



UNIVERSITY OF  
GLOUCESTERSHIRE

at Cheltenham and Gloucester

# PRISM

RESEARCH CONFERENCE

19th - 20th May 2011

The Interdisciplinary  
Researcher:  
*Paradigms, Practices and  
Possibilities for Sustainability*



**Postgraduate Researchers Interested  
in Sustainability Matters**

University of Gloucestershire  
Francis Close Hall Campus  
Cheltenham, England, UK  
[www.glos.ac.uk/prism](http://www.glos.ac.uk/prism)

## THE INTERDISCIPLINARY RESEARCHER

It is widely acknowledged that the complexities of sustainability require forms of research activity that challenge boundaries at several interfaces, not least between academic disciplines, across professional roles and in relation to personal values. The new conceptual and practical spaces that are being uncovered by innovative sustainability research provide a landscape rich with potential for academic practice and to advance human understanding of the sustainability challenges we face.

In recent years sustainability has become an increasingly fashionable research topic, the focus of new inter-disciplinary research funding streams and a powerful attractor for the next generation of researchers. However, despite this acceleration of interest and the growth in numbers of doctoral and post-doctoral studies focusing their studies in the area, there are still very limited opportunities for postgraduate and early career researchers, as well as their mentors and peers, to share discussions and insights on critical agendas and research issues.

This PRISM conference has been conceived to provide a forum for wide-ranging debate on the horizons for interdisciplinary research on sustainability matters. It foregrounds the motif of the *'interdisciplinary researcher'* as the inspiration and the base for an exciting exploration of changing *paradigms*, innovative *practices* and emerging *possibilities* in this field.

## PRISM

PRISM is a network of postgraduate and early career researchers based in universities across the UK and overseas, who are engaged with the conceptualisation as well as the applied practice of sustainability-related research. The network was initiated by University of Gloucestershire and is supported by the European Commission through the Marie Curie International Incoming Fellowship Programme. PRISM hosts regular interactive and topical research seminars at the University of Gloucestershire and communicates through a JISmail group.

## THE CONFERENCE

The conference is founded on the impulse to support the professional and academic development of the next cadre of innovative inter-disciplinary sustainability researchers. Its core aims are:

- To gain an overview of international developments and trends in interdisciplinary research in sustainability.
- To explore conceptual debates on research paradigms for an interdisciplinary approach to sustainability.
- To share practice on and opportunities for interdisciplinary research in sustainability.

During the conference, invited keynote and expert sessions will address these themes and provide targeted discussion space, so that participants can discuss the conceptual, methodological and socio-political dimensions of the widest range of inter-disciplinary research inquiries on sustainability questions. Opportunities will also be provided for participants at all levels and from all backgrounds to contribute through interactive presentations and posters.

The Conference forms part of the Marie Curie International Incoming Fellowship (IIF) Programme *'Learning and Living for Sustainability: Building Interdisciplinary Research Capacity and Expertise in Social and Professional Responses to Sustainability'* which is based at the University of Gloucestershire. The project involves evidence-based research on the complexity of, and opportunities for, embedding sustainability as an interdisciplinary research activity at the University of Gloucestershire, and embedding education for sustainability across professional courses. Professor Daniella Tilbury is the Marie Curie Fellow leading this project and is the Chair of this Conference.

PROGRAMME		Thursday 19 <sup>th</sup> May	
10.00-10.30 Foyer	<i>Registration and Coffee</i>		
10.30 Room: CE102	<b>Welcome and Scene Setting:</b> Professor Daniella Tilbury, Marie Curie Fellow; Conference Chair.		
10.45	<b>Keynote Presentation:</b> Professor Heila Lotz-Sisitka, Murray & Roberts Chair of Environmental Education and Sustainability at Rhodes University, South Africa.		
11.15	<b>Panel Response:</b> The Panel: Mona El Zoghbi, PRISM Member; Dr Morgan Phillips, Global-Footsteps; Prof Michela Mayer, Leader of the OECD ENSI Junior Researchers Group; Prof David James, Associate Dean (Research), University of Gloucestershire.		
11.45	<b>Discussion:</b> facilitated by Dr Alex Ryan, Associate Director of Sustainability, University of Gloucestershire		
12.00	<b>Interactive Session:</b> Facilitated by Dr Clemens Mader Group Activity to identifying boundaries of current thinking on research approaches to sustainability and potential areas of research that would extend the boundaries. Outcomes captured for conference proceedings.		
13.00	<i>Lunch: CE102</i>		
13.45 – 16.30	<b>Parallel Streams:</b>		
13.45 - 14.00	Introduction by Chair of Parallel Sessions		
14.00 – 15.45	Paper Presentations		
	(i) <b>Paradigms:</b> Dr Michela Mayer Room: CE102	(ii) <b>Practices:</b> Dr Merce Junyent Room: TC002a	(iii) <b>Possibilities:</b> Dr Clemens Mader Room: CE202
15.45 - 16.15	Discussion		
16.15	Plenary: Concluding Remarks by Chair of Parallel Chairs		
17.15	<b>Closing Remarks:</b> Prof Peter Childs, Dean of Research and PRISM Members Elisabeth Annett & Lidia Ochoa		
17.30	Close		
18.00	Reception		

## HEADLINE PRESENTERS

### Keynote Speaker

#### **Professor Heila Lotz-Sisitka**

*Rhodes University, South Africa*

Heila Lotz-Sisitka holds the Murray & Roberts Chair of Environmental Education and Sustainability at Rhodes University. She is an active researcher who contributed to the inclusion of environmental and human rights concerns in South Africa's National Curriculum Statement and to the SADC Regional Environmental Education Programme. She serves on UNESCO's International Reference Group for the UN Decade of Education for Sustainable Development and is the editor of the Southern African Journal of Environmental Education. She coordinates the MEd programme in Environmental Education at Rhodes University and also supervises a number of PhD studies in the same field. She served as the Scientific Chair of the World Environmental Education Congress in 2007.



### Invited Experts: Thematic Sessions

#### **Dr Michela Mayer**

*Leader of the ENSI Junior Researchers Group; retired Professor, Italian National Institute for the Evaluation of the Educational System (INVALSI)*

Michela Mayer has extensive expertise in research training and education. She leads the ENSI Junior Researchers Programme and is a member of the Italian UNESCO commission for ESD. She undertakes research to support the evaluation of the European Project SUPPORT (Partnership and Participation for a Sustainable Tomorrow). Michela has been a member of the International Science Expert Group of the PISA Programme (2003-2006) and responsible for the PISA Science National research (1999-2009). She lectures at the Master level and supervises various PhD theses in the area of environmental education and sustainability.



#### **Dr Clemens Mader**

*Regional Centre of Expertise on Education for Sustainable Development (RCE) Graz-Styria; host of COPERNICUS Alliance*

Clemens Mader is the Director of the RCE Graz-Styria, University of Graz in Austria. He has a main research and teaching emphasis in the fields of sustainability process assessment, transdisciplinary research as well as theories and practices of ESD. At the moment Clemens is supervising research projects in the fields of "implications of e-mobility in rural regions", "assessment of sustainability processes" as well as two educational projects: one focusing on the development of train the trainer programmes on ESD in Egypt and one on the development of a joint master programme on ICT enabled ESD. Clemens currently hosts the Copernicus Alliance which brings together researchers from across Europe to explore ways in which higher education can reorient itself to sustainability. He is also past President of OIKOS – an organization which brings together students engaged in sustainability.



#### **Dr Mercè Junyent**

*Universitat Autònoma de Barcelona*

Mercè Junyent is a trained biologist with a PhD in education for sustainability in higher education. She is a senior lecturer at the Science Education and a member of the Research Group Complex based at the Universitat Autònoma de Barcelona. Her main research lines are: environmental education in teacher training; curriculum greening on higher education, professional competences in education for sustainability. She has been involved in the Spanish/Latin American PhD programme which brought together researchers who had an interest in sustainability research to Valsain for a research education course. She has mentored many masters and doctoral research studies in environment and sustainable development.



## 19 May 2011 - WORKSTREAMS

### Themes and Questions

#### *(i) Paradigms: Dr Michaela Mayer*

Sustainable development calls for a paradigm shift in both the practice and the focus of research inquiries. The need to question current assumptions about growth and development has been highlighted in many academic disciplines and inter-disciplinary research is promoted as critical in examining the complexities of sustainable development. It is also essential to consider the ways that dominant research paradigms can stifle certain research questions and maintain knowledge boundaries. This session will invite participants to explore the scope of an alternative paradigm that best supports inclusive and participatory sustainability research.

- Q. Which theoretical and methodological foundations are essential to create the new research paradigms we need in relation to sustainable development?*
- Q. What kinds of approaches are most valuable in shifting the power relations between researcher and researched, to enlarge the perspective of sustainability research?*
- Q. What are the levers for changing paradigms, to bring these important elements more deeply into standard research discourse and practice?*

#### *(ii) Practices: Dr Merce Junyent*

Sustainability research requires that investigators explore new ways of *seeing* the world and new ways of *engaging* with research. To envision new forms of research practice requires critical and creative thinking about existing approaches. It also provides opportunities for researchers to explore alternative ways of framing their practice. To then carry out innovative forms of research involves nerve, commitment and clarity of purpose. This session will invite researchers to consider their own practices and priorities for developing the field of sustainability research.

- Q. What forms of innovative research practice have most to contribute to the development of interdisciplinary approaches to sustainability research?*
- Q. How are these new approaches and methods likely to challenge us as researchers – conceptually, personally and politically?*
- Q. Can we identify areas where the “glass ceiling” limits innovation in research practice for sustainability – and how can we tackle these constraints?*

#### *(iii) Possibilities: Dr Clemens Mader*

Inter-disciplinary sustainability research questions offer the chance for exciting, ground-breaking research but efforts to carry out such research will inevitably meet a range of obstacles. This session will consider ways to approach these challenges in the context of emerging trends and opportunities in interdisciplinary and international research. The intention is to share thinking and discussion around recent insights gained through the pursuit of interdisciplinary research for sustainable development in international settings. Participants will consider scenarios, issues and possible ways forward for their own research development, learning from good practice and the benefits of peer reflection.

- Q. Which trends in intercultural and interdisciplinary research appear to have something distinctive to contribute to sustainable development?*
- Q. What are the critical insights we can gain into the ways that research interfaces operate – locally, nationally and among global networks and collaborations?*
- Q. How can we understand the possibilities for making innovative forms of research happen, through new and existing funding opportunities and research partnerships?*

PROGRAMME	
Friday 20 <sup>th</sup> May: ENSI-PRISM Workshop - 'Researching ESD for a Better World'	
9.00 – 15.30	<p>The 'Researching ESD for a Better World' workshop will provide participants with the opportunity to become acquainted with the research issues and methods of the ENSI network; to share experiences and concerns with ENSI junior and senior researchers; and, to discuss research issues and methodologies.</p> <p>The workshop will involve active participation and offer parallel sessions. The closing session will include a plenary discussion and ideas for bridging links between the PRISM and ENSI networks and identifying potential collaborative opportunities.</p> <p>The workshop provides an opportunity for participants to engage deeply with issues of interdisciplinarity and sustainability.</p>
15.30 – 18.30	ENSI Meeting: Closed Session

## The Marie Curie International Incoming Fellow



### Professor Daniella Tilbury

Professor Daniella Tilbury became a Marie Curie International Incoming Fellow in 2009 and was funded by the European Commission to lead ***'Learning and Living for Sustainability: Building Interdisciplinary Research Capacity and Expertise in Social and Professional Responses to Sustainability'***.

Daniella has had a lengthy research career in the area of sustainability with a focus on leadership, learning and institutional change. Her PhD research undertaken at the University of Cambridge was the first to look at institutional development for sustainability within higher education. Since then she has been the recipient of several awards including the Macquarie Innovation Award for Research and served as Founding

Director of the Australian Research Institute in Education for Sustainability (ARIES). She is a Fellow of the Salzburg Global Academy on Sustainable Futures and the Leadership Trust.

Daniella serves as Chair of the UN's Global Monitoring and Evaluation Expert's Group which advises on the assessment of global progress during the UN Decade in ESD. In this capacity she has informed the development of UNESCO's First Global Report in ESD. She led the IUCN-UNESCO Asia Pacific ESD Indicators Project and the UNESCO research into Good Practices in Cultural Diversity and ESD. Daniella is a member of the UNECE Expert Group on ESD Competences.

Daniella has over 100 books and refereed articles and has given keynote addresses in conferences across the globe. Most significantly, she was a keynote speaker at the UN World Conference in ESD (Bonn 2009) as well as UNESCO's side event at the World Summit on Sustainable Development (Johannesburg 2002). Her early work focused on monitoring and evaluation of sustainability frameworks. She has assessed strategic initiatives for government agencies; conducted participatory evaluations for EU programmes and evaluated field projects in Tanzania, Madagascar, South Africa, Venezuela, Brazil, Colombia, China, Hungary, Vietnam, Australia, Spain, Tunisia, and Italy.

## CALL FOR PRESENTATIONS AND POSTERS

Submissions Closing Date: 1<sup>st</sup> March 2011

Interdisciplinary research on questions of sustainability takes place across various contexts: private and public sector settings, local and global contexts, and both within and outside mainline academic institutions and disciplines. With this complexity, issues of research methodology, approach and effectiveness are highly diverse and involve many tensions and creative opportunities.

We welcome submissions which directly address any aspect of the three conference themes of *paradigms*, *practices* and *possibilities* in relation to sustainability research. Potential presenters are encouraged to submit proposals for work that crosses the boundaries of professions and institutions, research methods and academic disciplines, and that provokes the widest range of questions around evidence, participation, social change and paradigm renewal.

### SUBMISSIONS GUIDANCE

Presenters are invited to submit:

- 1) An **abstract** of no more than 300 words for a presentation (8-10 mins); *OR*
- 2) A **summary description** (no more than 200 words) of a poster *on research*. *Poster presentations will be scheduled to take place during the lunchtime hour*

Please also include the following details:

- **Title:** no more than 15 words
- **Authors:** names for each author with surname first, presenting author underlined
- **Abstract:** in English, size 10 Arial font, single line spacing
- **Institutional Affiliation:** name of institution or professional association – please indicate if you are an early career researcher/supervisor or experienced researcher.
- **Contact Details:** email address and telephone number for the presenting author

You may find some of the following headings useful in the preparation for your abstracts/posters:

- disciplinary field/s you are working in/influenced by
- research questions and how you arrived at them
- details of methodology and decisions about research design
- general difficulties and ideas/strategies for overcoming them
- reflections, challenges and implications of the inquiry

Abstracts and summaries should be emailed to Ms Seek Pang: [spang@glos.ac.uk](mailto:spang@glos.ac.uk)

### Timelines

#### ***If you are planning to present:***

Presentation and Poster proposals accepted until **1<sup>st</sup> March 2011**

Accepted Papers and Posters announced **10<sup>th</sup> March 2011**

Deadline for presenter registrations **25<sup>th</sup> March 2011**

#### ***If you are planning to attend:***

Conference bookings open **7<sup>th</sup> February 2011**

Early Bird bookings close **25<sup>th</sup> March 2011**

Final bookings closing date **9<sup>th</sup> May 2011**

CONFERENCE FEES			
19 <sup>th</sup> May	<i>Early Bird PRISM Conference</i>	£40 for students	£55 for supervisors and others
19 <sup>th</sup> May	<i>Full PRISM Conference</i>	£55 for students	£70 for others
20 <sup>st</sup> May	<i>ENSI PRISM Workshop</i>	£15	

*A registration form accompanies this leaflet together with details of accommodation venues.*

## CONFERENCE ORGANISERS AND WORKSHOP PARTNERS

### The PRISM Network

PRISM is a network of postgraduate and early career researchers based in universities across the UK and Overseas, who are engaged with the conceptualisation as well as the applied practice of sustainability-related research. The network emerged through a group of researchers at the University of Gloucestershire and is supported by the European Commission through the Marie Curie International Incoming Fellowship Programme. PRISM hosts regular interactive and topical research seminars at the University of Gloucestershire and communicates through a JISCMail group.

### The Marie Curie IIF Scheme

Marie Curie Fellowships are funded by the European Commission. The Fellowships attract top-class researchers from overseas to work and undertake research training in Europe, with a view to developing mutually-beneficial research co-operation between Europe and third countries. This knowledge transferred during this period of mobility constitutes a springboard for the future development of relations between the Member States and the third countries.

### The University of Gloucestershire

The University of Gloucestershire has strong credentials in sustainability and has consistently been acknowledged as a sector leader in this area. Its alignment with the sustainability agenda stems from its corporate responsibility commitments, its responsiveness to student and market needs, and its mission to serve the wider community.

### Conference Partner – ENSI

OECD Environment and School Initiatives - ENSI is an international network which has supported educational developments, environmental understanding, active approaches to teaching and learning, through research and the exchange of experiences internationally since 1986. The Association aims at supporting educational and pedagogical developments, via research and international exchange of experiences, promote insight into learning for sustainable development, environmental studies, active forms of learning and teaching, as well as education for citizenship. In 2008 ENSI committed to an ENSI Young Researchers Programme. The objective of the programme is to harness the energy and enthusiasm of a new generation of researchers, committed to education for sustainable development and involve them in the ENSI network in an active and meaningful way.

