

Call for presentations and registration

“Cultures of (Un)Sustainability: ambiguities, politics, and perspectives”

A Knowledge Exchange Symposium on Sustainability Research at Maastricht University

June 4, 2015; 15:00-18:00

On **June 4, 2015**, the Faculty of Arts and Social Sciences (FASoS) will host the third **Knowledge Exchange Symposium on Sustainability Research at Maastricht University**, an initiative of the UM Green Office and ICIS. The topic of the symposium is *Cultures of (Un)Sustainability: ambiguities, politics, and perspectives*.

The aims of the symposium are:

1. to strengthen the sustainability research community at UM by getting to know each other's work, interests and expertise.
2. to explore future steps towards enhanced knowledge exchange and cross-faculty collaboration.

Dr. Raf de Bont (Assistant Professor at FASoS) will give a keynote speech on

Conservation Science and the Agency of Nature: Negotiating Antelopes, Pygmies and Tourists in Albert National Park, 1920-1950.

Furthermore, we invite two short presentations that relate to the topic of the symposium:

The concept of sustainability is highly ambiguous. Emerging from multiple origins, it has travelled widely and taken many shapes. Most well-known is the definition of sustainable development by the Brundtland commission (1987) as ‘meeting the needs of present generations without compromising the capacity of future generations to meet theirs’. However, this definition raises more questions than it answers: e.g. can/should all needs be met, how do we know the needs of future generations, and what about the needs of non-humans? Alternative definitions and approaches have emerged such as renewability, intergenerational justice, and ecological conservation – to mention only a few. Each concept highlights different problems of environmental, economic and technological nature.

Cultural and social sciences have always been strong at articulating such multiplicity of meanings, exploring how concepts operate in various contexts, and how struggles over ‘facts’ and ‘optimal technological solutions’ are always (also) struggles over control and discursive hegemony. This is not to say that facts are just selected arbitrarily according to political preference, but it is to say that we can only understand the meaning of facts and ‘sustainable’ solutions if we take proper account of the social, political, economic and cultural context in which they are produced.

We are looking for **2 presentations** (15 minutes max) of research that deal with the politics of '(un)sustainability', either as an object of research, or as a relevant contextual aspect of the research. Please express your interest by sending an abstract (150 words max) of your intended presentation. Selection will take place primarily on the basis of research diversity within UM.

To get to know each other's work, interests and research focus, we also invite **digital posters**. These consist of a brief presentation (10 to 15 slides), summarizing e.g. a specific research project you are (or have been) involved in or a recent publication. To be effective, readers should be able to view your slides within about 5 minutes. Please stay as concise as possible, while including enough text to be understandable (more than the normally used key words for presentations). You are free to submit more than one poster, to reflect the diversity of your interests and achievements. The posters will become available online. During the symposium, a "tour guide" will highlight some of the submitted posters and will reflect upon the common themes. Examples of digital posters can be found attached to this Mail.

Harro van Lente, chair of the Maastricht University Science, Technology and Society (MUSTS) research programme, will conclude the meeting with a reflection on the potential for knowledge-exchange and cross-faculty collaboration on sustainability research at UM. As usual, at the end of the symposium there will be opportunities to meet each other informally over drinks.

Please **register** for the Symposium and/or **express your interest in giving a presentation** by sending an email to Lola Nacke (l.nacke@maastrichtuniversity.nl) before 13th of May.

Digital posters should be submitted before 27th of May (l.nacke@maastrichtuniversity.nl).

We welcome input from all members of staff (ranging from PhD students to professors).

Organising Committee:

Lola Nacke, Green Office
Govert Valkenburg, FASoS
Martina Kuhner, FASoS
Bart van Oost, FASoS
Hans Schouwenburg, FASoS
Ragna Zeiss, FASoS
Annemarie van Zeijl-Rozema, ICIS