

# iFAST: The International Forum on Advanced Environmental Sciences and Technology

*A series of distinguished seminars by eminent scientists*

**8 a.m. CST, 9 a.m. EST, 2 p.m. GMT, 10 p.m. China**

**Wednesday, Jan. 15, 2025**



**ELENA BENNETT**

**MCGILL UNIVERSITY**

<https://www.mcgill.ca/nrs/academic-0/bennett>

Elena Bennett is professor and Canada Research Chair in Sustainability Science at McGill University in Montreal, Quebec, Canada. Bennett's work focuses on the interactions among ecosystem services and how we can manage these interactions for multifunctional working landscapes, using a landscape ecology and systems ecology perspective. She was the leader of the Montérégie Connection project that worked with stakeholders to understand the role of landscape connectivity in the provision of a dozen ecosystem services and how those might change across a range of future scenarios. She is now leading ResNet, the 100+ person Natural Sciences and Engineering Research Council of Canada Strategic Network that builds on the Montérégie Connection to compare ecosystem service provision in six exemplar working landscapes across Canada. Her most recent work focuses on using radical transformative experiments in society as 'seeds' to improve storytelling and sense-making about how we might achieve a 'Good Anthropocene'. She is currently working on a book that brings these many threads together. Bennett was a Leopold Leadership Fellow (2012). She won the Macdonald Campus Award for (Undergraduate) Teaching Excellence in 2012, the Carrie M Derick Award for Excellence in Graduate Supervision in 2013, and the David Thomson Award for Graduate Supervision in 2022. She won a Guggenheim Fellowship to pursue interdisciplinary work on multifunctional agricultural landscapes of Canada in 2022. She is a Fellow of the Royal Society of Canada (2023) and a member of the National Academy of Sciences (2022).

## Building a Better Anthropocene

**Abstract** There is growing consensus that global development is on an unsustainable trajectory. However, the global change community has produced very few positive visions of more desirable, just and sustainable futures for society and nature, or how these might be achieved. In the rare non-negative visions, the potential of such futures and the pathways towards achieving them are not clearly articulated. Together, this abundance of negative visions and a lack of clearly articulated positive ones may inhibit our ability to move towards a positive future for the Earth and humanity. I have led positive scenario workshops around the world, from the Arctic to Africa and from the most urban parts of Europe to rural North America. What I notice in these positive futures is that few people focus on provision of things like food or water; instead, they focus on having better relationships with other people and with nature. Over the last 60 years, our thinking about conservation has undergone a change that puts the relationships between people and nature much more at the center of focus. Alongside this shift has come a change in science from mono-disciplinary to multidisciplinary, and from a focus on intrinsic values towards relational values. In ResNet, a network of scientists interested in transdisciplinary approaches to ecosystem services, we are working to help develop more relational indicators of ecosystem services for working landscapes in Canada. Without these indicators, we will be left making critically important decisions about the future in an isolated, piecemeal fashion with a limited picture of the ecological, economic and social risks associated with those decisions. For a future of shared health and prosperity, we urgently need a new kind of science that integrates across services, sectors and landscapes, that brings together social science and ecological science, and even art and creativity, to enable us to envision a resilient future and understand how the decisions we are making today can help us get there, ideally one that also incorporates the stories people are telling about the future they want to build..



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**Zoom webinar ID: 934 8142 2012 ([zoom.us/j/93481422012](https://zoom.us/j/93481422012))**

**More details and previous iFAST seminar videos are available on [www.ou.edu/ieg/seminars](http://www.ou.edu/ieg/seminars).**

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