

Sustainability, the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), and COP 26

We are all part of the natural world, and we depend upon it for everything we do: the air we breathe, the water we drink, the food we eat, and the clothes we wear. Mobile phones, for example, are composed of a range of metals taken from the earth, including copper, aluminium and gold ([Park, 2018](#)). Plastics, a material many of us use each day, are made of fossil fuels, such as crude oil and natural gas, that have been formed over millions of years from dead plant and animal matter. The way we extract, transform, consume, and dispose of the earth's natural resources is at the heart of the sustainability challenges we face.

We must reimagine and reinvent the way that we do things. We must find ways to live within our planet's environmental boundaries as well as ensuring social justice for all. An economist from the University of Oxford has provided an example of what this might look like in the form of the 'Doughnut Economic' model. You can find out more about the model [here](#). Whilst this is a huge challenge, it also represents an opportunity. We need artists, and educators, nurses, and engineers, and everyone else in between to learn about these problems, and find ways to tackle them collectively. No one can be left behind. This is the ambition at the heart of the United Nation's Sustainable Development Goals: 17 Goals that have been chosen by the global community to set us on a path towards sustainability. Whilst the Goals are ambitious in scope, they are not legally binding, and the world is very likely to miss these targets. You can read more about the Goals [here](#).

Unlike the Sustainable Development Goals, the 2015 Paris Climate Agreement is legally binding and commits Parties to keep global warming to well below 2 degrees, and ideally no more than 1.5 degrees above pre-industrial levels. The Paris Climate Agreement was adopted by 196 Parties, representing over 97% of emissions produced worldwide. As part of the Agreement, countries must reassess their Nationally Determined Contributions (NDCs) every 5 years. The first review since the signing of the Agreement in 2015 will be happening at the Conference of the Parties (COP 26) in November 2021.

Recommendations for further reading:

- Jackson, T. (2009). *Prosperity without Growth: Foundations for the Economy of Tomorrow*. Reprint, London: Earthscan (2017)
- Mazzucato, M. (2019). *The Value of Everything: Making and Taking in the Global Economy*. London: Allen Lane
- Raworth, K. (2018). *Doughnut Economics: Seven Ways to Think Like a 21st Century Economist*. London: Random House Business

References:

[Park, M. \(2018\), 'Sustainable shopping: if you really, truly need a new phone, buy one with replaceable parts', *The Conversation*, 22.03.2018. Available at: <https://theconversation.com/sustainable-shopping-if-you-really-truly-need-a-new-phone-buy-one-with-replaceable-parts-93069>](#)