

Our fifth anniversary



Nature Sustainability is five. We reflect on what we have achieved so far and our ambitions going forward.

On 8 January 2018, *Nature Sustainability* launched with an ambitious vision. We wrote about our aims to offer a comprehensive catalogue of the most impactful sustainability scholarship, covering a broad range of topics and debates that would be able to reach across disciplines to highlight relevant, yet diverse, perspectives; to facilitate cross-disciplinary dialogue; and to elevate all research approaches (including disciplinary, interdisciplinary, transdisciplinary, theoretical and applied) to one level of prestige (*Nat. Sustain.* **1**, 1; 2018). The journey so far has been exciting, often challenging but certainly rewarding, and we now want to reflect on what we have achieved and what the next goals will be.

Over the past five years, the editorial team has worked with enthusiasm and a commitment to assemble a robust and relevant corpus of research and opinion that we hope has been able to meet the needs of our highly diverse audience. To give a sense of the breadth of content that we have published over these five years, we have put together four collections that reflect some of the research themes and areas of interest to the journal. However, selecting papers with a specific theme, or that belong to a specific research area, has been less straightforward than we anticipated. Quite a few of our articles are truly holistic and relevant to more than one specific research field, a point to be celebrated in a journal such as *Nature Sustainability* that has such a broad scope and mission. We encourage our readers to sift through the collections to find papers most relevant to them, even though at first glance it may seem that the way the content has been organized may not be central to their interests. Perhaps, by doing so, readers could expand their own research horizons.

One of the cross-cutting themes that has emerged over the years and is core to the journal is inequality in all its facets. We have seen articles looking at inequalities related to



carbon emissions and policies, energy use and access, a variety of environmental impacts, food and economic systems and access to natural resources; a selection of relevant papers highlighting such issues can be found in our collection entitled '[Inequality and sustainability](#)'. We hope to continue to push the research agenda on inequality and sustainability with even more insightful contributions in the years to come.

Another active research area we have featured is water sustainability, especially research that explores beyond the boundaries of the water system itself. We have published several contributions showing the importance of water to, as well as the effects on water from, pursuing most of the Sustainable Development Goals (above and beyond SDG 6 and SDG 14), a selection of these articles can be found in our collection '[Water research for sustainability](#)'. As *Nature Water* begins its journey (see Editorial <https://doi.org/10.1038/s44221-023-00026-3>; 2023), we hope to work together to compile an even stronger catalogue of research and opinion to advance the most topical water-related debates.

We have also prepared two collections reflecting our editorial commitment to advancing, beyond knowledge, the practice of sustainability – namely, sustainable solutions. As we are sure our readers are aware, an array of diverse solutions is being debated and researched, but the domain is vast and we are far from able to show the full breadth of the evolving relevant developments in our pages yet. We are, however, excited to share

some influential contributions from within the space of emerging nature-based (see collection '[Nature-based solutions for sustainability](#)') and technological (see collection '[Emerging technologies for sustainability](#)') solutions.

Bringing both types of solution under the same roof has perhaps been the biggest challenge for our editorial team. Scholars and practitioners involved in advancing how people can best work with nature respectfully and, where possible, taking advantage of its complexity while limiting interference do not typically work together with technology and engineering experts that are involved in designing and testing devices, materials and various chemical processes. We at *Nature Sustainability* are determined to bring these groups together, as we know that they ultimately share the same goal and that their mutual recognition of all of the possible solutions to advance sustainability can only provide a stronger basis for a more prosperous future. Going forward, we will increase our efforts to achieve greater integration of these research areas. We would also welcome ideas and proposals to strengthen cross-disciplinary dialogue and integration, particularly from early-career researchers and experts from under-represented groups and geographies.

Finally, we would like to mention our convening efforts. The editors at *Nature Sustainability* have been actively involved in organizing international expert panels aimed at removing or at least reducing barriers across

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the research, policy and practice domains to enable mutual learning about pressing issues and new cross-disciplinary collaborations. Our four [expert panels](#) show our commitment to breaking down silos, bringing experts

together, and forging new alliances to deliver holistic sustainability contributions. Although our capacity to engage with the community has been recently affected by the impacts of the COVID-19 pandemic, we are getting ready

to resume our role as a convening leader in the sustainability realm. We hope that you will join our forthcoming initiatives.

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