

The IPBES Global Assessment on Transformative Change: An Overview

The following questions were asked during our live webinar with Suzie Greenhalgh, Manaaki Whenua, and Nicholas Rāhiri Roskrige (Ātiawa, Ngāti Tama-ariki me Ngāti Porou), retired Professor in Ethnobotany and Horticulture but due to time restrictions, we were unable to answer these in the session.

Questions and Answers:

What do you think the most important thing we could do in NZ to drive transformative change?

From a personal perspective I think a raised awareness of what Transformative change actually is and how we can facilitate at all levels of society to ensure we respond appropriately to the current issues. So strong communication and appropriate examples taken out to the policy and public spaces

How does the challenge against our diversity and inclusive approaches to governing influence these aims? Is there appreciation of how we resource the change needed when politics pushes back on environmental and social health and wellbeing?

We have to look wider and accept that the government are just one player in the space. Indigenous communities worldwide continue to practice their ethics of stewardship and management etc. This report advocates for more diversity in the knowledge spaces and to recognise it is a collective responsibility rather than individuals.

I noticed your presentation suggests stronger government regulation as a useful instrument. There is currently a leaning to reduce regulation in NZ while supporting/freeing up local action for groups such as catchment groups. Do you have any thoughts about this?

I think the report acknowledges that there is a stronger role for governments to play and that they need to be more involved in enacting the needs for the future of our environment and to meet the 2050 agreement. The IPBES process is targeted at policy makers amongst other interests.

How do you think this could inform NZ's commitments to the Global Biodiversity Framework

The Key Messages are intended to inform all governments who are members of the IPBES community and I think some countries are more advanced in their response to biodiversity issues than others, but this report is intended to help bring them together for some broader approaches that are not just geopolitically driven

Are there any binding statutory requirements for governments or is it non-binding? Requirement for monitoring progress?

At this stage it is non-binding but the process of being approved by a Plenary of the member states means all the governments are fully aware of the content of the report

How can Indigenous knowledge systems shape new metrics beyond western science paradigm?

Great question and one which the report authors asked themselves many times. KM12. (Knowledge co-creation and recognition of plural forms of knowledge, worldviews and values) identified the role of diverse knowledge systems (in particular ILK) to inform future policy directions. Also, the need to decolonise academia, in particular to recognise and value other knowledge contributions

What do you think is one of the most important thing NZ could do to transform faster than we are presently moving?

Empowerment at all levels - so the government can lead but others need to pick up the challenge and support a move towards change which meets the strategic need.

Along the same lines - what happens after sign-off for IPBES reports? What take up do you see around the world and in NZ in particular?

After the Plenary accept the reports a strong effort moves into communicating the report and all its messages out to the global audience. Many of the authors focus on putting their work into publications while other processes such as webinars are also promoted. I have chaired a number of webinars on the report in the last couple of months

How large is the lack of imagination impact? Can you unpack that impact a little more?

Remembering this is a global report so our experiences in NZ are generally quite unique when compared to other countries. The report notes the need to view the issues from a broad international and global space, so governments and other parties need to think outside of their usual boundaries and also interact with other interests - all in the best interests of biodiversity

Many changes are deep societal changes and very hard to achieve. What kinds of initiatives were discussed between the authors?

That's a big question - I think the key approach by authors (which included fellows [ECR]) was to inform the main report through their own experiences, mostly academic. Throughout the 3 years several workshops were held with interested parties such as the ILK Taskforce to contribute feedback to the report as it came together. Other examples of initiatives were the case studies spreadsheet which ended with over 800 examples from the authors and external contributors and helped inform some of the how and why TC occurs

Is there any work being done to apply these learnings and needed action to NZ?

Early days but currently the communications activity is kicking in around the world and that includes webinars such as this one, global forum representation and publications. I'm not aware of anything specific within NZ yet

Did Aotearoa sign off on this at government level?

Yes, NZ/Aotearoa was represented at the Plenary in Namibia in December so was a party to the final signing-off of the report at that time.