

“Partnership of academics and practitioners for more resilient social-ecological systems: experiences from New Zealand”

A seminar by

Prof. Henrik Moller

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Where: University of Bern, Department of Integrative Biology.

When: Tuesday 26th March 2013, 1615 h.

Abstract: Policy makers, researchers and research brokers are increasingly calling for the formation of transdisciplinarity teams to identify strategies for more sustainable management of coupled ecological and social systems. Despite its enormous promise, transdisciplinary research is exceptionally difficult to put into effective practice. It is time consuming, it challenges traditional university institutional organisational models, and immediate outcomes are unpredictable. Persuading spirited individual experts from particular disciplines to bend to new ways of researching a common problem can seem a bit like trying to herd cats! A large part of the innovation generated by transdisciplinary teams comes from creative partnership between academics and practitioners (eg. Indigenous “Traditional Ecological Knowledge” holders, farmers, environmental managers, policy makers, educationalists, politicians), yet there is little scope within New Zealand’s research institutions to nurture such partnerships. This seminar uses the experiences of (i) the University of Otago’s Centre for Sustainability (CSAFE, www.csafe.org.nz), (ii) a long-term project with Rakiura Māori to assess the sustainability of a traditional seabird harvest (“muttonbirding”), and (iii) the Agriculture research group On Sustainability (ARGOS, www.argos.org.nz) to identify constraints and enablers for more effective research partnerships between practitioners and professional scholars.

About our speaker: Prof. Henrik Moller describes himself as “an ecologist gone bad”. For the first 20 years of his research he worked on invasive species and applied population ecology for pest control, species recovery and harvest management. For the past 15 years he has become much more interested in people, communities and society, and especially in research on how to support them to choose more sustainable options for land and natural resource management. This seminar will be presented in English.