

## Unethical Editors from STOTEN Are Moving to a Nature Portfolio Title

STOTEN, Science of the Total Environment, an Elsevier title, is currently “on hold” by the indexing agency Clarivate partly due to the questionable editorial practices by the editors [1], including some top researchers in China [1-2]. Those questionable editorial practices include Edit-for-Themself (acting the handling editor for their own article submitted to the journal), as well as Edit-for-Pal (acting the handling editor for articles from their previous coauthors, or from researcher at their institutions), causing concerns about the quality and reliability of the articles they handled.

### Previous Questionable Editorial Practices by the Editors

Editorial Board Members of npj Materials Sustainability			
Name	Editorial Role	Institution	Remark
Dan Tsang	Editor-in-Chief	Hong Kong University of Science and Technology	Questionable Editor Practices on STOTEN
Sze Dai Pang	Associate Editors	National University of Singapore	
Yuanzhi Tang	Associate Editors	Georgia Institute of Technology	
Roberto Rinaldi	Associate Editors	Imperial College London	
Greeshma Gadikota	Associate Editors	Cornell Atkinson Center for Sustainability	
Shicheng Zhang	Associate Editors	Fudan University	
Francesca Toma	Associate Editors	Helmholtz Zentrum Hereon	
Yaoqing Zhang	Advisory Editor	Senior Editor for Nature Sustainability	
Eric Piechota	Advisory Editor	Editor for Nature Communications	
Hong S. Wong	Editorial Board Members	Imperial College London	
Jean-Philippe Tessonier	Editorial Board Members	Iowa State University	
Susan A. Bernal Lopez	Editorial Board Members	University of Leeds	
Hanwu Lei	Editorial Board Members	Washington State University	
Daniel S. Alessi	Editorial Board Members	University of Alberta	Questionable Editor Practices on STOTEN
Konstantinos S. Triantafyllidis	Editorial Board Members	Aristotle University of Thessaloniki	
Yamei Zhang	Editorial Board Members	Southeast University (China)	
Fan Lu	Editorial Board Members	Tongji University	
Angela Yu-Chen Lin	Editorial Board Members	National Taiwan University	
Teresa A.P. Rocha-Santos	Editorial Board Members	University of Aveiro	Questionable Editor Practices on JHM
Yifeng Zhang	Editorial Board Members	Technical University of Denmark	Questionable Editor Practices on STOTEN
Ning Yan	Editorial Board Members	University of Toronto	
Paulo Pereira	Editorial Board Members	Mykolas Romeris University	
Shurong Wang	Editorial Board Members	Zhejiang University	
Deyi Hou	Editorial Board Members	Tsinghua University	Questionable Editor Practices on STOTEN
Wenshan Guo	Editorial Board Members	University of Technology Sydney	Questionable Editor Practices on STOTEN
Zhidong Zhang	Editorial Board Members	ETH Zurich	
Kuishuang Feng	Editorial Board Members	University of Maryland	
Scott Fendorf	Editorial Board Members	Stanford University	
Z. Jason Ren	Editorial Board Members	Princeton University	
Yifei Sun	Editorial Board Members	Beihang University	
Bin Ma	Editorial Board Members	Paul Scherrer Institute	
Xinde Cao	Editorial Board Members	Shanghai Jiao Tong University	Questionable Editor Practices on Chemosphere
Anett Georgi	Editorial Board Members	Helmholtz Centre for Environmental Research	
Roya Maboudian	Editorial Board Members	University of California	
Wengui Li	Editorial Board Members	The University of New South Wales	
Grzegorz Lisak	Editorial Board Members	Nanyang Technological University	

STOTEN: Science of the Total Environment  
JHM: Journal of Hazardous Materials

However, the 5GH team found some of these unethical editors from STOTEN and other journals, such as Chemosphere, another journal is “on hold” by Clarivate, and Journal of Hazardous Materials (JHM), were assigned to the editorial board of a newly established Nature Portfolio title, npj Materials Sustainability. Those editors are:

**Daniel CW Tsang (a.k.a. Dan Tsang)**, the Editor-in-Chief of npj Materials Sustainability, and previous editorial board member of STOTEN (2018-2024). According to the investigation by the us and our allies, Tsang got involved in questionable practices (mostly Edit-for-Pal) for 64 STOTEN articles (by the end of September, 2024), and the number is climbing fast [1, 3].

**Daniel S. Alessi**, editorial board member of both npj Materials Sustainability and STOTEN, has 3 questionable editorial practice records on STOTEN [1, 3-4], in which he edited for his frequent coauthors (like Yong Sik Ok and others).

**Yifeng Zhang**, editorial board member of both npj Materials Sustainability and STOTEN, has 4 questionable editorial practice records on STOTEN [1, 3], all of which He edited for hie frequent coauthor Aijie Wang, another unethical editor on Environmental Research, an Elsevier title.

**Deyi Hou**, editorial board member of both npj Materials Sustainability and STOTEN, has 16 questionable editorial practice records on STOTEN [1, 3], in which he edited for his frequent coauthors, including Daniel CW Tsang, the Editor-in-Chief of npj Materials Sustainability.

**Wenshan Guo**, editorial board member of both npj Materials Sustainability and STOTEN, has questionable editorial practice record(s) on STOTEN [1, 3], editing for article(s) from her frequent coauthor Huu Hao Ngo.

**Teresa A.P. Rocha-Santos**, editorial board member of both npj Materials Sustainability and

Journal of Hazardous Materials (JHM), has questionable editorial practice records on JHM [5], editing for article(s) from his frequent coauthor(s).

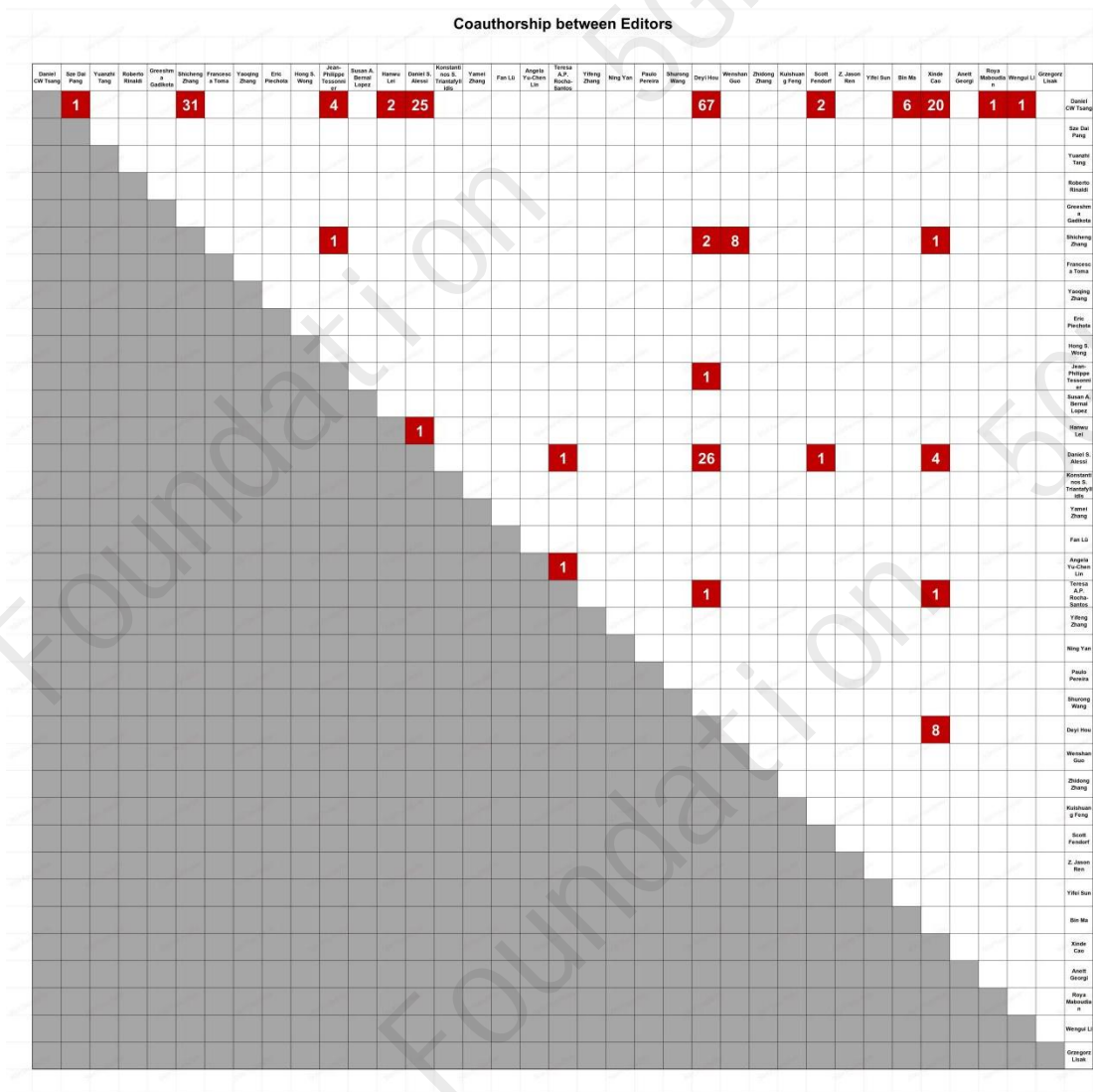
**Xinde Cao**, editorial board member of both npj Materials Sustainability and Chemosphere, has questionable editorial practice records on Chemosphere [6-9], editing for article(s) from his frequent coauthor(s), including Daniel CW Tsang, the Editor-in-Chief of npj Materials Sustainability.

It is noticed that the above-mentioned unethical editors also received Edit-for-Pal from their frequent coauthor(s) on the same journals, or other journals. These questionable editorial practices are thus believed to be organized and to promote the publications for their “academic friends”.

#### **Lack of Diversity among the Editorial Board Members**

The current editorial board also causes concerns about its diversity, which is crucial for the sustainability of the journal. 14 of 36 (about 1 in 3) editors in the board are clustered to a group, sharing coauthorship between at least two members [10]. Daniel CW Tsang, Deyi Hou, Shicheng Zhang, Daniel S. Alessi, and Xinde Cao are the core authors among this researcher group.

For example, Daniel CW Tsang previously coauthored with 11 editorial board members of npj Materials Sustainability. Deyi Hou with Tsinghua University, China, ranks first among the editors have coauthorship with Daniel CW Tsang. Until late September, 2024, Deyi Hou have 67 coauthorship with Daniel CW Tsang, following by Shicheng Zhang (31 coauthorship) with Fudan University, China, Daniel S. Alessi (25 coauthorship) with University of Alberta, Canada, as well as Xinde Cao (20 coauthorship) with Shanghai Jiaotong University, China.



The 5GH team want to address that the above-mentioned 14 clustered editors, by the mean of academic coauthorship, have strong “academic relationship” to each other, and they are a part of a larger clustered researchers in environmental science. Since a large number of editorial board members (7, or 1 in 5) have massive questionable editorial practice records, and the lack of transparency on editorial process of npj Materials Sustainability, such as not disclosing the information of the handling editor(s) and the reviewers with their review reports, the scientific community concerns whether those unethical editors would take advantages of their editorial role to promote publications from their collaborators.

**Lack of Diversity of the Authorship on npj Materials Sustainability**

And the scientific community has more reasons to worry about this. Until the early October, 2024, npj Materials Sustainability had published 36 articles (editorial articles are excluded), including 25 review articles and 11 research articles. 24 of them (67%), including 19 review articles (76%) and 5 research articles (45%), were coauthored by editorial board members, and/or their frequent coauthors [10].

Review Articles Published on npj Materials Sustainability		
DOI	Author(s)	Remark
10.1038/s44296-024-00036-6	Kerry Rippy, Robert T. Bell, Noemi Leick	
10.1038/s44296-024-00037-5	Nicolò Pajer, <b>Chiara Cestari</b> , <b>Dimitris S. Argyropoulos</b> , Claudia Crestini	
10.1038/s44296-024-00031-x	Irene Walker, Robert Bell, Kerry Rippy	
10.1038/s44296-024-00023-x	<b>Zeyu Tao</b> , <b>Yuanmeng Tian</b> , <b>Wei Wu</b> , Zhendong Liu, Weiqi Fu, Chung-Wei Kung, <b>Jin Shang</b>	
10.1038/s44296-024-00024-w	Nisha Singh, <b>Tony R. Walker</b>	
10.1038/s44296-024-00030-y	<b>Raj Mukhopadhyay</b> , Barbara Drigo, <b>Binoy Sarkar</b>	
10.1038/s44296-024-00025-9	<b>Bin Ma</b> , <b>John L. Provis</b> , <b>Dengquan Wang</b> , Georg Kosakowski	Bin Ma is a editorial member
10.1038/s44296-024-00027-7	Linyao Ke, <b>Nan Zhou</b> , <b>Qiu hao Wu</b> , Yuan Zeng, Xiaojie Tian, Jiahui Zhang, <b>Liangliang Fan</b> , <b>Roger Ruan</b> , <b>Yunpu Wang</b>	
10.1038/s44296-024-00016-w	Songqi Leng, Shahzad Barghi, <b>Chunbao Xu</b>	
10.1038/s44296-024-00019-7	Cheng Zhong, <b>Rong Chen</b> , <b>Baicang Liu</b> , <b>Shengyan Pu</b> , <b>Deyi Hou</b>	Deyi Hou is a editorial member
10.1038/s44296-024-00020-0	<b>Vishnu Pusarapu</b> , <b>Rakesh Narayana Sarma</b> , <b>Prince Ochonma</b> , Greeshma Gadikota	
10.1038/s44296-024-00021-z	Xing Quan Wang, Cheuk Lun Chow, Denvi Lau	
10.1038/s44296-024-00011-1	Adam Thelen, Xun Huan, Noah Paulson, Simona Onori, <b>Zhen Hu</b> , Chao Hu	
10.1038/s44296-024-00017-9	Zicheng Zhuang, Fengming Xu, Junhong Ye, Nan Hu, Liming Jiang & Yiwei Weng	
10.1038/s44296-024-00022-y	Hangyu Li, Zhen Ni, Zhenyu Kang, Hongtao Sheng, Yuqing Wang, <b>Mengfang Chen</b> , Linbo Qian	
10.1038/s44296-024-00014-y	<b>Shuangjun Li</b> , Runkai Chen, <b>Junyao Wang</b> , <b>Shuai Deng</b> , <b>Hui Zhou</b> , <b>Mengxiang Fang</b> , <b>Huiyan Zhang</b> , <b>Xiangzhou Yuan</b>	
10.1038/s44296-024-00015-x	Antonio Ovejero-Pérez, Pedro Y. S. Nakasu, Cynthia Hopson, Josiel Martins Costa, <b>Jason P. Hallett</b>	
10.1038/s44296-024-00010-2	Weisheng Lu, Jinfeng Lou, Benjamin Kwaku Ababio, Ray Y. Zhong, Zhikang Bao, Xiao Li, Fan Xue	
10.1038/s44296-024-00013-z	<b>Michael Komárek</b>	
10.1038/s44296-024-00012-0	Yingxue Yu, Markus Flury	
10.1038/s44296-024-00009-9	Rohit Gupta, Zahra Hajabdollahi Ouderji, Uzma, <b>Zhibin Yu</b> , William T. Sloan, <b>Siming You</b>	
10.1038/s44296-024-00008-w	Kai-Kai Wu, Pian-Pian Xu, <b>Lei Zhao</b> , Nan-Qi Ren, <b>Yi-Feng Zhang</b>	Yifeng Zhang is a editorial member
10.1038/s44296-024-00007-x	Angie F. J. Tan, Sam Yu, <b>Cheng Wang</b> , Guan Heng Yeoh, Wey Yang Teoh, <b>Alex C. K. Yip</b>	
10.1038/s44296-024-00005-z	<b>Fei Jin</b> , Mingshan Zhao, Maochun Xu, <b>Liwu Mo</b>	
10.1038/s44296-023-00003-7	<b>Songlin Wu</b> , <b>Kurt O. Konhauser</b> , Baodong Chen, <b>Longbin Huang</b>	

We understand that at the early stage of a journal, the editorial board may need some “help” from their friends. But regarding to these huge proportions of the Article-from-Pal, and questionable editorial practice records with some editors, including the Editor-in-Chief, what is happening on npj Materials Sustainability is concerning. We urge Springer Nature, the publisher of the journal, to keep eyes on the editors.

- [1] 5GH-SciPress-20241007.001 (in Chinese)
- [2] 5GH-WuGH-20240929.001
- [3] Supporting Information (1) <5GH.org/SciPress/2024/STOTEN(20241007).xlsx>
- [4] 10.1016/j.scitotenv.2024.173424
- [5] 10.1016/j.jhazmat.2020.123775
- [6] 10.1016/j.chemosphere.2020.126539
- [7] 10.1016/j.chemosphere.2019.125344
- [8] 10.1016/j.chemosphere.2016.01.043
- [9] 10.1016/j.chemosphere.2018.07.088
- [10] Supporting Information (2) <5GH.org/WuGH/2024/npjMatSus.xlsx>

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