

Editorial

Michel Mason

University of Essex

Abstract

This Sustainability Special Issue brings together a range of perspectives to examine the wicked problem of sustainability. Amid environmental, social, cultural, and economic concerns, the issue provides a platform for exploring how technology, political structures, inclusivity, and gender equity shape sustainable futures. Articles investigate how unregulated digital tools and opaque frameworks can reinforce inequalities, revealing the need for a rethink in design and transparency. Studies on gender representation in male dominated fields and post-conflict situation underscore the importance of inclusive practices in building resilient, representative communities. Fictional contributions further explore themes of self-discovery and gendered expectations, offering personal insights into the social dimensions of sustainability. Collectively, these works call for an intersectional approach to sustainability, inviting readers to critically engage with and participate in the sustainability narrative.

Keywords: sustainability, social inequality, social justice, inclusivity, gender, climate crisis

Date of Submission: 11.11.2024

Date of Acceptance: 13.11.2024

Editorial

As our world faces unprecedented environmental, social, cultural, and economic challenges, the imperative for change for a sustainable future has never been more evident. This Sustainability Special Issue provides a dedicated platform giving voice to diverse student perspectives and advancing our collective understanding of what it means to live in world of wicked problems.

A recurring theme in sustainability discussions is the dual role of technology and political frameworks in shaping and maintaining inequalities. In *From Search Engines to Debit Cards: How*

Technology reinforces Social Inequalities, the author explores how everyday digital tools, if unregulated, can entrench existing social divisions and widen socioeconomic gaps. *How Political Institutional Arrangements Shape Public Policy* examines how political structures impact the effectiveness of universal suffrage. Keeping with the examination of political institutions, *The Impact of Transparency on FDI Allocation: A Subnational Case Study on Bulgaria* demonstrates how transparency in the foreign direct investment process can prevent incentivised corruption and strengthen democratization to enable investments that align with local need. Together these articles remind us that without conscious design and robust policy intervention, technological and political institutions reinforce existing hierarchies by compromising the equitable distribution of, and access to, resources central for sustainable development.

Inclusivity is a vital dimension of sustainability, and this theme is reflected in *Sense of Belonging: The Impact of Gender and Representation on University Students within STEM and Psychology*. The article explores how the lack of equitable gender representation affects female students' sense of belonging and career aspirations within the male-dominated fields comprising STEM. A related examination of gender inclusion is offered in *A Gendered Peacebuilding Process: Challenges in DDR Programmes for Female Ex-combatants in Colombia*. Here the writer reveals the unique hurdles faced by female ex-combatants in post-conflict reintegration programmes. Both articles demonstrate that despite initiatives targeted at addressing the historical invisibility of women, women will continue to face obstacles in fields traditionally viewed as male domains.

In the fictional contributions, *The Place of the Setting Sun* and *Letter to Myself*, the writers also explore what it means to be a woman through a central theme of self-discovery and familial expectations. Both try to understand the experiences of women navigating roles shaped by their past as they undertake a journey towards self-empowerment. The storyteller in *The Place of the Setting Sun* confronts and eventually transcends the expectations placed upon being the eldest daughter in a Muslim family. While the narrator in *Letter to Myself* highlights the transformative power of understanding and self-acceptance.

In *The Climate Crisis, Refugees, and Migration* the author examines how climate change has induced migration to create the climate refugee. The author argues for proactive, sustainable solutions not only to mitigate the negative impacts of climate change but to support and protect displaced communities.

Editorial

This Sustainability Special Issue serves more than just a compilation of articles on the sustainability discourse. Collectively the writers form a community calling for a rethink of sustainability through an intersectional and inclusive lens. By critically examining sustainability through this broader lens, these contributions challenge us to think about the complex social, political, economic, and environmental dimensions at play. The articles, poem, and story highlight that addressing sustainability's wicked problems demands a nuanced approach through perspectives of social justice. We invite you to explore these contributions and by engaging with the ideas and reflections presented here, we hope that readers are inspired to offer their own voice dedicated to advancing knowledge and understanding of sustainability in all its complexity.

Copyright Statement

©Michel Mason. This article is licensed under a [Creative Commons Attribution 4.0 International Licence \(CC BY\)](https://creativecommons.org/licenses/by/4.0/).