

# Desta Mebratu on the Importance of Energy



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Desta Mebratu is a guest researcher involved in the theme [Energy Justice](#). He is affiliated with Stellenbosch University as an Extra Ordinary Associate Professor, Center for Complex Systems in Transition, School of Public Leadership. Before that he was the Deputy Director for Africa at the United Nations Environment Programme, UNEP.

We asked him to tell us about himself, why he is involved in the research theme, and what he hopes to contribute.

## **What is your background?**

I am a chemical engineer by background with an MSc on Environmental Management and Policy and PhD of Engineering in industrial environmental economics. I also have an MBA in International Business. For more than 25 years, I have been working in the field of cleaner production, resource efficiency, sustainable industrial development and green economy.

## **Why are you involved in the theme Energy Justice?**

Energy has always played a central role in all forms of social transformation in human history, and promoting energy justice is critical to achieve an inclusive and sustainable development. This issue is particularly critical for regions like Africa where there is direct correlation between access to energy and level of poverty/underdevelopment.

## **What do you hope to contribute?**

I hope to contribute to the theme by bringing the developing country perspective, based on my decades' long experience working across many countries in Africa and other regions.

**What do you hope to get out of your stay?**

I hope to gain additional insights on the key issues related to energy justice from a trans-disciplinary perspective.

**What are your research interests?**

My current research interest is focused on applying transdisciplinary systems thinking that would enable society to move beyond promoting incremental changes and bring about transformational changes that are urgently needed.

**What drives you?**

What drives me is the urgency to address the confluence of global challenges before it is resolved through its own corrective dynamics, which would be very costly in every term. I am also driven by the huge leapfrogging possibility that Africa has to develop its economy on a more sustainable basis, which is a major opportunity for the global transition to sustainability.

**What are you working on right now?**

I am working on developing an alternative development model which could assist African countries to build an inclusive, low carbon and resource efficient economy and thereby optimise their leapfrogging opportunity to a sustainable society.

**Have you ever been to Lund and/or Sweden?**

Yes, I lived in Lund from August 1996 to March 2000, during which I did my Masters and PhD, and have been here many times since then.

- 02/06/2017