

Guest editorial

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This special issue came about one day when I was talking to Professor David Crowther and telling him that there needed to be more of a focus upon scientific and technological approaches to sustainability in the journal and to attract more scientists to make contributions. Probably he was trying to shut me up when he said to me that if I thought that then I should edit a special issue of the journal and prove that I was right. So, I duly produced a call for papers and asked for contributions. This proved successful and the special issue was published as issue 6 of volume 15 in 2019. Indeed, the call was so successful that this is the second part of the special issue. Clearly many people agree with me that science and technology have large part to play in social responsibility and its various ramifications.

For too long science has been regarded as a separate subject with little attempt to combine science and technology with social aspects of the subject. But Brundtland argued for three equal pillars of sustainable development and this applies equally to social responsibility. And all three pillars rely in part upon technology and part upon people. The contributions in this special issue clearly demonstrate this and deal with a wide variety of subjects with contributions from all over the world. Interestingly, there is little overlap with the topics covered in Part 1 of the special issue – which also covered a wide range of issues with a worldwide set of contributors.

In this issue therefore there is a paper discussing corporations and heavy metal contamination in groundwater – with an obvious connection to corporate social responsibility. Equally there is a paper discussing biodiversity accounting and how that helps uncover environmental degradation while there is another paper discussing biogas production amongst farmers and the social implications of this. Balancing these are papers discussing such topics as corporate communication about environmental matters, e-complaint mechanisms and maintenance management in polytechnics, corporate disclosure of greenhouse gas emissions and municipal solid waste generation. Some issues are discussed in a global context while others are more local in focus and concentrate upon such countries as India, Vietnam, Lithuania and Indonesia.

Clearly the topic of this special issue is a broad ranging one and has a global context as well as addressing local issues. Equally clearly there is a need to integrate scientific and technological developments in the context of sustainability with the social context of society and economic context of business activity. None of these are self-contained and none can really be considered without considering the other aspects. It is only by integrating these scientific and technological issues with the other contexts – social, environmental and economic – that the full implications can be observed. It is in the integrated context that perhaps some meaningful insights and developments can be developed and implemented. It seems that many agree with me about the importance of addressing these issues together and enriching the discourse. I hope that, once you have read the contributions in this issue (and of course in part 1 of the special issue), you will agree with me and be motivated to think more broadly about the subjects which concern all of us.

I would like to thank all contributors to this special issue. Equally, I would like to thank everyone who has helped me with the reviewing of the papers submitted. I would especially like to thank Professor Crowther for suggesting that I edit these issues. Finally I look forward to a continued focus upon these issues in future issues of the journal.