**Course** **outline**

**Grassroots** **Science: socially driven alternatives that tackle global problems**

**Capita Selecta RSO 51303. Credit points:** 3.00

Registration: st.boerengroep@wur.nl

**Start: 13th of February2012.**

**Deadline Essay for examination: Friday June 22, 2012**

**Language of instruction**: English

Coordinator: Petra Derkzen, Rural Sociology Group. [www.ruralsociologywageningen.wordpress.com](http://www.ruralsociologywageningen.wordpress.com)

**Contents**:

“Socially driven” initiatives, by for example farmers, consumers, civil society organisations, sometimes in collaboration with scientists, constantly emerge in the face of ­poverty, social injustice, hunger, natural resource degradation, environmental decline and other global problems. Some of these initiatives contain practices that promise more sustainable livelihoods for the people on the ground while simultaneously tackling global problems. Many initiatives stand in stark contrast and sometimes even contradict with the “technologically driven” solutions implemented by many scientists and policy makers.

Throughout this Course, representatives from a selection of these types of initiatives will present their achievements, their views on how these can contribute to positive social change. You will be attending lectures, read articles that correspond with the topics of the lectures, and in the end write a personal reflection on the whole series.

**Learning outcomes:**

At the end of the course, the student is expected to be able to:

* Summarise the state of the art initiatives and innovations devised by farmers, NGOs, civil society, action researchers, or a combination that aim to tackle major problems in agriculture and food production and have had sustainable outcomes in the social, economic and ecological sense
* Critically evaluate the contributions of the presented initiatives in moving forward towards sustainable and just food systems

**Course Learning Activities**

1. Attend series of Grassroots Science organized by Otherwise and Boerengroep.
2. Read literature provided at least a week before the lecture through blackboard. The literature consists on average of 2 articles per lecture.
3. Complete essay assignment and submit before 22 of June 23.59 hours

**Students need to follow at least 5 of the provided activities. Your presence will be registered.**

You only have to read and write about the literature accompanying the lectures that you will attend.

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| **Monday February 13**  19:30h Forum C221 | **Agroecology as a science, movement and a practice: can it feed the world?**  *Irene Cardozo, vice president agroecology association Brazil*  In this lecture Irene Cardoso will discuss some questions that are common when talking about Agroecology: Is agroecology a science, a movement or practice? Is it possible to feed the world using agroecology approach in agriculture? What is the best: intensifying agriculture to have more area for nature conservation or to have a more extensive agriculture integrated with nature? She will also share some of her own experiences, mainly with agroforestry systems, in the Zona da Mata of Minas Gerais, Brazil. One question she would like to leave for the discussion: how can we scale up the agroecological experiences around the world? |
| **Wednesday February 29**  20:00h Forum | **Political developments in Bolivia: their impact on indigenous people and the environment**  *'Ricardo Calla, anthropologist and former Minister of Indigenous Affairs in Bolivia, has a long history of working with indigenous people in the Andes.*  In Bolivia, indigenous people form a majority of the population and therefore, possess significant political power. However, economic power is in the hands of the oligarchy. Ricardo Calla will give his view on contemporary politics and their impact on indigenous people and on environment in Bolivia.' |
| **Monday March 5**  19:00 Forum | **Shell, seeds and saving the planet: rights and livelihoods in a global economy**  *Nnimmo Bassey’s work as Chair of Friends of the Earth International and Executive Director of Environmental Rights Action in Nigeria has turned him into one of Africa’s leading advocates for the environment and human rights. He will speak about the practices of Royal Dutch Shell and the oil industry in Nigeria, and the impacts on the environment and the livelihoods of peasant communities.*  *Karin Nansen is a founding member of Red de Ecología Social (REDES/Friends of the Earth Uruguay). She will discuss sustainable alternatives to the dominant system of seed management and efforts in Uruguay to strengthen food sovereignty by rescuing local seed varieties and promoting organic locally-grown food for local communities and the domestic market. She will also examine the links between gender justice and food sovereignty.*  *Ricardo Navarro is the founder of the Salvadoran Center for Appropriate Technology (CESTA/Friends of the Earth El Salvador). He will discuss rights, livelihoods and grassroots solutions in the context of climate change, which has been disastrous for the people and ecosystems of El Salvador.* |
| **Thursday April 5**  19:30h Forum | **Family farming as a starting ground for rural development**  Sergio Schneider, Federal University of Rio Grande do Sul (UFRGS) |
| **Monday May 14**  19:30h Forum | **Building on farmers’ knowledge** |
| **Monday June 11**  19:30h Forum | **Rural Sovereignty** |

Updates on lectures on www.st-otherwise.nl and www.boerengroep.nl

**Essay assignment**

The assignment consists of two parts:

* A summary of between 500 and 700 words for each lecture you attended, making use of both the lecture and the provided literature. The amount of words is limited which means you are asked to clearly explain the key issues addressed.
* A critical personal reflection of minimum 2000 words and maximum 2200 words on how the presented initiatives and social movements contribute to sustainable development and how they contrast and sometimes even contradict with that proposed by policy and science

Your essay need to be submitted latest on the June 22 through a Turn-it-in assignment on blackboard. This means that the essay will be checked on plagiarism. Blackboard closes on 23.59 on the 22 of June. Essays which are received after the June 22 will not be examined.

**Examination:**

Attending at least five lectures is compulsory. Grading for the course will be based on your assignment. The mark for you assignment needs to be at least a 5.5.

**Literature:**

Articles with corresponding topics will be made available online one week prior to the lectures.