

Sustainability Beyond 2030

Trajectories and Priorities for Our Sustainable Future

Marco Tavanti and Alfredo Sfeir-Younis



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Sustainability Beyond 2030: Trajectories and Priorities for Our Sustainable Future is an indispensable guide to understanding our planet's sustainability past, present, and future. It is a tool for enlightenment, engagement, and empowerment towards shaping a sustainable world as we approach the milestone year of 2030.

Written by renowned sustainability experts Marco Tavanti and Alfredo Sfeir-Younis, who was a pioneer in the field and participated in the first 1972 United Nations Conference on the Human Environment, this book offers an in-depth analysis of critical environmental issues, human development challenges, and the economic complexities of fostering equitable and sustainable growth. In addition to evaluating various pivotal policies and events, by extracting patterns and trajectories that have shaped our present commitments to the 2030 SDGs and the 2050 climate goals, *Sustainability Beyond 2030* boldly projects into the future, identifying core priorities likely to guide the global agenda beyond our current commitments. This foresight is coupled with well-informed recommendations, essential for building resilience and fostering future opportunities.

This book is a call to action for current and future generations of sustainability leaders. It encourages readers, whether policymakers, academics, or engaged citizens, to participate in the collective responsibility of crafting a sustainable world for future generations.

Marco Tavanti is a Leadership and Sustainability Professor at the University of San Francisco's Masagung Graduate School of Management. He is a recognized scholar and global leader in cross-cultural relations, social innovation, and sustainability leadership.

Alfredo Sfeir-Younis worked for almost thirty years at the World Bank, becoming Director and Ambassador at the United Nations. As a Chilean economist and spiritual leader, he is a recognized authority in sustainable development, shared governance, and international relations.

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To our ancestors

who guarded the past and cultivated resilience amidst adversity.

To the next generation of leaders

who kindle the flame of hope and transformation despite the many challenges.

May we all harness their lessons, values, and strength

to work effectively for our common good and interconnected future.

For a thriving world beyond 2030 and

for all generations to come.



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Acronyms

10YFP	10-Year Framework of Programmes on Sustainable Consumption and Production Patterns
5Ps	People, Planet, Prosperity, Peace, and Partnership
B-Corp	Benefit Corporation Certification
BIPOC	Black, Indigenous, and People of Color
BOP	Base of the Pyramid
CBD	Convention on Biological Diversity
CBDR	Common but Differentiated Responsibilities
CBDR-RC	Common but Differentiated Responsibilities and Respective Capabilities
CBIT	Capacity-Building Initiative for Transparency
CCUS	Carbon Capture, Use, and Storage
CE	Circular Economy
CHS	Commission on Human Security
COP	Conference of the Parties
CSD	Commission on Sustainable Development
CSR	Corporate Social Responsibility
CSV	Creating Shared Values
ECOSOC	Economic and Social Council
EEG	German Renewable Energy Act
EGA	Environmental Goods Agreement
EITI	Extractive Industries Transparency Initiative
ESG	Environmental, Social, Governance
ESRS	European Sustainability Reporting Standards
FAO	Food and Agriculture Organization
G-20	Group of 20
GCF	Green Climate Fund
GDP	Gross Domestic Product
GHGs	Greenhouse Gasses
GNH	Gross National Happiness
GPPAC	Global Partnership for the Prevention of Armed Conflict

GRI	Global Reporting Initiative
GWP	Global Water Partnership
HDCA	Human Development and Capacity Approach
HDI	Human Development Index
IEP	Institute for Economics & Peace
IIRC	International Integrated Reporting Council
IMF	International Monetary Fund
IoT	Internet of Things
IPBES	Intergovernmental Science-Policy Platform on Biodiversity and Ecosystem Services
IPCC	Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change
IPLCs	Indigenous Peoples and Local Communities
IUCN	International Union for Conservation of Nature
JPOI	Johannesburg Plan of Implementation
LDCs	Least Developed Countries
MDCs	More Developed Countries
MDGs	Millennium Development Goals
MRV	Monitoring, Reporting and Verification
MSPs	Multi-Stakeholder Partnerships
NDCs	Nationally Determined Contributions
NGO	Non-Governmental Organization
NLP	Natural Language Processing
OECD	Organization for Economic Co-operation and Development
PFAS	Per- and Polyfluoroalkyl Substances
PPP	Public–Private Partnership
R&D	Research and Development
REEEP	Renewable Energy and Energy Efficiency Partnership
ROI	Return on Investment
SASB	Sustainability Accounting Standards Board
SCP	Sustainable Consumption and Production
SDGs	Sustainable Development Goals
SMEs	Small and Medium Enterprises
SPI	Social Progress Index
SROI	Social Return on Investment
SSE	Social and Solidarity Economy
TRIPS	Agreement on Trade-Related Aspects of Intellectual Property Rights
UNCED	United Nations Conference on Environment and Development—Earth Summit 1992

UNDRIP	Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples
UNEP	United Nations Environmental Programme
UNESCO	United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization
UNFCCC	United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change
UNGA	United Nations General Assembly
UNGC	United Nations Global Compact
UNHRC	United Nations Human Rights Council
UNIDO	United Nations Industrial Development Organization
UNSG	United Nations Secretary-General
VNRs	Voluntary National Reviews
WBCSD	World Business Council for Sustainable Development
WCS	World Conservation Strategy
WEHAB	Framework for Water, Energy, Health, Agriculture, and Biodiversity
WHO	World Health Organization
WSSD	World Summit on Sustainable Development—Johannesburg Summit 2002
WSUP	Water and Sanitation for the Urban Poor
WTO	World Trade Organization



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Introduction

“You can’t really know where you’re going until you know where you have been.” Maya Angelou’s famous quote encapsulates the purpose of our book. It is very difficult to recognize priorities and articulate appropriate plans for a more resilient and sustainable future for all without considering previous sustainability trajectories. *Sustainability Beyond 2030* is written with this purpose in mind: to present an overview of the most important accomplishments and ongoing challenges that the next generation of sustainability leaders need to know.

This exploration is not just a historical recount of events and policies; it is an invitation to understand how our collective past has shaped our global sustainability agenda today. As we navigate the evolution and articulation of environmental, social, and economic challenges that have defined our journey thus far, we gain valuable insights into our current global commitments. Recognizing these trajectories is not merely an academic exercise—it’s a crucial step in defining the priorities for our future and sustainable path forward. A sustainability mindset requires literacy in systems thinking, complex thinking, and future thinking, addressing short-term needs with long-term planning. We want to provide a “wider view” of knowledge and a “bird’s-eye-view” perspective, urging all of us to reflect on past efforts as we move forward with greater purpose and clarity toward a more sustainable world.

First, we examine the most influential global environmental conferences and their outcome documents since the seminal 1972 Stockholm Conference on the Human Environment and later important subsequent United Nations conferences on the environment and sustainable development. Through these crucial dialogues, we witness the evolution of global thought and policy about environmental, social, and economic sustainability. We see how our understanding of these interlinked issues has

deepened, our commitment to tackling them has strengthened, and our challenges have evolved.

The method used to identify these trajectories includes a detailed analysis of the conferences and the documents they produced. We also review data about decisions, commitments, and actions implemented to uncover patterns and trends. Then, we identify key priorities and challenges that have persisted over the past several years and extrapolate how they might evolve.

Trajectory analysis in the context of environmental policies offers a systematic method of understanding how policies have evolved. This approach considers many factors, including discourse, ideologies, contexts, texts, and values, and the acknowledgment that policymaking is a complex process shaped by tangible and intangible influences. It recognizes that the dynamic interaction of knowledge, politics, culture, and social structures shapes our efforts to address environmental issues.

Discourse plays a significant role in shaping environmental policies. How we talk about and understand environmental issues—the narratives, metaphors, and terminologies we use—significantly influences our decisions. Discourse frames issues in a certain light and highlights particular aspects and directs attention toward specific solutions.

Underlying these discourses are ideologies that shape our fundamental understanding of environmental issues. Ideologies define what is valued, what is considered natural or unnatural, and what is deemed right or wrong. They influence the interpretation of facts and figures, the framing of problems and solutions, and the negotiation of interests and power.

Context is also crucial in trajectory analysis, as environmental policies do not exist in a vacuum. They are developed and implemented within specific political, socioeconomic, and cultural contexts. These contexts influence not only the policies themselves but also their reception, implementation, and impact.

Texts, in the form of legislation, regulations, treaties, and agreements, represent the tangible outcomes of the policymaking process. Analyzing these texts allows us to trace changes in policy over time, identify shifts in focus and priority, and examine the implementation and enforcement of policies.

Finally, values are at the heart of environmental policymaking. What we value in society—economic growth, biodiversity,

human health, or social justice—shapes the policies we develop, our decisions, and our actions. Uncovering these values helps us understand policymakers' motivations and potential impacts.

By integrating these various elements, trajectory analysis provides a holistic understanding of the evolution of environmental policies. It allows us to trace the paths that have led us to our current state and to anticipate potential future trajectories. This understanding, in turn, can guide us in developing more effective, equitable, and sustainable policies for the future.

In exploring these trajectories, this book sheds light on the principles that have guided past and present decisions, our commitments, and the gaps we still need to address. We aim to provide an informed perspective on the future of sustainability, transcending the limitations of our current commitments and setting the stage for the grand challenges beyond 2030.

The 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, adopted by all United Nations member states in 2015, is an ambitious plan of action for people, planet, and prosperity. It proposes 17 Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) and 169 targets that touch upon critical aspects of global development's social, economic, and environmental dimensions. As a bold manifesto for human development and ecological preservation, it merits appreciation for the breadth and depth of its vision.

However, despite these commendable attributes, a critical review of the 2030 Agenda reveals that it may need to address the difficulty and severity of the world's most pressing challenges. While undoubtedly significant and far-reaching, the agenda's goals may not be ambitious enough in light of the accelerated pace of climate change, biodiversity loss, rising inequities, and pollution's pervasive and persistent effects.

Furthermore, the agenda's reliance on existing socioeconomic paradigms raises questions about its capacity to drive the profound systemic change required to achieve true sustainability. Some of its goals could have been more transformational, challenging the structural drivers of global environmental change and social inequality.

In contrast, organizations such as the Club of Rome advocated for more radical shifts. Marking its 50th anniversary of the seminal report *The Limits to Growth*, the Club of Rome highlighted the need to embrace a more profound transformation that values

the Earth and all its inhabitants. The Club's most recent report, *Earth for All*, presents alternate futures with more audacious solutions and radical shifts to sustainable pathways.¹

Earth for All envisions scenarios that aim to alter the root causes of our current crises, proposing a fundamental transformation of our relationship with the planet. It emphasizes the need to move beyond the reductionist perspective that has dominated global policy for decades. Instead, it adopts a more holistic, system-oriented approach that aligns economic development with ecological health and social equity.

While the 2030 Agenda is a crucial step towards a more sustainable world, its goals must be more ambitious to grapple with the severity of the global environmental and social crises. Complementing it with more transformative visions like those proposed by the Club of Rome may be needed to address this call. A synthesis of these perspectives could provide a comprehensive and actionable framework for sustainable development, paving the way for a future where humanity lives in harmony with the planet.

Ultimately, this book is more than an academic exploration. It is a call to action, reminding us of our shared responsibility towards our planet and each other. It invites readers everywhere, regardless of their background or expertise, to engage with the issues defining our collective future.

Thinking about past and present challenges beyond 2030 with a more robust and effective sustainability agenda means inviting everyone to engage in this shared global responsibility. It is an invitation to recognize the historical "trajectories" that determined the evolution into the current goals. It is an exploration into some of the current priorities and future challenges that most likely will influence the identification and definition of the future agenda beyond 2030. Unfortunately, persisting challenges and delayed responses to current goals will most likely determine the continuation of numerous current priorities. Yet, the future is presenting new emerging challenges, from cybersecurity to migrant rights and from climate change mitigation to global health preparedness, just to mention a few.

Sustainability Beyond 2030 hopes to do more than raise academic knowledge and intellectual awareness. It hopes to provide a variety of tools where clear past trajectories are recognized

and current “priorities” included into the new drawing of the Post-2030 Agenda.

These trajectories represent our shared wisdom and experiences. Such trajectories hold the solutions to the most pressing problems of our time, spanning numerous disciplines from the social to the technological. Like seeds in fertile soil, the solutions to these problems shall take root, grow, and bask in the sunlight of shared victories.

Sustainability Beyond 2030 extends an inclusive invitation for everyone to explore possibilities and understandings and engage proactively as knowledgeable stewards of our collective fate. Together, we can traverse the challenging currents of today while capitalizing on opportunities for change, steering towards a brighter and more secure future for all.

Note

- 1 Randers, J., Gaffney, O., Rockström, J., Ghosh, J., Dixon-Declève, S., & Stoknes, P.E. (2022). *Earth for All: A Survival Guide for Humanity*. Canada: New Society Publishers.



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