# Seedbeds of Transformation Conference

**9 to 11 May 2018**, **Port Elizabeth, South Africa**

**Session: How can research networks of the Future Earth framework effectively contribute to implementation of the SDGs in Africa?**

The UN 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development stresses the fundamental role science should play for implementation of the 17 SDGs. In this context, the Future Earth platform encourages the scientific community to engage in co-production of knowledge together with societal actors to generate the knowledge needed to support sustainability transformations. To achieve this aim, several international sustainability research networks are currently working on novel approaches, organising conferences, webinars or working groups dedicated to the issue, designing science-policy-interfaces, or studying best practices. However, many actors involved are challenged to implement collaborative approaches within their structures and creating conditions which are truly favourable for co-production. A major reason for this challenge is the global scope of these networks. How can global scale, international research networks effectively foster the production of knowledge relevant for key actors in the implementation of the SDGs in Africa? In particular, how can these networks foster knowledge production that truly considers African perspectives and needs regarding the SDGs? And how can African perspectives be integrated into global frameworks so that global priorities are relevant to actors on the ground in Africa. The session aims to jointly explore how international sustainability research networks, together with regional partners, can work towards creating the knowledge needed for implementation of the SDGs in Africa, and beyond.

We envision that our session impacts discourse and action on transformation through two ways. First, by facilitating dialogue among representatives of networks (e.g. managers, executive directors) we want to enhance learning for more efficient network functioning. Second, through this session, we aim to explore the potential of establishing an international learning and reflection group around co-production within and beyond the Future Earth platform. Hence, the insights generated in this session will translate in this new group and thereby impact further discourse, taking into account African perspectives.

Session Programme:

The session will start with a short introduction on the topic and a series of 4 flash talks of research networks giving insights in their approaches of fostering co-production for sustainability transformations in Africa. Then, we will moderate a discussion, first among the presenters and later with all participating networks and other participants. The discussion will be organised by applying the "fishbowl"-technique to allow all participants to express their perspectives. This procedure may allow to look at 4 research networks in more detail - and consequently to focus the discussion on specific experiences done in these networks. But at the same time allowing all other networks to share their experiences.

The discussion will be documented by jointly creating generic models of transformative sustainability research network.

| Time | Content | who |
|---|---|---|
| 15min | **Welcome and introduction**<br><br>(background, goals, program, present research networks, Mercator project: what happened so far, theory of change thinking/model/Waddell network functions) | Flurina, Theresa |
| 20min | **Flash talks of 4 selected networks** (4 min each)<br><br>Suggestion: Shuaib Lwasa on Urban KAN, Jackie Olang on Lira 2030, Heila Lotz-Sisitka on T-Learning, and Vasna Ramasar on ESG or Oonsie Biggs on SAPECS<br><br>4 slides referring to the following questions:<br><br>Slide 1:<br><br>*What are the objectives of your network in terms of implementing the 2030 Agenda in Africa?*<br><br>Slide 2:<br><br>*What kind of activities does your network do to reach these objectives?*<br><br>Put particular emphasis on the following questions:<br><br>How does your network facilitate (co-)production of knowledge in the African context?<br><br>How do you ensure that African perspectives and priorities better inform and gain traction for the SDGs, the Paris Climate Accord, international research agendas and other global sustainability frameworks?<br><br>Slide 3:<br><br>*What principles guide your network activities?*<br><br>Put particular emphasis on roles of researchers and other societal actors, work hierarchies and forms of collaboration within your network, sustainability understandings, epistemologies, assumptions about society-research relationships<br><br>Slide 4:<br><br>*What are main challenges and opportunities on your way towards achieving your network objective?*<br><br>*(During the presentations, key points are summarized in flip-chart tables)* | tbc |
| 45min | **'Fishbowl'-Discussion round**<br><br>The discussion will first focus on the issues presented in the four talks, then, on the experiences of the other participating research networks. Particular emphasis will be placed on the networks' change theories. Key insights of the discussions will be noted down on the flip-chart tables.<br><br>Towards the end, we like to draw (preliminary) conclusions regarding the following three questions:<br><br>What change theories are underlying the different knowledge (co-)production approaches?<br><br>What kind of (co-)production is needed for implementation of the SDGs in Africa, and bringing African perspectives to global frameworks?<br><br>How can research networks foster such (co-)production of knowledge in Africa? | all |
| 10min | **Outlook**<br><br>Explore the need and possibilities to continue discussion on these questions | Flurina |

<u>Participating Research Networks:</u>

The following networks and persons will participate:

- Flurina Schneider and Theresa Tribaldos, Centre for Development and Environment, Switzerland
- Lira 2030 in Africa: Jackie Olang (NASAC), Katsia Paulavets (ICSU), Vivi Stavrou (ISSC), Coleen Vogel (Wits University)
- T-learning transformative knowledge network: Heila Lotz-Sisitka (Rhodes University, South Africa)
- Network of African Science Academies (NASAC): Jackie Olang (Kenya)
- Southern African Programme on Ecosystem Change and Society (SAPECS): Bob Scholes (Wits University, South Africa); Oonsie Biggs (SRC, Stellenbosch University, South Africa)
- Global Land Programme (GLP): Ariane de Bremond, Peter Messerli (Bern University, Switzerland, US)
- Earth System Governance (ESG): Vasna Ramasar (Lund University, Sweden)
- Urban Knowledge Action Network (Urban KAN) Shuaib Lwasa (Mekere University in Kampala, Uganda),
- Water-Energy-Food Nexus Knowledge Action Network (Nexus KAN): Sandrine Paillard (Future Earth, France)
- Network for Transdisciplinary Research (td-net): Tobias Buser  (Switzerland)