



5th Indo-German Dialogue on Green Practices:

“*Genus loci - Locality matters*”: Embedding sustainable transformation in local contexts

Dates: 13th – 15th October 2023

Place: Tiruvannamalai, Tamil Nadu, South India

[Please register here for the event](#)

Convenors: Dr. Christoph Woiwode, IGCS at IIT Madras, in collaboration with F5Green Foundation, Tiruvannamalai

Background

After a break of three years due to the Covid-19 pandemic, we are planning to launch the 5th iteration of the Indo-German Dialogue on Green (Urban) Practices (IGD). The IGDs have been conceived as a continuous series of annual interactions between academics, civil society activists, government officials, policymakers, and the corporate sector. Its key objective is to provide an open platform for sharing and exchanging experiences of social (urban) innovative change in Germany and India to leverage action towards new transdisciplinary research and practice projects. Methodologically, the series is designed with an open-ended approach to evolving interaction about emerging themes deemed relevant by the participants who drive the agenda and activities. We view this as a cultural project of change to address the challenges of urbanization, sustainability and transformation from a broad perspective.

The overarching objectives of the dialogue series are:

- ❖ To facilitate cross-cultural experience through knowledge sharing and transfer about mutual perspectives and fieldtrips/exposure visits;
- ❖ this series of dialogues is underpinned by ongoing research of participants and the organisers (interviews, group discussions, mapping, participant observation at field trips, document & discourse analysis, citizen science elements for participation of practitioners in research process);
- ❖ research that might develop from the dialogue networking process and cumulate in collaborative proposals.

Since 2017 four annual events took place with IGCS partnering with the Wuppertal Institute for the 1st IGD in Chennai and funded by Heinrich Böll Foundation New Delhi, under the title





“Social Innovation and Change Agents towards Sustainable Lifestyles and Consumption”. Building on the previous event, the second IGD took place in Freiburg in 2018 with Freiburg University as partner on the cross-cutting theme “Education, Learning, Training and Awareness for Sustainable Development”, co-funded by the IGCS through the German Academic Exchange Service (DAAD) and the German Consulate General Chennai. Discussions during this meeting led to the third IGD in Pune in 2019 where IGCS partnered with Bharati Vidyapeet Institute for Environment Education and Research and the Centre for Environment Education under the leading topic “Co-creation of the Living Environment”, co-funded by German Centre for Innovation and Research New Delhi DWIH, the German Consulate General Mumbai and IGCS (<https://cocreatesustainability.wordpress.com/>).

Finally, due to the Covid-19 pandemic, we conducted the fourth IGD in 2020 as an online event. It was carried out in partnership with Bochum University of Applied Sciences’ Sustainability Learning and Research Lab on the theme “Wellbeing and the ‘Good Life’: The human being in sustainability transformations. The thematic focus of the upcoming 5th IGD was brainstormed and discussed by the delegates during this event.

More about the IGD Series and reports are available here <https://www.igcs-chennai.org/igd/>

This year’s thematic focus “Locality Matters”

During the 4th IGD, several working groups had brainstormed various topics that could be taken up for the 5th IGD. Given the topic of the 4th workshop with its focus on inner transformation, the themes related to the worldviews that underpin sustainability approaches, and the kind of visions and (utopian) narratives that frame transition and change processes. The other key theme that emerged in these discussions revolved around embedding sustainable transformation in local contexts in terms of their cultural, social, ecological, economic and other dimensions. We acknowledge that there exist different worldviews in India and across India and Germany. Can we identify those to explore how sustainability is brought to live in place specific contexts? This can be an endeavour to make more explicit, by becoming more aware, the underlying worldviews and values of our actions. In doing so, how can we connect locality to the worldviews and values to also probe critically what kind of transitions may be needed? While the 4th IGD focused on inner transition, how do we connect and then also do the outer transformation, e.g. the regeneration of urban places or more generally how does ‘place-making’ happen?

These questions have multiple implications. For instance, if we take justice, might we view it as an ‘intrinsic value’? It may be seen as crucial not only for humans but also other beings and for changing the world, hence what does ‘just transition’ involve, for example a ‘kincentric’ ethical stance perhaps that relates humans to the ‘other-than-human-world’ as well? Further, zooming in on locality will also bring into focus local livelihoods, and local as well as indigenous ways of knowing. Lastly, in spite of concentrating on the local, the links to





global agreements that may be setting agendas and trends or vice versa are influenced by more local discourses (such as role of indigenous communities) is important as well such as the recent Montreal Agreement on biodiversity. We are keen and excited to explore these and many more aspects with respect to “locality matters”.

As a result of these deliberations on how locality matters, we propose this **overarching, guiding question** for the workshop:

How does local transition to sustainable, regenerative and resilient societies happen in Germany and India?

More specific questions:

What kind of transformation processes are required? Which are the thematic focus areas and topics, what are the obstacles, issues and challenges?

These questions relate to several **keywords**, such as pluriversal development; diversity; local knowledge; indigenous populations; human and non-human relationships; place and space specificity.

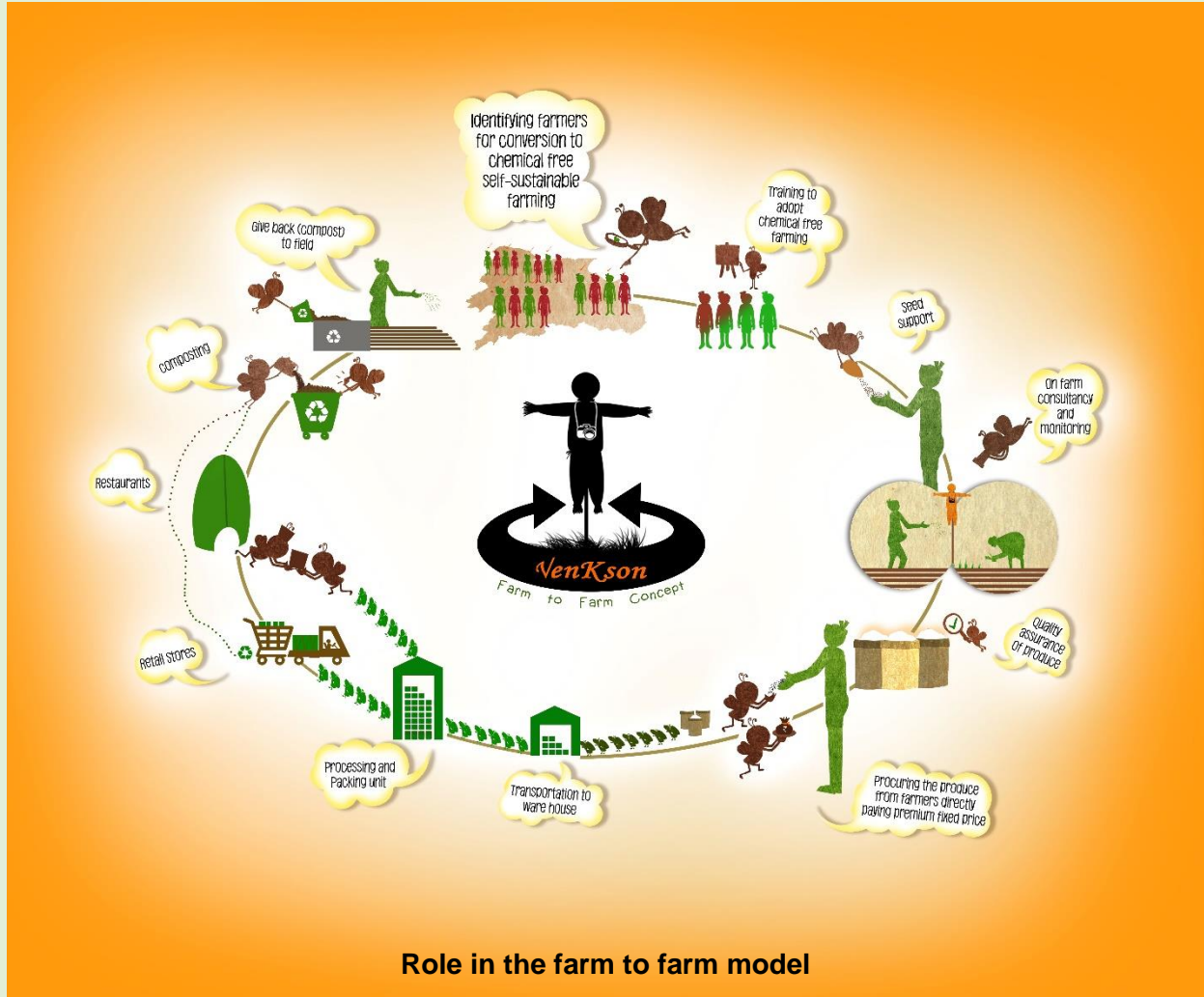
This is a revamp of the IGD series after the pandemic, when we had convened in an online mode. With this topic especially, it is inevitable and highly relevant that we again meet in person, for an immersive experience of how ‘locality matters’, but also to demonstrate the transformative power that the people have who live in various and diverse localities. Moreover, our interpretation of the ‘urban’ is broad, rather referring to urban regions, including periurbanization and urbanizing rural regions, or even exploring links between the rural and the urban (e.g. in resource use, mobility, food). This element of is characteristic of the locality where this IGD will take place. We will have this opportunity in the South Indian rural town of Tiruvannamalai through our host f5green Foundation.

About host organisation F5Green Foundation and VenKson and the Knowledge Exchange Centre in Tiruvannamalai

F5 Green Foundation (F5GF) is a Non-Governmental Organization registered under Section (8) of the companies Act with the vision to create a better environment for all the species sharing this universe to co-exist in peace. They work in close coordination with **M/s.VenKson Enterprises Pvt Ltd (VEPL)** and a component of the Farm-to-Farm concept conceived by VEPL.

The mission is to create public awareness, meticulous use of science and technology, promoting active public participation especially of children and women, and effective coordination with Government bodies.





Role in the farm to farm model

F5 Green Foundation works with the farmers at the grass root level, primarily supporting them to connect with the market and environment related activities. VenKson, established in 1999 as a Media firm, later expanded into Agri Business, Publication and Eco projects. Currently Venkson is working on creating cluster type small manufacturing units for processed food & non-food products dovetailed with **Entrepreneur Development** and **establishing a Knowledge Exchange Centre at Tiruvannamalai**. The centre will be a communal space for cross-country knowledge sharing about the food culture, environmental issues, and various other topics.

Pagirvu (Promoters of Agriculture & Green Initiatives for Rural and Village Upliftment) – A Marketing Company – works in coordination with F5 Green Foundation and VenKson. They have an organic store in Central Chennai.





Location and setting: Background about Tiruvannamalai

Tiruvannamalai District was created from erstwhile North Arcot District on 30-09-1989.

It is located on the Eastern Ghats, which plays an important role in modulating climate, fostering biodiversity, providing sustenance, and storing energy in trees. The city of Tiruvannamalai is on the Northern part of Tamilnadu at 190 km from Chennai and 210 km from Trichy.

It is a spiritual, cultural, and economic hub. Girivalam – walking around the Annamalai Hills - (14Kms) during full moon day is a famous activity in the town. Chithra Pournami (May) and Karthigai Deepam (Nov-Dec) are the most important festivals which attracts nearly 4 to 5 Lakh people worshipping Lord Shiva.

Trade and Commerce are the major contributors to the economy of the city. Agriculture happens on the outskirts of the city and nearly 56% of the people in the district depend upon Agriculture (Rainfed Farming) related activities. The main crops cultivated here are rice, groundnut, pulses, tapioca, vegetables and flowers and millets (on hills).

Organic Farming is done by a small group of youngsters and is now spreading slowly.

Climate will be hot and arid from March to mid June. From mid June to Feb the climate will be pleasant and is a good time to visit Tiruvannamalai.



Tiruvannamalai town (credit: C. Woiwode)



Approach and Methods of Interaction

The process of interacting through sharing and discussions is at the centre of IGDs, therefore we desire to create a safe space to reflect and critically discuss how locality enables and shapes sustainability transformation.

In the past, the format of the IGDs has been participatory and interactive, with the programme being co-designed and conducted by the delegates. We will retain this approach through these:

- a) Expert talks
- b) Field visits
- c) Group work
- d) Sharing and discussions
- e) Serious games
- f) Exchange and practice of methods of inner work

INVITATION

If you are interested to contribute to the planning and preparation of this event, please get in touch with us at below contacts.

Funding and Registration

Limited funds are available to support travel and accommodation.

Max. number of participants is 50

Contact:

Dr. Christoph Woiwode, woiwode@igcs-chennai.org more about IGCS <https://www.igcs-chennai.org>

Mrs. Renuka , renuka@venkson.com more about VenKson <https://www.venkson.com> and F5Green Foundation <https://f5green.org>

