

## *Editorial*

*“Be the change you wish to see in the world”*. These words by Mahatma Gandhi most befittingly describe the task currently facing us. In other words, Gandhi is suggesting, if something is to change, it is up to all of us to act now. In a time of heightened political uncertainty, following a year of unexpected electoral results, particularly in the United States and in Great Britain, has quickly swept the challenges of global, sustainable development from the public agenda. Polarized societies and political landscapes are taking centre stage in many countries, with deepening generational and cultural divisions amplifying the risks associated with sluggish economic recovery. Indeed, the issue of sustainability is struggling to compete with topics – such as domestic security, refugee flows, and job creation: all issues currently dominating the political agenda in many countries. Also the rise in populist tendencies in Western democracies is less conducive to the political advocacy of sustainability issues.

In this situation, it seems ironic that China, a country with massive environmental problems, appears to have recognised the signs of the time. According to the United Nations, China invested \$103 billion in renewable energy last year – more than America, Britain and Japan combined. The goal was to reduce domestic pollution and increase access to international markets. China’s major cities are installing thousands of electric buses and taxis, and the country is in a position to lead the world on sustainability, which presents enormous opportunities for investors. Europe is well on its way to a zero-emission economy. The Gulf countries and Morocco are deploying large new capacity in renewable energy, especially solar energy. These developments give reason for hope: that sustainability has meanwhile become so entrenched that even political setbacks in some countries will not seriously derail the necessary change processes.

The Living Planet Report 2016 published by WWF at the end of last year again emphasized how still more impetus is needed to further solutions to

the world's sustainability challenges: biodiversity continues to decline worldwide – a 58 percent drop in animal populations has been observed over the past 40 years; and 239 million hectares of natural forest have been destroyed over the past 25. Moreover, many scientists doubt whether the enduring indecisiveness of politics and industry will suffice to limit global warming to the 2° or even 1.5° Celsius target.

Whatever the sustainability plan, one factor is, according to the Simone Cesaretti Foundation, decisive for its success: *the ability to make the Right to Sustainability a constitutive principle of a new global society where well-being and its sustainability, in time and space, constitute its fundamental strategic goal*. To this end, it becomes necessary a crucial paradigm shift able to project the “Global Society System” by a segmented approach to well-being to a universal approach.

In this issue of the *Review of studies on sustainability* we will explore whether we have come closer to reaching this goal, analysing, issues like food, tourism, human rights and human capital.

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