

# RIHN taking initiative on discussion toward “new life” after COVID-19 pandemic

The unfolding SARS-CoV-2 (COVID) pandemic is drastically altering the human-nature relationship. It is affecting global environmental issues in complex ways while the overall picture still remains unclear. Negative effects include reduced access to commons such as communal spaces, green spaces and public transport, as a result of lockdowns, concerns around food security due to reliance on the global food system, and threats to meeting people’s basic needs. On the other hand, the forced stop of unsustainable levels of production and air transport, as example, led to reductions in carbon emissions and air pollution.

The largest impact could be a collective re-evaluation of values and lifestyles that opens the door to radical shifts in policy. In order to discuss on this matter worldwide, the Future Earth Knowledge-Action Network on Systems of Sustainable Consumption and Production (FE SSCP KAN), supported by the Future Earth Regional Center for Asia, has led an initiative to leverage the crisis as an opportunity for a sustainability transition to tackle the multiple environmental crises that threaten to impact well-being far beyond COVID. It organized a highly successful [open forum](#) on March 26 with more than 300 participants, facilitated by Steven McGreevy, a member of SSCP KAN and the project leader of the FEAST research project at the Research Institute for Humanity and Nature (RIHN), located in Kyoto, Japan. “The open forum discussed how lock-down-induced changes to everyday life could be new sources of sustainability and well-being, how critical and undervalued the care economy is to the way we live, and how new values and worldviews are emerging that question what is necessary to a good life.” says McGreevy.

The Future Earth SSCP KAN is planning to hold again a virtual Mini-Conference on COVID-19 and Sustainability Transitions on coming May 27. (See here: <https://bit.ly/2zTkFkY>)

Several RIHN members are now playing a central role in Future Earth SSCP KAN efforts as organizers, facilitators, and participants in driving the initiative, and in promoting findings from RIHN projects.

One of the members of the FEAST Project, Norie Tamura has initiated with the FEAST team a multi-country online survey of small-scale farmers to see how the outbreak has affected their operations and gauge their level of resilience in times of crisis. At this stage, partners from Japan, Italy, UK, US, Taiwan, and Latin America are coordinating on this effort. A similar survey of coastal fisheries co-led by Tamura together with fishery scientists and practitioners is about to launch in Japan, with plans to expand it to other countries in collaboration with The North Pacific Marine Science Organization (PICES).

Other FEAST Project members, Christoph Rupperecht and Max Spiegelberg have joined an international alliance of Degrowth experts in drafting of an open letter (<https://www.degrowth.info/en/open-letter>) to offer five principles for the recovery of the economy and as the basis of creating a just society: 1) Put life at the center of our economic systems, 2) Radically re-evaluate how much and what work is necessary for a good life for all, 3) Organize society around the provision of essential goods and services, 4) Democratize society, 5) Base political and economic systems on the principle of solidarity.

The pandemic has highlighted critical flaws in the global socio-economic system and their effects on humans and nature, but also shown that swift, radical policy changes are possible if the situation requires it. RIHN is committed to leading international transdisciplinary research for solving ongoing and emerging global environmental problems.