

Special Issue

Tracking Sustainability through the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs): Synergies and Trade-Offs

Message from the Guest Editors

The United Nations Resolution “The Future We Want”, adopted by the General Assembly on 27 July 2012 (UN, 2012), defined sustainability as three interconnected pillars (the environmental, social and socioeconomic). There can, however, be no long-term sustainability in the absence of a balance and equilibrium between these three dimensions. The challenge lies in finding a blend of the three to engender an equilibrium that can last across time. The sustainable development goals aim to achieve prosperity and wealth while also protecting the planet. Again, the achievement of sustainable goals implies the definition of sustainable equilibria that may generate both synergies (for instance, social sustainability might necessitate improvements to the quality of education) and trade-offs (such as, for example, those between economic sustainability and climate action). In this context, it is important to conceptually define and empirically measure the synergies and trade-offs originated by the goals, in order to properly track sustainability and to enhance understanding and implementation.

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