Preface

Communities are sustained not only by their physical resources and economic opportunities but also by the relationships, shared values, knowledge and institutions that connect people. These elements form the social fabric through which communities maintain their identities, respond to disruption and shape their futures. Amid environmental change, socioeconomic pressures and rapid modernisation, understanding how this social fabric can be strengthened has become an important concern for researchers, policymakers and practitioners.

This Special Issue of the Pertanika Journal of Social Sciences & Humanities, entitled "Advancing Social Fabric: Resilience and Sustainability in Community Development," brings together interdisciplinary perspectives on the processes that enable communities to adapt, participate and thrive. Guided by the theme "Reinforcing Social Fabric for a Sustainable Future: Insights from Community Development", it examines how social relationships and collective action intersect with cultural continuity, environmental stewardship and inclusive socioeconomic development.

The contributions address several closely connected areas. One concerns indigenous knowledge, traditional practices and cultural heritage, including the challenges of preserving community identities as social and economic conditions change. A second concerns environmental sustainability and resilience, highlighting the significance of local participation, resource management and community responses to ecological pressures. A third considers the relationship between heritage, tourism and local development, where collaboration among residents, institutions and other stakeholders can contribute to more responsible and inclusive outcomes.

Taken together, these perspectives encourage readers to look beyond narrow understandings of resilience as merely recovering from a crisis. Resilience also depends on the capacity to maintain meaningful social ties, negotiate change, safeguard valued traditions and participate in decisions affecting community life. Similarly, sustainability is not solely an environmental objective. It has social and cultural dimensions that require attention to local knowledge, equitable participation and the long-term wellbeing of communities.

The Special Issue aims to advance discussion across sociology, environmental studies, cultural studies, tourism and related fields. Its broader contribution lies in encouraging dialogue between research and practice: how evidence concerning community networks, governance, cultural resources and environmental management can inform more context-sensitive policies and initiatives. The geographical and disciplinary diversity represented

in the proposed contributions provides opportunities to consider both shared challenges and locally specific responses.

We hope this collection will stimulate further research and constructive engagement among scholars, policymakers, practitioners and community stakeholders. Above all, it invites continued consideration of how resilient and sustainable communities can be nurtured through the relationships, knowledge and collective responsibilities that hold their social fabric together.

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