



Opening Remarks of the President of the Max-Planck-Gesellschaft,
Prof. Martin Stratmann,
on the occasion of the formal inauguration of the Max Planck-Yale Center for Biodiversity
Movement and Global Change,
May 2, 2018,
Kroon Hall, Yale University, New Haven.

– *The spoken word takes precedence* –

Prof. Jetz, Prof. Wikelski,

President of Yale University, Prof. Salovey,

Vice Provost, Prof. Schiffer,

Dear Colleagues,

Ladies and Gentlemen,

It's my great honour and pleasure to celebrate with you the inauguration of the Max Planck - Yale Center for Biodiversity Movement and Global Change today.

I am excited that this event is held in the beautiful Kroon Hall of the Yale School of Forestry & Environmental Studies, which also contributes to the Center projects. When preparing for my trip to Yale, I found out, rather by accident, that tomorrow is a date of historical relevance to this well-known institution. On May 3, 1871, Henry Solon Graves was born. Graves studied at Yale and Harvard, and also at the University of Munich which is - by the way - just around the corner from my office at the Max-Planck-Gesellschaft. Together with his friend Gifford Pinchot, Henry Graves was the founding father of the Yale School of Forestry. What is more: the two were the founding fathers of American Forestry in general. So I think we found a truly dignified and fitting date and place for our Center opening.

Let me start by expressing my deepest gratitude towards Yale University for its trust in our common endeavours of which there are many.

Currently, we have 21 ongoing projects between researchers of the MPG and Yale. I am proud that these projects cover a vast range of research fields.

Causal Perception in Infancy and Adulthood, Anatomy of Corporate Law, Stellar halos around Milky Way-like galaxies, Gene Interaction... These are just some of the project titles under which scientists from both sides work together fruitfully.

However, collaboration on the Center level is the strongest tool that we can offer our scientists in the Max-Planck-Gesellschaft when joining forces with colleagues from abroad. Centers are expensive – I think Presi-



dent Salovey will agree on that – and funding is guaranteed for at least 5 years. This Center here for example will be funded with approx. 5 million euros, a sum that is split equally between the two partners.

Considering that Centers are costly endeavours, the selection process is very competitive. In the U.S., we currently run four Max Planck Centers: This one here, two Centers together with Harvard, and one Center together with Princeton University. An important conceptual pillar of each Center is the training and advancement of early career researchers. So it's not only about bringing experts in one field together, but also about lending a platform to the next generation of creative minds.

So far, we have established 21 Max Planck Centers all around the world. All of these Centers are special. But I dare say that this new Max Planck - Yale Center is pretty much the peak of the extraordinary! That's because we are launching a totally new field of research. To this end, both our sides bring in technologies, analysis skills and a breath and quality of data that is truly unique. Yale University is the forerunner in the collection and analysis of biodiversity data across different scales. And our institute is the forerunner in the collection of animal movement data.

So I think we can safely say: What a perfect match!

Ladies and Gentleman, over the past two decades we have celebrated quite a few "Resolution Revolutions" in different fields of science. We can now glimpse into the innermost cores of life in biology, and we can look out deep into the night sky like never before. Just think of the second Gaia Data release of last week. It's the best map of the Milky Way that humankind has ever seen.

The next Resolution Revolution has planet earth in focus and the protagonists are sitting right in front of me. It's you! Tracking real-time dynamics of life across vast scales of time and space...while at the same time being able to really connect this information to precise geodata - this opens up new horizons.

I am, first of all, deeply convinced that your Center approach will advance concepts in ecology, biodiversity and collective behaviour - both on a principal level but of course especially against the background of rapidly changing environments.

Secondly, I am enthusiastic about possible applications of your work, for example the idea to track animal escape behaviour and use it as early warning systems in case of natural disasters or epidemics.

And thirdly, I am confident that your work has the potential to also trigger a new consciousness for environmental issues in the wider public. When it comes to pressing questions of global change, I often get the impression that there is a certain overload of abstract information around that can tend to leave people rather puzzled and helpless.

Often it seems there are just too many pieces of the puzzle, too many snapshots to take in, which add up to barely more than a fuzzy draft of disasters awaiting us all at some indefinite point in the future.



But your work makes planet earth very accessible for the human mind. Tracking changes over space and time, tracking the migration and movement of animals, that's the opposite of a snapshot! You are rather producing coherent perceptions and therefore understanding *and* fascination. It's this fascination that sets a positive tone, motivating every single one of us to care more about our surroundings. Initiatives like this Center are able to create a certain directness and immediateness that come without a moralizing undertone.

The track record of your outreach activities is impressive already. You engage many people - from all over the world - in data collection and I am thankful for your great dedication and commitment. My hope is, of course, that these outreach activities will flourish even more within the framework of the new Center.

Ladies and Gentlemen, Martin Wikelski and Iain Couzin from the MPI for Ornithology, they both enjoy highest visibility within the community of the Max-Planck-Gesellschaft, but also within the German public in general.

With passion and innovative ideas, they managed to transform an institution of more than 100 years of age into a world-class site of cutting-edge science. I'm talking about the Max Planck Institute in Radolfzell they are in charge of. And I know that Radolfzell is also a place where our early career researchers really love to work. The same is true for the Yale Center for Biodiversity and Global Change and its director Walter Jetz. He is the initiator of the *Map of Life* and belongs to the most highly cited researchers in the field of ecology and environmental studies. However, from the online pictures of the Jetz' research group, I can tell that this place is not only a perfect environmental niche for serious work - but it seems to also be a good place for enjoying life and growing together as a group! And I tell you: I was just as pleased to discover this second aspect!

Altogether, I can only say that conditions could not be better for our Max Planck - Yale Center, and I would like to wish you all the greatest success and the best of luck for all the scientific adventures lying ahead of you.