

Wageningen University and Kyoto University Joint International Seminar  
to commemorate the signing of the MoU for further collaboration

## **Transformations to Sustainability: From an International and Interdisciplinary Perspective**

Date: 10:00-12:00 am | September 28, 2018

Venue: Kyoto University Research Administration Building 1F Seminar Room

*Climate change, environmental degradation and resource pressures have created unprecedented situations for societies worldwide... Conventional knowledge and capacity building to tackle the challenges associated with sustainability have had some positive impacts but are ultimately not fully adequate. Consequently, there is growing attention to the need for more fundamental transformations in the way societies interact with each other and with the natural environment as the basis of sustainability. Societal transformations refer to profound and enduring systemic changes that typically involve social, cultural, technological, political, economic and environmental processes. A comprehensive and concerted research initiative is needed that can boost research on transformations to sustainability, and catalyse new kinds of solutions to environmental and social challenges.*

--- The Belmont Forum and NORFACE Network (2017)

This seminar is aimed to commemorate the signing of the MoU between Wageningen University and Kyoto University (the signing ceremony is scheduled on 9<sup>th</sup> October). At the same time, two universities are involved in several research projects funded by the Belmont Forum and NORFACE (New Opportunities for Research Funding Agency Cooperation in Europe). By taking this opportunity, we invite the project leaders of the two international and interdisciplinary research projects from both universities to introduce their projects and exchange ideas about how to transform our societies towards sustainability by fundamentally rethinking and systemically changing the relations between societies and between societies and the natural environment.

09:45	<b>Registration</b>
10:00–10:10	<b>Opening Remarks and Introduction of Speakers</b> Prof. Shuji Hisano (Graduate School of Economics, Kyoto University)
10:10–10:50	<b>The Conservation Revolution: Radical Ideas for Saving Nature beyond the Anthropocene</b> Prof. Bram Büscher (Sociology of Development and Change, Wageningen University, The Netherlands)
10:50–11:30	<b>Transformation as Praxis: Exploring Socially Just and Transdisciplinary Pathways to Sustainability in Marginal Environments (TAPESTRY)</b> Prof. Nobuhito Ohte (Graduate School of Informatics, Kyoto University)
11:30–12:00	<b>Discussions: How to transform our societies towards sustainability?</b>

## Presentation 1)

### **The Conservation Revolution: Radical Ideas for Saving Nature beyond the Anthropocene**

The question how to pursue environmental conservation has become acute. Saving nature has never been an easy proposition. But the arrival of the Anthropocene – our alleged new phase of world history in which humans dominate the earth-system – seems to have upped the ante dramatically; the choices facing the conservation community have now become particularly stark. It is therefore no surprise that we have recently seen several radical proposals for revolutionizing conservation, surrounded by heated debates. One proposal, *the 'new' conservation*, asserts that humans must take their 'earth domination' seriously and manage this to maximize sustainability and economic development. The response was a *radical resurgence of 'neo-protectionism'*. This view aims to separate development from conservation and calls (again) for a drastic expansion of protected areas, even up to half the planet. The presentation is the first to provide a sustained evaluation of and reflection on the arguments informing these radical conservation proposals and their implications for thinking about development. We argue that both proposals hold important seeds for radical change. Yet each on its own contains untenable, even dangerous contradictions as they do not take political economic realities seriously enough. In-depth analysis of these contradictions reveals that to do justice to the debate's radical implications we need to take it out of the Anthropocene and place it more fittingly within the Capitalocene. Humans, after all, cannot overcome the age of humans; we can – indeed must – overcome the age of capital. Inspired by political ecology and real-world examples of saving nature differently, we develop an alternative position that we call *'convivial conservation'*. Convivial conservation allows radical seeds to grow into a realistic and positive new foundation for reconciling global conservation and development imperatives. It imagines and builds a post-capitalist approach to conservation that contributes to an overarching movement to create a more equal and sustainable world. This, in short, is conservation's challenge in the 21st century: a true conservation revolution.

**Prof. Bram Büscher** (Sociology of Development and Change, Wageningen University, The Netherlands; Department of Geography, Environmental Management & Energy Studies, University of Johannesburg, South Africa)

He currently serves as Professor and Chair at the Sociology of Development and Change group at Wageningen University. He also holds appointments as a visiting Professor at the Department of Geography, Environmental Management and Energy Studies of the University of Johannesburg and a Research Associate at the Department of Sociology and Social Anthropology of Stellenbosch University. From April-June 2017, he held a Van Zyl Slabbert Visiting Professorship at the Departments of Politics and Sociology at the University of Cape Town. From 2008-2014, he was as an Assistant and later Associate Professor of Environment and Sustainable Development at the Institute of Social Studies, Erasmus University.

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## Presentation 2)

### **Transformation as Praxis: Exploring Socially Just and Transdisciplinary Pathways to Sustainability in Marginal Environments (TAPESTRY)**

The objective of TAPESTRY is to examine how transformation may arise from below in marginal environments with high levels of uncertainty. Climate change uncertainties, especially at the local level, constitute one of the main challenges to the sustainability of societies and ecosystems, calling for systemic transformative changes. While uncertainty can exacerbate anxieties about the future, it can also provide an opportunity to create transformation and deep structural change. TAPESTRY focuses on three patches of transformation in India and

Bangladesh – vulnerable coastal areas of Mumbai, the Sundarbans and Kutch – where hybrid alliances and innovative practices are reimagining sustainable development and inspiring societal transformation. TAPESTRY is organised in a transnational and transdisciplinary consortium across the UK, India, Bangladesh, Norway and Japan. Its conceptual innovation lies in studying transformation as praxis, by putting bottom-up change and the agency of marginalised people at the centre and by analysing how co-produced transformations can be scaled up and out. The project is particularly relevant to theme 1 and 3 of the call, i.e. governance, wellbeing, quality of life, identity and values in relation to transformations to sustainability. All these lie at the heart of the welfare and development challenges faced by India (a lower middle income country) and Bangladesh (least developed country). The project’s outcomes and impact will inform processes to improve the quality of life of marginalised people affected by climate change related uncertainties, build action and capacity amongst all partners whilst generating evidence of how bottom-up transformation can take place in marginal environments.

**Prof. Nobuhito Ohte** (Biosphere Informatics Laboratory, Department of Social Informatics, Kyoto University)

“I have studied hydrological and biogeochemical cycles in forest ecosystems applying field methods and multiple isotopic tracer techniques. What currently I want to do is describing the transformation and flow of nutrients and materials in ecosystems through the community dynamics of plants and microbes. Building up a geographically comprehensive database on ecological information is also an important task for me. Complex system like a forest ecosystem has much kind of redundant functions and structures. Those play effective roles to buffer the direct impact by the external disturbance, and make the system resilient. Biodiversity is an indispensable property to guarantee these mechanisms in the ecosystem. I want to clarify the linkages and connections operating those mechanisms. This is my purpose of life.”



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