access to affordable, reliable, sustainable and modern energy for all |
| Goal 8 | Promote sustained, inclusive and sustainable economic growth, full and productive employment and decent work for all |
| Goal 9 | Build resilient infrastructure, promote inclusive and sustainable industrialization and foster innovation |
| Goal 10 | Reduce inequality within and among countries |
| Goal 11 | Make cities and human settlements inclusive, safe, resilient and sustainable |
| Goal 12 | Ensure sustainable consumption and production patterns |
| Goal 13 | Take urgent action to combat climate change and its impacts |
| Goal 14 | Conserve and sustainably use the oceans, seas and marine resources for sustainable development |
| Goal 15 | Protect, restore and promote sustainable use of terrestrial ecosystems, sustainably manage forests, combat desertification, and halt and reverse land degradation and halt biodiversity loss |
| Goal 16 | Promote peaceful and inclusive societies for sustainable development, provide access to justice for all and build effective, accountable and inclusive institutions at all levels |
| Goal 17 | Strengthen the means of implementation and revitalize the global partnership for sustainable development |

These SDGs, comprising as they do (or must), a broad set of goals that cover the triple bottom line of environment, economy and society, are representative of the breadth of issues J-Sustain seeks to cover, but also have a high-level focus that can be perceived as disconnected both to the realm of academic investigation and to the actions of the individual. In future issues, it is our hope that we can see transferrable, practical solutions to contribute in some part to these bigger-picture goals. A key differentiator of this journal is that we aim to have all of the articles published directly addressing how niche areas of scientific

^{*} The full text can be found at the UN's website: <https://sustainabledevelopment.un.org/post2015/transformingourworld>

endeavor can have actual, scalable impacts on broader, global problems of sustainability. We would encourage potential authors to consider how their work connects to such broader targets, and ensure that this is included in articles submitted for publication.

3. The Paris Agreement: COP 21

While covering only a single (although notably very important and wide scale) issue, the 21st Conference of Parties (COP 21) was widely considered to be a more challenging task to gain consensus on. Coming close on the back of the terrorist attacks in Paris, it was even unclear for a short time whether the talks would go ahead. The final proposal of The Paris Agreement – completed a day after the scheduled conclusion of COP 21 – has been widely welcomed as a victory in global diplomacy, and certainly not one taken for granted. Previous COPs had been disappointingly anti-climatic, with parties largely split across the North-South divide. In Paris, although no legally binding targets were set, at least a symbolic decision was made that (on the face of it) satisfied all parties sufficiently to warrant their support.[†] The Paris Agreement, and measures to mitigate global warming, with aims to keep global temperature changes to less than 2°C (and preferably less than 1.5°C), come under goal 13 of the SDGs, although the bodies to address this, and the treaty negotiations themselves are separate.

Like all good global treaties, they come with a long legalese preamble of the acknowledged and accepted issues and defining components. Some elements of the preamble are particularly worthy of commentary in the context of this journal and in reflecting on the SDGs. The agreement recognizes that it is not just techno-economic or techno-scientific solutions that, operating in isolation, will solve the problem of global warming. In the first section of preamble the document encourages parties not to ignore the implications of actions on equality, indigenous and other local communities and other vulnerable groups – covered within the SDGs but important in integration beyond the narrower environmental or techno-environmental sphere of consideration.

The agreement recognizes the need for financing – particularly of mitigation and adaptation in developing countries; for capacity building; for technology transfer; and the requirement for transparency of action and support.

One of the key articles in the actual agreement is Article 2, which highlights the targets of the agreement to:

“strengthen the global response to the threat of climate change, in the context of sustainable development and efforts to eradicate poverty, including by:

(a) Holding the increase in the global average temperature to well below 2 °C above pre-industrial levels and to pursue efforts to limit the temperature increase to 1.5 °C above pre-industrial levels, recognizing that this would significantly reduce the risks and impacts of climate change;

(b) Increasing the ability to adapt to the adverse impacts of climate change and foster climate resilience and low greenhouse gas emissions development, in a manner that does not threaten food production;

(c) Making finance flows consistent with a pathway towards low greenhouse gas emissions and climate resilient development.”

These three targets on their own could be argued to embrace a significant proportion of the SDGs (if they are appropriately addressed and significantly achieved). The second point (b) recognizes that there are significant risks of food-energy-carbon nexus issues among other constraints, that without appropriate governance could lead to perverse situations of developing

countries further damaging their opportunities by producing biofuels for developed nations (as has happened in a number of countries). The third point (c) also has significant implications, as it opens up what has been an emerging and important area in climate taxation, carbon trading and in ethical investment strategies. Appropriate restructuring of finance approval and investment methods could lead to the opening up of finance for climate and other beneficial development activities.

Further, it states that the agreement “*will be implemented to reflect equity and the principle of common but differentiated responsibilities and respective capabilities, in the light of different national circumstances*”. This point is important – and was probably a vital component of the agreement being made – in that it recognizes that, while implicitly all nations must engage in actions to mitigate climate change, contextually some must bear more of the costs, some must make greater cuts while others must priorities other development issues.

The document recognizes that the current pledges and policies for action do not come close to the required targets for mitigating climate change and keeping global temperatures at the prescribed levels. Pledges at the time of COP21 were modelled as resulting in aggregate emissions of 55 GtCO₂-eq in 2030, rather than the necessary 40 GtCO₂-eq needed for a 2-degree scenario. Drastic and concerted action is still required. One issue here perhaps may be likened to the “tragedy of the commons” – in the face of “differentiated responsibilities”, who must take responsibility for the reductions, and how best can the over-emissions of some be remedied in making aggregate emissions not over-shoot the target.

The agreement itself does not come into force until 30 days after 55 parties have ratified it, with the signing to be held between the 22nd of April, 2016 and the 21st of April, 2017.

Energy and environmental issues have been one key section of J-Sustain since its inception, and these remain important to the journal. However, it is also important to again stress the importance of nexus issues that can bring alternative and extended perspectives on these issues which are highly intertwined with the challenge of global warming mitigation.

4. 2015 Conference

The 6th International Conference on Sustainable Futures for Human Security (SUSTAIN 2015) was held in Bali, Indonesia November 17 - 19. (<http://sustain-conference.com/>). As with previous years, selected articles from the conference will be published in J-Sustain in 2016. We thank the authors and the conference committee for preparing these submissions.

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[†] The final draft of the Paris Agreement can be found at: <http://www.cop21.gouv.fr/wp-content/uploads/2015/12/l09r01.pdf>