



## **Hope in a Changing Climate**

*Academic introduction to the 'Hope in a Changing Climate' film*

### **Joe Smith:**

My name's Joe Smith and I'm a Senior Lecturer in Environment in the Geography Department at The Open University, and I'm also directing the Creative Climate project, sitting here with Vince, who's the other academic adviser on this film.

### **Vincent Gauci:**

I'm Vincent Gauci. I am a Lecturer in Systems and Ecosystems Science at the Department of Earth and Environmental Science here at The Open University, and Joe's involved in this sort of work as well which is represented in the Environment section on iTunesU.

### **Joe Smith:**

I must admit when I saw this proposal my eyes immediately lit up. I was very attracted to a project that was going to tell me a hopeful story about climate change, poverty alleviation, economic development in the poorest areas and ecological restoration. You know those are pretty few and far between in the media world. The next thing I was excited about was that this was a conversation I wasn't going to have with myself about social and economic aspects, this is a conversation that only makes sense when you get natural and social sciences in the same room together, regarding which Vince, why were you motivated to get involved?

### **Vincent Gauci:**

Well just the sheer scale of these examples of restoration which I just hadn't come across before so I found them utterly fascinating, very new to me, and I've been working in ecosystems science for quite a long time. It just showed a very positive message that stuff can be done; you can have a positive outcome, not only for the environment but also for local populations, which are essentially those that were involved in the restoration projects themselves led by scientists from those regions. It just struck me as fascinating case studies, possibly an exemplar for the way we should move forward in different regions of the world.

### **Joe Smith:**

If I could just pick out one thing you said, that was about the local science and I would add to that the local government commitments, very unusual to have a film screening in US/UK where all of the scientists are from, in this case Rwanda, Ethiopia and China, very clearly demonstrating as, you know, we start at two weeks of major climate change negotiations that there are answers owned by, being delivered by what we still currently call the developing world. I think that's actually a very powerful subliminal message in the film.

### **Vincent Gauci:**

And it really works as well. You just see these before and after shots which are really spectacular, and especially with the lowest plateau, you start with this barren landscape, it's completely denuded, you have no organic matter in the soil, and then give it ten years you come back to the same location and it's forested and you have crops, and you have people feeding off that. Not only do you have this dramatic change to the landscape, but the carbon is really locked away and there's a big effect in terms of soil carbon, in terms of sequestration soil within vegetation itself, which is really nicely done, perhaps another thing that really fascinated me about this film. It'd be interesting for me to hear about how this film feeds into the Creative Planet project that you're running.

### **Joe Smith:**

I think the reason it landed on my desk initially was because it had the word 'hope' in the title, and what we're doing at The Open University is we're hosting a ten year global diary project, a little bit ambitious then. We're inviting both experts from science, politics, the arts, design to

come and start their diary, we'll nudge people four times a year, we're also inviting anyone across the planet to come and hold their diary, whether they're expert or not – allotment gardeners, shoppers, grassroots campaigners – to just come and tell their story, but really just try and capture this sense of humanity being on an incredibly ambitious journey across the next ten years. And I guess the last observation would be that the kinds of words we want to have in people's minds when they write their diaries – what kind of imagination, creativity, determination am I drawing down on as I react to what some people, a bit grandly I think, call one of the most important decades in human history?