

Future Earth and Sustainable Development Goals

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One of the next major challenges for research and policy in the field of sustainable development is the agreement of the post-2015 development agenda. This challenge is a direct result from the 2012 United Nations Conference on Sustainable Development (Rio+20), as well as from the formal ending of the Millennium Development Goals (MDG) in 2015. Governments, supported by civil society, now need to agree on a series of new global sustainable development goals and on the related governance mechanisms. At the Rio+20 Conference, governments decided on a process to develop such novel Sustainable Development Goals (SDG), to be integrated into the post-2015 global development agenda. Differently from the MDGs that target developing countries, the new Sustainable Development Goals are meant to apply to both developing and developed countries.

The research community that works in this field is faced with essentially two research tasks:

- ? First, we need to analyze the goal setting and implementation processes (governance questions);
- ? Second, we need to analyze and identify the goals and indicators themselves.

The first task entails an inquiry into who will be involved in setting these goals (Agency, Accountability), by which decision making mechanisms (Architecture, Adaptiveness), what these goals will be (Allocation and Access), and how to arrive at the framework for formulating the goals as well as an inquiry into how these goals will be translated into outcomes. The second task includes the question on how to elaborate the global development goals to facilitate achieving human well-being for all within resource constraints and environmental boundaries set by the earth system. A related question is the conceptual framework for the goals, and what goals, targets and indicators need to be developed. This in turn poses questions on enabling institutions and governance processes. We have witnessed in the past years that the development model that underpinned the post-1945 decades appears to be unable to handle the crises that many societies and institutions are struggling with (financial, demographic, environmental, etc.).

Therefore, questions related to the Post-2015 development agenda are not solely about SDGs, but are rather fundamental questions on how to achieve sustainability in the 21st century. To do so requires knowledge innovation, and it is possible through transdisciplinary research, one of the purposes of Future Earth, including co-design, co-production and co-design. This is a theme that should be explored in the year to come.

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