ANNOUNCEMENT

Recognizing our authors

Kazuhiko Takeuchi¹

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As editor in chief of the international journal *Sustainability Science*, I am proud to announce winners of the 2019 *Sustainability Science Best Paper Awards*. We conduct the yearly—awards to recognize contributions of researchers that further enhance understanding of sustainability science and demonstrate high standards of scientific quality.

For this award we considered all papers published in 2019 excluding note and comments, editorials, message article and papers authored by a member of the committee. From a total of 113 eligible papers published in 6 issues of 2019, three winners (one outstanding paper and two honorable mentions) have been chosen following our selection process. Our entire advisory board along with selected active editors are encouraged to nominate papers which members feel make a particularly good contribution to the advancement of sustainability science. The nominated papers are then ranked based on reviewer impressions and downloads, among other criteria, and then are hand selected by our nominating committee. Links and short descriptions of the winning papers are shared below.

I congratulate the authors for their hard work on this significant accomplishment, as well as Thomas Elmqvist from Stockholm University, Sweden and Peter Wilderer from European Academy of Sciences and Arts, Germany, for their extended support from the beginning of the process. We believe authors deserve recognition for diligent work beyond a citation count and other article metrics. Conversely, this serves as an indicator for our readership to find high quality, new research publications.

This award provides acknowledgements to winning paper in form of an award plate, certificates and a €200 book voucher from Springer for winning papers.

The winning papers are:
Outstanding Article

For the paper entitled:

Three pillars of sustainability: in search of conceptual origins

Authors: Ben Purvis, Yong Mao and Darren Robinson
May 2019, Volume 14, Issue 3

Short description:

Sustainability is often conceptualized in terms of ‘three pillars’, representing social, economic, and environmental aspects or goals. These are primarily actualized as competing priorities which must be integrated whilst balancing trade-offs, or as silos for grouping concepts, metrics, or workflows. Despite the ubiquity of this paradigm, its conceptual origins are far from clear. It is often referenced to the 1987 Brundtland report, however no explicit representation is found here, and usage predates this. This article goes in search of these conceptual origins, by reviewing the early sustainability literature, analyzing both academic and institutional documents from the 1980s to the early 2000s.

Through this, it is shown that there is no single origin of this conceptualization. Instead it is argued that it emerged historically from twin critiques of the economic status quo from both environmental and social perspectives. This is illustrated within the paper through the origins of the concept of ‘sustainable development’. The authors argue that the institutionalization of sustainable development, spearheaded by the United Nations since the publication of the Brundtland Report, has acted to neutralize this radical critique of the economic status quo, by promoting economic growth and development as a central component, or pillar, of sustainable development. It is further highlighted, that the absence of a theoretical rigorous conception of the three pillars acts to hamper efforts to operationalize sustainability.

Honorable mention

For the paper entitled:

How can science support the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development? Four tasks to tackle the normative dimension of sustainability

Authors: Flurina Schneider, Andreas Kläy, Anne B. Zimmermann, Tobias Buser, Micah Ingalls and Peter Messerli.
November 2019, Volume 14, Issue 6

✉ Kazuhiko Takeuchi
sustsci.eo@gmail.com

¹ Institute for Global Environmental Strategies (IGES),
Kanagawa, Japan

Short description:

The UN 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development stresses the fundamental role science should play in implementing the 17 Sustainable Development Goals endorsed by the global community. But how can and should researchers respond to this political demand on science to contribute substantially to transformation? The answer to this question is far from trivial, as it requires researchers to engage with the fundamental normative dimensions of the 2030 Agenda and with the epistemological ideal of modern science that postulates a separation of facts and values.

We suggest that the production of knowledge relevant to sustainable development and the 2030 Agenda entails analytic engagement with norms and values through four tasks. First, to unravel and critically reflect on the ethical values involved in sustainability, values should increasingly become an empirical and theoretical object of sustainability research. Second, to ensure that research on social-ecological systems is related to sustainability values, researchers should reflect on and spell out what sustainability values guide their research, taking into account possible interdependencies, synergies, and trade-offs. Third, to find common ground on what sustainability means for specific situations, scientists should engage in deliberative learning processes with societal actors, with a view to jointly reflecting on existing development visions and creating new, contextualized ones. Fourth, this implies that researchers and scientific disciplines must clarify their own ethical and epistemic values, as this defines accountability and shapes identification of problems, research questions, and results.

We believe that tackling these tasks, whether one is in favor or skeptical of the 2030 Agenda, is indispensable for maintaining and increasing the credibility and relevance of scientific contributions for sustainable development.

Honorable mention

For the paper entitled:

Reef Grief: investigating the relationship between place meanings and place change on the Great Barrier Reef, Australia

Authors: Nadine Marshall, William Neil Adger, Claudia Benham, Katrina Brown, Matthew I Curnock, Georgina Gurney, Paul Marshall, Petina L Pert and Lauric Thiault.

May 2019, Volume 14, Issue 3

Short description:

It is well-established that ecosystems bring meaning and well-being to individuals, often articulated through attachment to place. Degradation and threats to places and ecosystems have been shown to lead to loss of well-being. Here, we suggest that the interactions between ecosystem loss and declining well-being may involve both emotional responses associated with grief, and with observable impacts on mental health. We test these ideas on so-called ecological grief by examining individual emotional response to well-documented and publicized

ecological degradation: coral bleaching and mortality in the Great Barrier Reef ecosystem. The study focuses both on one off events of coral loss and the prospect of continuing decline on the self-reported well-being of residents living within the ecosystem, visitors, and those whose livelihood is dependent on the marine resource: data from face-to-face surveys of 1870 local residents, 1804 tourists, and telephone surveys of 91 fishers and 94 tourism operators. We hypothesize that the extent to which individuals experience ecological grief is dependent on the meanings or intrinsic values (such as aesthetic, scientific, or biodiversity-based values), and is moderated by their place attachment, place identity, lifestyle dependence, place-based pride, and derived well-being. Results show that around half of residents, tourists and tourist operators surveyed, and almost one quarter of fishers, report significant Reef Grief. Reef Grief is closely and positively associated with place meanings within resident and tourist populations. By contrast respondents who rated high aesthetic value of the coral ecosystem report lower levels of Reef Grief. These findings have significant implications for how individuals and populations experience ecosystem decline and loss within places that are meaningful to them. Given inevitable cumulative future impacts on ecosystems from committed climate change impacts, understanding and managing ecological grief will become increasingly important. This study seeks to lay conceptual and theoretical foundations to identify how ecological grief is manifest and related to meaningful places and the social distribution of such grief across society.

I extend my congratulations to all the winning authors.

Kazuhiko Takeuchi
Editor-In-Chief

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