

Day 2

Panel II. Conservation Politics

Keynote Speaker: Bram Büscher



Bram Büscher is Professor and Chair of the Sociology of Development and Change group at Wageningen University, The Netherlands and holds visiting positions at the Department of Geography, Environmental Management and Energy Studies of the University of Johannesburg and the Department of Sociology and Social Anthropology of Stellenbosch University, in South Africa. Dr. Büscher's recent books are *The Conservation Revolution: Radical Ideas for Saving Nature Beyond the Anthropocene* and *The Truth About Nature: Environmentalism in the Era of Post-Truth Politics and Platform Capitalism*.

Conviviality and the Bay of Bengal Littoral **Debojyoti Das, University of Sussex, U.K**

The term 'Conviviality' has emerged as an important concept in Sustainable Development discourse initially developed by a Latin American intellectual Ivan Illich as part of the decolonial and post development approach towards understanding our common future in a post technocratic world.

In our paper we will focus on the Bay of Bengal delta to explore its meaning through the study of the relationship between delta communities and their environment. The Sundarbans is also known as atharo bhatir desh-land of eighteen tides. The ebbs and flow of life in the delta are regulated by the transitory water regime. Living in the Sundarbans delta is like 'walking on the edge of a knife'. This hybrid landscape, where the waters of three mighty rivers, the Ganges, Padma and the Brahmaputra, meet to form the world's largest bird-foot delta, is ecologically fragile and exposed to hydro hazards such as tropical cyclones, floods, and tsunamis. The delta is part of a biodiversity hotspot that connects the region with the wider littoral world. The interconnectedness and coexistence of human communities and cultures produce diverse landscapes, which can well be compared with the diversity of human geography and the notion of the 'ecotone' in ecology.

In this paper we will interrogate the transition the littoral region has experienced both in terms of a shift in emphasis from precolonial circulatory network as well as the resultant cosmopolitanism that emerged on the delta's shores later disrupted by colonial 'revenue cartography' in the late 18th century. This will draw on our engagement with notions of 'wilderness' and 'statelessness' introduced by colonial administrators and well documented in the local vernacular oral literature such as the use of the term moger mulluck to define the Sundarbans lowland- area of no control and statelessness. While the precolonial Dharma literature such as the Mangal Kavyas and great epics like the puranas refer to the region as patal lok (hell) and rosatol (wetland) they were less expressed in terms of material consciousness.

The colonial land reclamation policy created a new definition of waste, privileged land over water, and established the rupture between ephemeral land and water ecologies by establishing terra firma as stable and 'solid' space over a fluid transitory landscape. This was a false consciousness established through Cartesian logic and Locke's theory on material waste. The paper will probe this ontological turn by focussing on more than human spaces in the delta and by centring on the right to nature and biocentrism that has become popular within social sciences and global intellectual history. Thus, I will be placing the Indian Ocean region and its history in longue durée frames, while yoking the theme to understandings of environmental change



Debojyoti Das is an anthropologist of South Asia, with a focus on the borderlands of eastern India and the Indian Ocean world; his work is deeply interdisciplinary, bridging his training as an ethnographer with extensive use of visual media and oral sources. His current research focuses on climate change, natural disaster, migration and sustainable development issues among marginalised littoral communities in the Sundarbans delta. His research interests lie in transdisciplinary and community focused work, which feeds into the use of different qualitative methods and tools for action research. He is the author of the book *The Politics of Swidden Farming: Environment and Development in Eastern India* (2021 reprint).

Becoming-with pewen: Understanding human-tree entanglements and its challenges to conservation
Robert Petitpas, University College London, U.K

Pewen (*Araucaria araucana*) and Pewenche (people of the pewen) have been affecting each other's ecology and survival for centuries. Pewenche have been shaping pewen forest ecology; moving seeds, planting trees, protecting them from fires and logging. In turn, pewen is fundamental in Pewenche economy, culture and spirituality; it has provided refuge from colonial expansion, nourishment, heat, spiritual and social bonding. The understanding of pewen for Pewenche people is related to their historical and reciprocal interactions, or living-with pewen.

In this presentation, I am going to argue that by living together pewen and Pewenche affect each other in a way that they constitute each other, or in other words, they have been engaged in a process of becoming-with. Also, I will discuss how this interaction shapes the way pewen is understood by Pewenche and their position regarding different conservation approaches. Understanding pewen and Pewenche entanglements as socioecological processes of co-becoming challenge conservation based on a nature-culture dichotomy and apolitical approaches. It also makes necessary taking seriously the politics of human and non-humans living together. Ignoring pewen-Pewenche entanglements reinforces social inequalities and reproduces colonialism through conservation.

I am in the last year of a PhD in Human Geography at University College London, UK. I have a bachelor in Forestry and an MSc. in Environment, Science and Society.

My research interests are political ecology of conservation and political ontology. I focus my work on my home country, Chile.



Paludiculture as conviviality on peatland: A farming system that supports ecosystem restoration
Ibnu Budiman, Wageningen University and Research, Netherlands

Sustainable peatland management practices such as paludiculture are crucial for restoring degraded peatland ecosystems. Paludiculture involves wet cultivation practices in peatland and can maintain peat bodies and sustaining ecosystem services. This can be seen as a conviviality on wetlands. Paludiculture is the cultivation of vitality, regeneration, and restoration in shifting terrains of belonging and exclusion in multispecies communities. This allows a plurality of agri/cultures and stewardship possibilities, from indigenous food forests and agroecology to rewilding the industrial plantation. It includes 534 species that are adaptive to peat soils and tolerant to acidic conditions and inundation.

However, information about paludiculture effects on tropical peatlands is limited in the literature. Therefore, this study aimed to analyse the effectiveness and progress of paludiculture projects in supporting peatland ecosystem restoration in Indonesia that uses approaches of soil rewetting, revegetation of peat soil/forest, and the revitalisation of rural livelihoods around peatlands. We obtained qualitative and quantitative data from field measurements, observations, document reviews, spatial data from open-source web applications, and interviews with key stakeholders in two projects (agri-silviculture and agro-sylvofishery) that adapt paludiculture principles to Indonesia's South Sumatra Province. Conviviality in this study was measured by investigating the contribution of both farming projects toward hydrological restoration, vegetation cover, soil conservation, community income, and peatland resilience to wildfire.

We found that the (limited) use of original paludiculture principles in both projects has a different contribution to peatland restoration. The agri-silviculture project has been utilising jelutung (*Dyera polyphylla*), ramin (*Gonystylus bancanus*), and balangeran (*Shorea balangeran*) for (forest) revegetation. The revegetation resulted in results that effectively supported peatland restoration. It is cultivation without harm to peat bodies. Additionally, in the agro-sylvofishery project, trade-offs between soil rewetting to maintain high peat water tables and the need to provide short-term economic benefits for local communities through horticulture and fishery practices were noted. During the 2019 El Niño, the involvement of a closed-loop canal to support fishery practices appeared to contribute to affecting the water table, which was also influenced by the open canals dug in nearby palm oil plantations. This shows the difficulty of coexisting and cohabitating, living alongside and in tension between paludiculture and industrial plantation.



Ibnu Budiman is a Ph.D. candidate on sustainability transition on agriculture. His research is focused on social system to support adoption of farm (technological) innovation in Indonesia.

Previously, he has been working for six years as a researcher and consultant in the field of environmental management and sustainable development, from various aspects; socio-ecological system, policy, governance, and technical aspects. He works on themes of climate actions such as renewable energy, agriculture, and land use.

Dewilding 'Wolf-land': Understanding historical drivers of human-wildlife conflict in Ireland
Dara Sands, Norwegian University of Life Sciences, Norway.

Proposals to reintroduce potentially dangerous wildlife into landscapes shared with humans through rewilding initiatives raise significant concerns about the occurrence of human-wildlife conflict. Understanding the contemporary drivers of such conflicts, increasingly recognised as being underpinned by complex and deeply-rooted social conflicts, has subsequently become a central focus of a growing body of human-wildlife and conservation conflict studies. Within this field, however, relatively little attention has been directed towards understanding the historical contexts through which human-wildlife interactions shift from coexistence to conflict.

Addressing this gap, this paper aims to identify the specific historical processes that disrupted a long history of human-wolf coexistence in Ireland and influenced the wolf's extirpation from the island. Drawing on an extensive review of primary historical sources and secondary literature, and applying analytical tools from environmental history, the paper first highlights that although conflict was always an inherent part of complex human-wolf relations, effective institutions and diverse cultural practices, ideas and beliefs helped support coexistence up until the 17th century. During the early modern period, however, Ireland's integration into a growing global capitalist system under colonial rule contributed to the breakdown of prior relations based on coexistence and escalated a conflict that resulted in the wolf's extirpation from the island in the 18th century. By examining the historical dimensions of human-wildlife interactions and drawing attention to the exploitative colonial-capitalist policies and practices that reshaped and reimagined human-wolf relationships in Ireland, the article demonstrates the relevance and importance of historical insights for current conservation efforts to transform human-wildlife conflict towards coexistence.

Dara Sands is a PhD candidate from the Department of International Environment and Development Studies, at the Norwegian University of Life Sciences.

