

Let's Push the Already Open Door

Letter of an ad-hoc group of National Networks and Committees for Global Change
to the Future Earth Task Force
25 May, 2020

The global sustainability transition will be enabled by local forces. Global networks for research and knowledge exchange are crucial to accelerate cooperation but most vital decisions connecting research and scholarship to policy and behavior change are now made at local and national levels. National government delegations lead global environmental and sustainability policy negotiations on goals and targets, and most policy choices for research come from national institutions. Changemakers in a transnational network, as interconnected as they were with their international peers, must recognize the national and local context, from which they depend and which they have the power to shape.

Future Earth is the lead global network of scientists collaborating for a more sustainable planet. It is powerful because it spans the globe, but to be effective, it is now the time to connect with the regional, national and local structures that must engage in the analysis of regional issues, their integration into the global knowledge base and the strengthening of government's engagement for the transition.

Future Earth connects with a number of national networks and committees that are well positioned to mobilize sustainability science within their countries, and to mobilize support for sustainability science. So far, the governance and management of Future Earth has not fully empowered these structures, and as a result, many of them feel disconnected from the governance of Future Earth and the Global Secretariat. For some, the name Future Earth has remained as the only visible link to the global work led by the other segments of Future Earth. As a result, information has not been flowing, national networks are poorly aware of global achievements and Global Research Projects and Knowledge Action Networks are rarely grounded in the regional context. This is taking place at a time when national interest in sustainability, and science, is increasing, and the imperative for coordinated global action is stronger than ever.

Now it is the time to change this.

National Networks and Committees are strengthening their own networking but they need to be recognized as key members of the Future Earth community. With a better-defined role in Future Earth and its priority-setting National Networks and Committees can significantly accelerate the progress towards the sustainability transition. Their

empowerment could also benefit Global Research Projects and Knowledge-Action-Networks, and help them liaise with national funding agencies that support sustainability research, as well the International Project Offices of GRPs, KANs and Future Earth itself.

In our view, Future Earth will be unable to reach its objective, or realize its ambition, without systematic mobilization at the national level.

As representatives of different Future Earth National networks and Committees, we ask the Future Earth Task Force to highlight our recommendation to the Future Earth Governing Council. A growing group of National networks and Committees stands ready to engage more closely with the global network of Future Earth.

With sufficient empowerment and support, the National Structures can make a significant difference in the work and impact of Future Earth. Let's push the already open door.

Sincerely,

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