

INNOVATION SEMINAR: INNOVATION FOR A WORLD IN TRANSITION

Speaker: Prof. Johan Schot, Director, SPRU

Wednesday 25 May 2016 15h30 – 17h30**Venue: Top Floor, The DIZ, 111 Smit Street (corner Eendracht Street), Braamfontein****Parking available on Eendracht Street****Abstract:**

Innovative social science thinking is needed to address the current interconnected social, economic and ecological challenges facing humanity. It is clear that the current paradigm of industrial mass production and individualized mass consumption based on intensive use of fossil fuels and a production of a massive amount of waste cannot be extended to all of the world's population without exceeding Earth's planetary boundaries. There is a second challenge, however. Despite continuing economic growth in many parts of the world, many people still live in poverty. Rising inequalities are resulting in highly uneven distribution of the benefits and costs of growth and development.

Many international organizations, business-linked foundations and official government advisors have responded to this double challenge of environmental change and social inequality. The United Nations (2015) has formulated 17 Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), calling for revolutionary greener production, increased social justice, fairer distribution of welfare, sustainable consumption patterns and new ways of producing economic growth. Other major organizations are promoting 'inclusive green growth' (World Bank, 2012), 'smart, sustainable and inclusive growth' (European Commission, 2010), 'a circular economy' (Ellen Macarthur Foundation, 2015) or 'a social contract for sustainability' (WGBU, 2011). However, it remains an open question how these goals are to be achieved.

In this presentation we assume that to deliver on the 17 SDGs and similar aims will require a Deep Transition, similar in scale and complexity to that which gave rise to modern industrial systems. I define a Deep Transition as a series of connected individual transitions in a similar direction in a wide range of socio-technical systems which provide food, energy, water, mobility, communication, materials, and healthcare. In the presentation I will provide a conceptualization and interpretation of the emerging Deep Transition. I will present a new conceptual framework able to account for major ruptures as well as underlying continuities in the evolution of socio-technical systems, and will discuss implications for innovation and innovation policy.

Speaker Bio:

Prof Johan Schot is the Director of SPRU and Professor of History of Technology and Sustainability Transition Studies. His research focuses on integrating social science and historical perspectives for a better understanding of the nature and governance of radical socio-technical change. Prior to coming to Sussex, he held academic posts at the Eindhoven University of Technology and University of Twente, Netherlands. He has founded a number of influential national, European and global research programs and networks, among others the Tensions of Europe Network, and the Digital European Science and Technology Museum. He is a series editor of the *Making Europe: Technology and Transformations* book series with Palgrave, the *Routledge Studies in Sustainability Transitions* and the *Technology and European History* book series with Amsterdam University Press/Chicago University Press. His latest research and consulting work delves into innovation, governance, and sustainability in the Global South.