

Can (governmental) reporting on the state of nature be transformative?

Session proposal for the Alternet Conference 2025

Reporting on the state of nature is one of the key tasks of many (governmental) research institutes. Continuous mapping of the deteriorating situation has led many research institutes to over time broaden up from the strict reporting on the state of nature and direct drivers of change, to also uncovering the root causes of biodiversity loss. While this is a necessary first step to enable transformative change, it is often met with resistance. The root causes inherently include the larger socio-economic and political structures which transcend the mandate of the environmental departments of the government and are moreover often value-laden. When nature reporting points out that changing these structures are necessary leverage points to bend the curve on biodiversity loss, it is often perceived as politicizing the research and going outside of the government-mandated task. While some pushback from both the policy administrations and the political sphere is arguably a sign that we are on our way to transformative change, too much pushback could mean that the reporting institutes lose credibility and face political repercussions, especially in the recently shifting political landscape.

In this closed session we invite all Alternet members who are responsible for reporting on the state of nature in their regions or countries, to share their experiences and to jointly reflect on the balancing exercise of pointing at the root causes and not have (detrimental) pushback from the policy and political side. As a potential outcome of this session a first outline of a shared vision on nature reporting could be drafted which highlights the need for nature reporting to be able to identify and report on root causes to fully fulfill their task and enable transformative change.

This session does not accept abstracts but will invite selected speakers. All Alternet institutes are invited to do a short pitch on their nature reporting strategy and their navigation of highlighting root causes and avoiding pushback. If this applies to your work, please contact jomme.desair@inbo.be . Most of the session will be interactive round tables