

Creating a Global SDG Transformation Forum

The Urgent Need and Opportunity

Many urgent challenges require transformation rather than incremental change. This is reflected in the [17 Sustainable Development Goals \(SDGs\)](#) adopted by the nations of the world in September 2015 and in the December 2015 Paris Climate Agreement. Doing more of the same will not get to the goals. They require fundamentally innovative action. However, there are several difficulties in taking transformative action: the knowledge and tools are fragmented amongst diverse disciplines, issues, organizations and people; there is inadequate knowledge and tools; and we need greater capacity to apply what is known about transformative action.

The Response

The SDG Transformation Forum is being initiated with the leadership of the global science community represented by [Future Earth](#), and [Transformations2017](#), the pre-eminent transformation meeting space globally. The Forum is (1) global, (2) multi-stakeholder, (3) supporting the Paris Climate Agreement and SDGs, (4) focused on SDG 17 about the "how" to realize the goals, (4) focused on "transformation" as a specific type of "how" activity in contrast to, for example, incremental change. The SDG Transformation Forum advances *collaborative action to address the new knowledge creation, innovative action and change capacity to realize the SDGs through transformation.*

The broad **vision** of the Forum is a system of activities and people who are accelerating transformational SDGs' implementation – by responding to need but also by raising awareness of the transformational knowledge and practice base.

Its **mission** is to engender collaborative knowledge creation and collective action based on a transformational approach to SDG implementation.

The Forum stakeholders include those working for transformation through science, government, business, civil society, funders, and practice. By identifying with them highly strategic, high-leverage actions the Forum supports more effective efforts through application of leading knowledge and tools, and creation of new knowledge and tools. It works across academic disciplines, issues, industries, and ministries/departments to cut through siloes, create synergies, and address duplication of efforts. In effect, it creates a critical element in innovation and transformation: a system approach. As co-developers of the Forum, the stakeholders:

- Pioneer new approaches to complex change by bringing cutting-edge theory and practice;
- Mainstream a transformational approach to SDG implementation in organizations and institutions across all sectors;
- Foster cross-sector learning and implementation around multi-stakeholder approaches to transformation; and
- Influence action takers and advance policy advice for a systemic approach to transformation.

Actions

The Forum is beginning by a simple set of webinars to bring together people across divisions and discuss issues critical to transformation. In concert with Transformations2017 conference August 30-Sept. 1, stakeholders are coming together September 2 around specific transformation issues to develop work streams around issues of transformation measurement, design, sustainability innovation, metanarratives, and financing.

Given transformation involves doing and organizing in innovative ways, the Forum's work must be driven by action and experimentation – actually trying out new possibilities.

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Attachment: Illustrative Forum Activities

Illustrative Forum Activities

Some examples of Forum activities identified are:

a) Creating a transformation agenda

The Forum will bring together people engaged in the SDGs to look at their activities in terms of transformation. They will meet to explore the latest knowledge and experiences with transformation approaches and identify potential priority actions to advance it through their individual and collective work.

b) Realizing scale and impact

Transformation is large scale change. Individual efforts require connecting, to have impact. The Forum will continually review key fields of activity and identify when and how to support connections. It has already begun doing this with people working on a new “meta-narrative”: several initiatives to create a transformational socio-political-economic-environmental vision of our future and actions to support its emergence.

c) Integrating transformation into SDG events

In June, 2017 the UN and the GoSweden host an SDG 14 (Oceans) event in New York. For events like these the Forum would organize action planning workshops to explore and integrate transformational methods and strategies into their plans. This will be followed up with an official side event to report on the workshop.

d) Working with member organizations to strengthen their transformation actions

Participating organizations have programs that aim for transformation. For example, Civicus has a program focused on innovation; the World Economic Forum has one focused on Global Challenges. The Forum will connect people and resources to support transformational approaches.

e) Accessing tools and methods

There is much known about how to approach transformation, but the knowledge is highly fragmented between issues (eg: peace-building, business responsibility, environmental change) and schools of approach (eg: appreciative inquiry, big data, system dynamics, collective leadership, Theory U). The Forum will create a virtual space for presenting these, and processes to expand their application. A key partner in this is the Transformation conferences that highlight such approaches.

f) Advancing the action frontier

Tools, methods and strategies require much more development. Partners will identify collaborative, high-leverage action projects that can address blockages to powerful transformation approaches. This can include supporting appropriate measurement methods, broadening engagement and mobilizing resources/building business models.

g) Strengthening the three key transformation activities

Transformation involves three activities: experimenting to identify viable transformations; building knowledge and skills to support the transformation process; and creating structures to sustain the transformation process for the necessary time (see Attachment C). Organizing innovations are arising to take up these challenges. Archetypical forms are social innovation labs, communities of practice and Global Action Networks. Development of these and other forms as a group of organizing innovations will greatly speed up their growth in maturity and scale. The Forum participants will include these new organizing structures and support building the unique competencies they require as transformation agents through peer-learning and other strategies.