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## Transforming biodiversity knowledge

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### Esther Turnhout (Twente)

Current biodiversity science is not fit for purpose. Its focus on non-human species and protected areas has separated people from nature, resulting in injustices while keeping a blind eye to the destruction of biodiversity outside protected areas and the political-economic root causes of biodiversity loss. In this talk, I will illustrate the limitations and blind spots of dominant biodiversity research agendas and priorities to make the case for transformation. I will also outline what will be needed to equip biodiversity research to support the transformative changes in societies and economies that are so desperately needed. This includes a deprioritization of current dominant approaches and a shift of research agendas towards: 1) a focus on understanding and fostering plural human-nature relations; 2) critical analysis of power relations and vested interests that cause biodiversity loss and block transformation; 3) participatory research to ensure just and equitable practices. Recognizing that such calls to change research are not new, it is vitally important to also reflect on why change is so slow and to consider the obstacles and resistance to transformation, both within and outside the scientific community. The broad and interdisciplinary biodiversity research community must urgently come together to build knowledge that supports transformation and that fosters emancipation, pluralism, and social-ecological justice and well-being.

**Esther Turnhout** is professor and chair of Science, Technology, and Society at the University of Twente, the Netherlands. She is an interdisciplinary social scientist interested in understanding the interactions and power dynamics between different (scientific and non-scientific) knowledge practices and knowledge-governance relations in environmental and sustainability issues. She has worked on and participated in the Intergovernmental Platform for Biodiversity and Ecosystem Services (IPBES) with a view to critically analysing what versions of nature, biodiversity and sustainability are co-produced in global assessment processes, what courses of action they promote or exclude, and whose interests they serve. These experiences have sparked an interest in exploring ways to transform environmental and sustainability science to support and contribute to transformative change and human and ecological well-being. She has published numerous articles on the biodiversity science-policy interface and other topics in high impact journals, she is the first author of the book 'Environmental Expertise: Connecting Science, Policy and Society' with Cambridge University Press and she is co-editor in chief of the interdisciplinary journal Environmental Science & Policy.

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