

Digital Utility: From Pipes to Pixels: Exploring the Digital Utility Revolution

By: Changiz Sadr, P.Eng, FEC, CISSP

Chief Compliance Officer at Cyber Security Global Alliance (CSGA)

Introduction

In the not-so-distant past, utility services were managed through an intricate network of pipes, wires, and mechanical systems hidden from plain sight. The water you drank, the electricity that powered your home and the gas that heated your stove all flowed through these physical conduits, largely hidden from view. But today, a quiet yet profound revolution is underway—one that's transforming our essential services from tangible pipelines to digital pixels.

The emergence of Digital Utility marks a seismic shift in how we produce, distribute, and consume our most critical resources. This transformation promises unparalleled efficiency, sustainability, and an entirely new level of control and convenience for consumers.

Quote from 360Research:

"The Global Digital Utility market is anticipated to rise at a considerable rate during the forecast period, between 2023 and 2030. In 2022, the market is growing at a steady rate and with the rising adoption of strategies by key players; the market is expected to rise over the projected horizon."

The global Digital Utility market size was valued at USD 242278.67 Million in 2022 and will reach USD 492380.89 Million in 2028, with a CAGR of 12.55 Percent during 2022-2028."

<https://www.360researchreports.com/enquiry/request-sample/23750626>

Join us on a journey through this paradigm shift as we explore the Digital Utility revolution and how it's reshaping the world we live in. Welcome to the era where pipes are fading into pixels, and the possibilities are endless.

Historical Context

The concept of Digital Utility has its roots in the broader history of utility services and the ongoing digital transformation. Understanding this historical context can help you emphasize the significance of Digital Utility Revolution and how it represents the next step in the evolution of utility services.

Here's some historical context:

Early Utility Services: The history of utility services dates back centuries. Basic utility services like water supply, heating, and lighting have been essential for human civilization since ancient times. For example, the Persian Empire Qanat, also known as "Kariz" in Persian, which is a remarkable and ingenious system of underground water channels developed more than 2000 years ago, is a testament to early water supply systems.

Electrification and the 20th Century: The 20th century saw a significant expansion in utility services. The widespread electrification of cities and homes marked a major milestone in the evolution of utilities. Electric grids and water distribution systems became increasingly complex and essential for modern life.

Computerization and Automation: In the latter half of the 20th century, utilities began to adopt computerization and automation in their operations. This involved the use of early computer systems to monitor and control various aspects of utility infrastructure, such as power distribution and water treatment.

Emergence of Smart Technologies: The 21st century witnessed the rise of smart technologies. The proliferation of the Internet of Things (IoT) and advancements in sensor technology allowed for real-time monitoring of utility systems. Smart meters, which can track energy and water usage with high precision, became more widespread.

Renewable Energy Integration: The push for renewable energy sources like solar and wind power has played a significant role in the development of digital utilities. These technologies, coupled with digital control systems, allow for more efficient energy generation and distribution.

Data and Analytics: The digitalization of utilities has led to the generation of vast amounts of data. Big data analytics and machine learning have become essential tools for utility companies to make sense of this data, optimizing operations and improving resource management.

Customer-Centric Approach: One of the key trends in the development of digital utilities is a shift toward a customer-centric approach. Digital interfaces and platforms enable customers to have more control over their utility usage and billing. This shift has been facilitated by advancements in user-friendly apps and online portals.

Environmental Sustainability: The growing focus on environmental sustainability has driven the adoption of digital technologies in utilities. Digital solutions allow for more efficient resource usage, lower emissions, and integration of renewable energy sources.

Regulatory Changes: Governments and regulatory bodies have played a critical role in shaping the digital utilities landscape. Regulations have evolved to accommodate and encourage the adoption of digital technologies, ensuring security, privacy, and fair practices.

Global Adoption: The transition to digital utilities is a global phenomenon, with countries and regions at various stages of implementation. Some regions have made significant progress in adopting digital technologies, while others are still in the early stages of transformation.

Definition of Digital Utility and its components and features

A Digital Utility, often referred to as a "Smart Utility," is a forward-thinking utility service provider that deploys advanced digital technologies to revolutionize the management, distribution, and consumption of vital resources like electricity, water, gas, and other public services. This transformative approach distinguishes itself from traditional utilities through several key components:

Smart Meters: Unlike traditional meters, Digital Utilities incorporate smart meters equipped with real-time monitoring capabilities. These meters collect data on resource consumption at a granular level and enable two-way communication

between consumers and service providers. This data empowers consumers to make informed decisions about their resource usage.

IoT Devices: The integration of the Internet of Things (IoT) devices is a hallmark of Digital Utilities. These devices include sensors and connected infrastructure that allow for real-time monitoring and control of utility systems. For example, IoT sensors can detect leaks in water pipelines or identify inefficiencies in power distribution.

Data Analytics: Digital Utilities harness the power of data analytics to process and analyze the vast amounts of information generated by smart meters and IoT devices. This data-driven approach provides insights into resource usage patterns, identifies potential issues, and enables predictive maintenance. Through data analytics, Digital Utilities optimize resource distribution and reduce waste.

Customer-Centric Services: A fundamental difference between Digital Utilities and their traditional counterparts is the focus on customer-centric services. Digital interfaces and online platforms empower consumers to access real-time data about their resource consumption, billing, and environmental impact. This level of transparency and control enhances the customer experience and fosters greater resource efficiency.

Efficiency and Sustainability: Digital Utilities are committed to improving resource efficiency and sustainability. By integrating renewable energy sources, optimizing resource allocation, and minimizing resources losses, they contribute to reducing environmental impact and lowering operational costs.

Interconnected Networks: Digital Utilities establish interconnected networks that facilitate the seamless flow of information between various components. This interconnectedness enables utilities to respond quickly to changes in demand, identify and address issues proactively, and enhance the resilience of infrastructure.

Cybersecurity Measures: With the integration of digital technologies, cybersecurity is of paramount importance. Digital Utilities invest in robust security measures to protect against cyber threats and safeguard the integrity of utility systems, data, and consumer information.

In summary, a Digital Utility represents a paradigm shift from traditional utility services by integrating advanced technologies. These advancements enable real-time monitoring, informed decision-making, and enhanced environmental stewardship, differentiating Digital Utilities as a cornerstone of the modern utility landscape.

Benefits of Digital Utility

The transition to a Digital Utility offers a wide range of benefits for both utility service providers and consumers. These benefits underscore the transformative impact of Digital Utilities, making them a vital component of modernizing utility services and addressing the growing demand for efficient, sustainable, and customer-centric resource management.

Here are some key advantages:

Enhanced Resource Efficiency: Digital Utilities optimize the distribution and allocation of resources, reducing waste and improving overall efficiency. This leads to cost savings and more sustainable resource management.

Real-time Monitoring: Smart meters and IoT devices provide real-time data on resource consumption and system performance. This data allows utilities to respond promptly to issues and consumers to make informed decisions about their resource usage.

Improved Customer Engagement: Digital Utilities offer user-friendly interfaces that empower customers to monitor and control their resource consumption. This increased transparency enhances customer engagement and satisfaction.

Predictive Maintenance: The data generated by digital systems enable predictive maintenance of infrastructure. By identifying and addressing potential issues before they become critical, utilities can prevent service disruptions and extend the lifespan of equipment.

Integration of Renewable Energy: Digital Utilities facilitate the integration of renewable energy sources, such as solar and wind power. This promotes sustainability and reduces the environmental impact of energy production.

Reduced Environmental Footprint: The ability to monitor and optimize resource consumption contributes to reduced greenhouse gas emissions and a smaller environmental footprint. Digital Utilities play a crucial role in environmental sustainability.

Operational Cost Savings: Streamlined operations, predictive maintenance, and reduced resource losses lead to cost savings for utility providers. These savings can be passed on to consumers or reinvested in infrastructure improvements.

Data-Driven Decision-Making: Data analytics and machine learning empower utilities to make data-driven decisions, from resource allocation to infrastructure upgrades. This results in more informed and efficient choices.

Enhanced Grid Resilience: Interconnected networks and real-time monitoring improve the resilience of utility grids. Digital Utilities can respond to outages and other disruptions more effectively.

Smart Grids: Digital Utilities contribute to the development of smart grids, which allow for two-way communication between utilities and consumers. Smart grids can balance supply and demand more effectively and reduce the likelihood of blackouts.

Adaptation of Changing Demands: The flexibility and scalability of digital systems enable utilities to adapt to changing energy and resource demands more effectively, such as the increased demand for electric vehicles or renewable energy.

Regulatory Compliance: Digital Utilities can more easily comply with evolving regulations, particularly those related to environmental standards, data security, and customer service.

Empowerment of Consumers: Digital Utilities empower consumers to take control of their resource consumption and costs, promoting a sense of responsibility and environmental awareness.

Innovation and Investment: The adoption of digital technologies encourages innovation and attracts investment in the utility sector. This leads to continuous improvements in service quality and sustainability.

Greater Reliability: With enhanced monitoring and control, Digital Utilities can provide more reliable service, reducing downtime and improving the quality of utility services.

Challenges and Obstacles of Digital Utility

Navigating these challenges requires careful planning, investment, collaboration, and a long-term commitment to digital transformation of utility services. Addressing these obstacles is crucial for realizing the full potential of Digital Utilities while ensuring the continued reliability and security of essential services.

Here are some of the key challenges:

High Initial Costs: The implementation of digital infrastructure, including smart meters and IoT devices, can be expensive. The upfront capital costs of upgrading existing systems can strain the budgets of utility providers.

Security Concerns: The integration of digital technologies increases the vulnerability to cyber threats and hacking. Ensuring the security of critical infrastructure and consumer data is a paramount concern.

Data Privacy: Managing vast amounts of consumer data requires strict data privacy measures. Ensuring that consumer data is protected and used responsibly is essential to building trust.

Regulatory Hurdles: The transition to Digital Utilities often necessitates changes in regulatory frameworks to accommodate new technologies and business models. Navigating regulatory hurdles can be time-consuming and complex.

Interoperability Issues: Ensuring that different components and systems within a utility network can communicate effectively can be challenging. Lack of interoperability can lead to inefficiencies and increased costs.

Consumer Adoption: While digital tools empower consumers, not all may be quick to adopt new technologies. There can be a learning curve and resistance to change among some segments of the consumer base.

Maintenance and Updates: Keeping digital systems up to date and maintaining them over time is essential. Outdated or poorly maintained systems can lead to vulnerabilities and service disruptions.

Resource Limitations: In some regions, there may be limitations on the availability of resources necessary for a digital transformation, such as reliable internet connectivity, which can hinder the adoption of Digital Utilities.

Educational Challenges: Educating both utility staff and consumers about the benefits and operation of digital systems can be a significant challenge. Ensuring that users make the most of these tools and understand their impact is crucial.

Environmental Impact: While Digital Utilities aim to reduce the environmental footprint of resource management, the production and disposal of digital hardware can have environmental impacts, especially if not managed responsibly.

Resistance to Change: Utility providers and employees may be resistant to change, particularly if it requires adopting new technologies and work flows. Overcoming this resistance is crucial for a successful transition.

Disruption Risk: The transition to digital systems can sometimes lead to temporary disruptions in service, which can be a source of frustration for consumers and businesses.

Rural and Remote Areas: Implementing Digital Utilities in rural or remote areas can be more challenging due to limited infrastructure and connectivity options.

Supply Chain Vulnerabilities: Reliance on global supply chain for digital components can expose utilities to supply chain disruptions and delays.

Legal and Liability Issues: Establishing liability for digital systems' performance, data management, and cybersecurity can be legally complex and requires careful consideration.

Case Studies

These case studies showcase the diverse applications of Digital Utilities in different parts of the world. They highlight the positive impact of digital technologies in enhancing

resource management, improving service quality, and promoting sustainability. Each of these initiatives reflects the growing importance of digital innovation in the utility sector.

Here are a few real-world case studies of Digital Utility implementations:

Amsterdam's Smart City Grid: <https://amsterdamsmartcity.com/>

Amsterdam is known for its commitment to sustainability and environmental responsibility. The city has been transforming its utility infrastructure into a smart and interconnected grid. They've integrated smart meters, IoT sensors, and data analytics to monitor and manage resource consumption more efficiently. This has resulted in significant energy savings and reduced environmental impact.

Singapore's Smart Water Network:
<https://www.watershare.eu/projects/singapores-smart-water-grid/>

Singapore has developed a smart water network that uses advanced sensors and data analytics to monitor water quality, distribution, and consumption. The system can detect leaks and water quality issues in real-time, enabling swift responses to maintain water quality and minimize wastage.

Enel's Open Fiber Network: <https://www.enel.com/>

Enel, an Italian utility company, has been investing in open fiber networks to enhance communication between utility infrastructure and consumers. They offer real-time data and services, such as energy consumption monitoring, to customers. This initiative has improved customer engagement and resource efficiency.

Austin Energy's Smart Grid Initiatives: <https://austinenergy.com/>

Austin Energy, a municipally-owned utility, has been at the forefront of smart grid adoption in the US. They've integrated smart meters and distribution automation to improve outage response times and provide customers with detailed information about their energy consumption. These efforts have enhanced grid reliability and consumer satisfaction.

Iberdrola's Grid Investment in Spain: <https://www.iberdrola.com/home>

Iberdrola, a global energy company, has made significant investments in upgrading its grid infrastructure. They've incorporated advanced sensors and data analytics to reduce losses in energy distribution, optimize grid operations, and integrate renewable energy sources more effectively.

Dubai Electricity and Water Authority's (DEWA) Smart Initiatives:

<https://www.dewa.gov.ae/en/>

DEWA has launched multiple smart initiatives to improve its utility services. This includes the Shams Dubai program, which encourages the installation of solar panels, and the Green Charger initiatives, which promotes electric vehicle charging infrastructure.

Technologies Driving the Transformation

These technologies work together to create a comprehensive ecosystem for Digital Utilities. IoT devices and sensors provide real-time data, big data analytics extract insights from this data, cloud computing ensures its secure storage and accessibility, and machine learning enhances decision-making processes. The combination of these technologies results in more efficient, responsive, and sustainable utility services.

Here's an example of how each of these key technologies plays a pivotal role in the context of Digital Utilities:

IoT (Internet of Things): Use case: Smart Meters

Digital Utilities leverage IoT devices like smart meters to collect real-time data on resource consumption. Smart meters are equipped with sensors that monitor electricity, water, or gas usage at a granular level. This data is transmitted via the internet to utility providers. It enables accurate billing, early detection of anomalies (such as leaks or energy inefficiencies), and empowers consumers to monitor and control their resource usage through web interfaces or mobile apps.

Big Data Analytics: Use case: Predictive Maintenance

Digital Utilities harness big data analytics to process the vast amount of data generated by IoT devices and other sensors. For example, predictive maintenance systems use machine learning algorithms to analyze historical performance data and detect patterns indicative of equipment failures. By proactively addressing

maintenance needs, utilities can reduce downtime, extend the lifespan of infrastructure, and improve resource efficiency.

Cloud Computing: Use case: Data Storage and Scalability

Digital Utilities rely on cloud computing platforms to store and manage the enormous volumes of data generated by IoT devices and sensors. The cloud provides scalable storage solutions that can handle large datasets, ensuring accessibility, data redundancy, and disaster recovery. It also allows utilities to access data and applications from anywhere, promoting operational flexibility and efficiency.

Machine Learning: Use case: Demand Forecasting

Machine learning algorithms are employed to improve demand forecasting within Digital Utilities. By analysing historical consumption data, weather patterns, and other variables, these algorithms can predict resource demand more accurately. This helps utilities optimize resource allocation, reduce energy waste, and better balance supply and demand, which is particularly valuable in the context of renewable energy integration and peak demand management.

Regulatory Framework

Regulations and government policies play a pivotal role in shaping the transition to a Digital Utility model. A supportive regulatory environment can significantly facilitate the adoption of digital technologies in utility services, while inadequate or overly restrictive regulations can hinder progress.

Here's how regulations and policies impact this transition:

Facilitating Factors:

Incentives for Innovation: Supportive policies can offer financial incentives and tax breaks to utilities that invest in digital infrastructure and sustainability initiatives. These incentives encourage utilities to adopt new technologies and innovative approaches.

Data Privacy and Security Standards: Clear regulations regarding data privacy and security provide a framework for utilities to handle consumer data

responsibly and securely. Compliance with these standards builds trust with consumers and ensures their information is protected.

Interoperability Standards: Regulations that establish standards for interoperability between various components and systems within the utility network can help ensure that different technologies and vendors can work together seamlessly. This reduces inefficiencies and promotes a more effective transition.

Open Data Initiatives: Encouraging utilities to share non-sensitive data with third-party developers can spur the creation of innovative applications and services that enhance consumer engagement and resource management.

Environmental Regulations: Regulations that set environmental targets, emissions reduction goals, and renewable energy integration mandates can motivate utilities to invest in sustainable practices and embrace digital solutions for better resource management.

Hindering Factors:

Outdated Regulations: Regulations that are slow to adapt to technological advancements can hinder the adoption of Digital Utility solutions. These regulations may not account for complexities of IoT, big data, and smart grid technologies.

Bureaucracy and Red Tape: Overly bureaucratic regulatory processes can slow down the implementation of digital technologies. Lengthy approval procedures for new projects can impede innovation and make it harder for utilities to respond to changing needs.

Data Privacy Concerns: While data privacy can be supportive, they can also become overly restrictive, making it difficult for utilities to collect and analyze data that is crucial for improving resource efficiency and customer service.

Lack of Incentives: The absence of incentives for utilities to invest in digital technologies and sustainability initiatives may result in a lack of motivation for them to transition to a Digital Utility model.

Fragmented Regulations: Inconsistent or fragmented regulations across regions can create challenges for utilities that operate in multiple areas. Compliance with patchwork of regulations can be cumbersome and costly.

Ultimately, a well-balanced regulatory framework helps utilities, consumers, and society at large by ensuring that the transition to Digital Utilities is not only smooth but also beneficial for all stakeholders. It strikes a balance between enabling innovation and protecting consumer interests.

Environmental Impact

The transition to Digital Utilities offers a range of positive environmental impacts, promoting sustainability and reducing the environmental footprint of utility services. Digital Utilities contribute to environmental sustainability through various mechanisms that reduce energy consumption, lower emissions, and enhance resource management. By integrating renewable energy sources and leveraging data-driven technologies, they play a pivotal role in mitigating the environmental impact of utility services while advancing the global shift toward a more sustainable energy future.

Here are some key ways in which Digital Utilities contribute to a greener and more eco-friendly approach:

Reduced Energy Consumption:

Energy Efficiency: Digital Utilities implement technologies like smart meters and real-time data analytics to monitor and optimize energy consumption. By providing consumers with insights into their energy usage, these systems encourage more responsible energy use and result in overall reduced energy consumption.

Load Balancing: Smart grids, a key component of Digital Utilities, enable more effective load balancing. Utilities can distribute energy more efficiently, matching supply with demand. This minimizes the need for excess energy generation, which can be less energy-efficient and more polluting.

Lower Emissions:

Integration of Renewable Energy: Digital Utilities facilitate the integration of renewable energy sources, such as solar and wind power, into the energy grid.

These clean energy sources produce little to no greenhouse gas emissions, reducing the overall carbon footprint of energy production.

Predictive Maintenance: Digital technologies like machine learning enable predictive maintenance, which ensures that energy infrastructure functions optimally. Well-maintained systems are more energy-efficient and produce fewer emissions.

Optimized Resource Management:

Water Conservation: For water utilities, digital technologies enable the efficient management of water distribution. Sensors and data analytics can detect leaks and inefficiencies in real-time, preventing the wastage of water resources.

Gas Leak Detection: Digital systems in gas utilities can swiftly detect and respond to leaks, preventing harmful emissions and ensuring safety.

Reduction in Resource Losses:

Minimizing Resource Leaks: Real-time monitoring and data analytics can quickly identify and rectify resource leaks, such as water or gas leaks, reducing resource losses and the environmental impact associated with those losses.

Improved Grid Resilience:

Reducing Outages: Smart grids and digital monitoring improve the resilience of utility grids, and reducing the likelihood of power outages. Fewer Outages mean that backup generators and less energy-efficient power sources are used less frequently.

Consumer Empowerment:

Demand Response: Digital Utilities empower consumers to participate in demand response programs. During peak demand times, consumers can reduce their energy consumption in exchange for incentives. This reduces the need for additional, often less efficient, energy generation.

Environmental Awareness:

Education and Awareness: By providing consumers with real-time data on their resource consumption and its environmental impact, Digital Utilities raise awareness about the environmental consequences of resource use. This can encourage more eco-conscious behaviors.

Future Outlook

The future of Digital Utilities is promising and will likely continue to evolve in several significant ways in the coming years. The future of Digital Utilities will be marked by a strong emphasis on sustainability, customer empowerment, and the integration of advanced technologies. As the world transitions toward more efficient, eco-friendly, and customer-centric utility services, Digital Utilities will play a crucial role in shaping the future of energy and resource management.

Here are some insights into the future of Digital Utilities:

Greater Integration of Renewable Energy: Digital Utilities will increasingly integrate renewable energy sources, such as solar, wind, and hydropower, into their grids. This will drive the transition to cleaner and more sustainable energy generation.

Advanced Data Analytics: The role of data analytics and machine learning in Digital Utilities will expand. Utilities will use more sophisticated algorithms to optimize resource allocation, predict demand, and further reduce waste.

Enhanced Customer-Centric Services: Digital Utilities will continue to prioritize customer engagement. Consumers will have even more control over their resource consumption, billing, and environmental impact through intuitive digital interfaces and mobile apps.

Decentralization of Energy Production: We can expect to see a rise in decentralized energy production, including home solar panels and small-scale wind turbines. Digital Utilities will accommodate and incentivize such micro-generation to create a more resilient and distributed energy grid.

Energy Storage Solutions: The integration of energy storage solutions, such as advanced batteries, will become more common. These technologies will allow

utilities to store excess energy for use during peak demand periods and improve grid reliability.

5G and IoT Expansion: The rollout of 5G networks will further enhance the capabilities of IoT devices and sensors. This will result in even more real-time data collection and monitoring, leading to improved resource management.

Smart Cities and IoT Integration: Digital Utilities will play a pivotal role in smart city initiatives. The integration of utility data with other smart city components, like transportation and waste management, will create more holistic and efficient urban environments.

Electric Vehicles Charging Infrastructure: As electric vehicles (EVs) become more popular, Digital Utilities will expand their EV charging infrastructure. Utilities will offer smart charging options and demand management to prevent grid overloads.

Blockchain for Energy Transactions: The use of blockchain technology for secure and transparent energy transactions will gain traction. Blockchain can facilitate peer-to-peer energy trading and create more efficient markets for renewable energy.

Environmental Targets and Regulatory Support: Governments and regulatory bodies will set more ambitious environmental targets, pushing utilities to adopt sustainable practices and invest in digital solutions to meet these goals.

Grid Resilience and Microgrids: Utilities will focus on improving grid resilience by implementing microgrids that operate independently during outages. These microgrids will integrate renewable energy sources for increased reliability.

Cybersecurity Advancement: With the growing importance of data in Digital Utilities, there will be increased investment in cybersecurity measures to protect infrastructure and consumer data.

Global Expansion: The adoption of Digital Utilities will continue to expand globally, with more regions and countries embracing the benefits of advanced digital technologies in resource management.

Conclusion

In conclusion, the journey from traditional utility infrastructure, often represented by physical pipes, to the contemporary digital utility landscape defined by pixels, has unveiled a transformative revolution in the way we harness, distribute, and utilize essential services. This paradigm shift, characterized by enhanced efficiency, sustainability, and accessibility, signifies a pivotal moment in the evolution of utility services. As we have traversed through the digital transformation of utilities, we have witnessed a convergence of technology, data, and user-centric innovation, reshaping not only the way we consume essential resources but also the very fabric of our daily lives.

The digital utility revolution has not only brought about unprecedented conveniences but has also introduced new challenges and considerations related to cybersecurity, data privacy, and equitable access. These challenges will require ongoing collaboration among stakeholders, including governments, industries, and communities, to ensure that the benefits of this revolution are shared broadly and that no one is left behind.

As we move forward, it is imperative that we continue to explore and adapt to the dynamic landscape of digital utilities. Embracing emerging technologies, adopting sustainable practices, and fostering a culture of innovation will be essential to maintaining the momentum of this revolution. The future promises further integration of digital utility solutions with artificial intelligence, the Internet of Things, and other groundbreaking technologies, opening doors to possibilities we can only begin to imagine.

In essence, the digital utility revolution is not just about transformation of pipes to pixels but a profound change in how we connect, interact, and thrive in an increasingly interconnected world. It is a testament to human ingenuity and adaptability, and invites us to embrace the opportunities and challenges of this brave new era. As we stand on the precipice of a digital utility future, it is with great anticipation and a sense of responsibility that we continue to explore, innovate, and shape the course of this revolution for the betterment of society and the sustainability of our planet.