

PROMOTION RECOMMENDATION
The University of Michigan
School of Natural Resources and Environment

Bilal Butt, assistant professor of natural resources and environment, School of Natural Resources and Environment, is recommended for promotion to associate professor of natural resources and environment, with tenure, School of Natural Resources and Environment.

Academic Degrees:

Ph.D.	2007	Michigan State University, East Lansing, MI
M.A.	2002	Michigan State University, East Lansing, MI
B.A.	1996	Eastern Kentucky University, Richmond, KY, <i>magna cum laude</i>

Professional Record:

2011 – present	Assistant Professor, School of Natural Resources and Environment, University of Michigan
2010 – 2011	USAID Post-Doctoral Research Associate, University of Wisconsin-Madison
2008 – 2010	NSF Post-Doctoral Research Fellow in Geography, University of Wisconsin

Summary of Evaluation:

Teaching: Professor Butt is a dedicated teacher with a passion for innovative and engaged education. He has developed and excellently delivered courses that advance the school's mission, including for core competency in the social sciences, for field experiences in Africa, and for policy engagement in Washington, DC. He works continually to improve his teaching, and his efforts are reflected in nominations for the school's Outstanding Faculty Award and recognition by the Provost's Office for his efforts to advance global engagement. He is a sought-after mentor, advising two University Research Opportunity Program undergraduate students and mentoring a number of graduate and undergraduate students, and also serves on numerous thesis committees for Ph.D. and master's students.

Research: Professor Butt examines human-ecosystem interactions, with a particular focus on east African drylands. He investigates how ongoing socio-economic, institutional, technological, and ecological changes are transforming pastoral livelihoods; interactions between wildlife, domesticated animals, and rangeland resources; and the implications of these changes and interactions for resilience, adaptation, and sustainability. He is a gifted researcher who applies his multi-lingual skills and a wide range of theoretical lenses to work in a challenging field environment, demonstrating a range of substantive and methodological interests. His work pushes the boundaries of interdisciplinary scientific knowledge in a way that informs policy and management in pastoral systems.

Professor Butt's 17 peer-reviewed papers appear in leading geography and interdisciplinary science journals. He has successfully competed for both internal funds and for National Science Foundation (NSF) grants totaling \$710,000. Most recently, his work was recognized with a

prestigious NSF CAREER award, which recognizes both a coherent and innovative research and education plan and a record of success in advancing the field.

Recent and Significant Publications:

- Butt, B., 2016, "Neoliberalism, Conservation and Dispossession in Kenya's Arid Lands," *Humanity: An International Journal of Human Rights, Humanitarianism, and Development* 7(1): 91-110.
- Butt, B., 2015, "Herding by mobile phone: technology, social networks and the "transformation" of pastoral herding in East Africa," *Human Ecology* 43(1): 1-14.
- Butt, B., 2014, "The Political Ecology of Livestock Incursions into Protected Areas: Technology, Place and Socio-Ecological Dynamics in the Mara Region of Kenya," *Africa: Journal of the International African Institute* 84(4): 614-637.
- Butt, B., 2012, "Commoditizing the Safari and Making Space for Conflict: Place, Identity and Parks in East Africa," *Political Geography* 31(2): 104-113.
- Butt, B., Turner, M. D., Singh, A., and Brottem, L., 2011, "Use of MODIS NDVI to evaluate changing latitudinal gradients of rangeland phenology in Sudano-Sahelian West Africa," *Remote Sensing of Environment* 115(12): 3367-3376.

Service: Professor Butt has a strong commitment to service to the school, the university, and his various professional communities. He is an active member of three of the school's fields of study, participating in and leading curricular decisions and strategic planning. He has served as a member of the school's Research and Global Engagement committees, as well as been active on faculty search committees. He presently coordinates the environmental informatics field of study. His work was instrumental in initiating the school's engagement with the United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP). At the university level, he has been a member of the International Institute's Fulbright selection committee. He also has accompanied undergraduate students to Kenya under the sponsorship of a number of programs at the university, and participates activities with the African Studies Center to enhance the visibility of Africanist research. Professor Butt is an active member of the Association of American Geographers, the Association of American Anthropologists, and the African Studies Association, and is a sought-after presenter for workshops and panels. His work has resulted in participation in various global immersion and cultural exchange initiatives, focusing particularly in East Africa.

External Reviewers:

Reviewer A: "[Professor Butt's] scholarly contribution is exceptional in its interdisciplinarity, combining natural and social science, quantitative and qualitative methodologies. It is universally argued that progress in understanding and solving complex environment-development problems can only arise from such cross-disciplinary work, but few researchers have the skills and dedication to do this successfully. [Professor] Butt is one of those scholars."

Reviewer B: "I assess [Professor] Butt to be a strong scholar whose research is of consistently high quality, and represents a cohesive yet methodologically and theoretically diverse set of contributions to the ecology and political ecology of pastoralism."

Reviewer C: “[Professor] Butt has built a significant reputation within the East African pastoralist and rangeland research community and culture. He has produced hard-hitting and seminal work, and has established himself as an international researcher of respected intellect and output.”

Reviewer D: “It is the use of different theoretical perspectives and integration of different methods that makes the research of [Professor] Butt innovative and productive.”

Reviewer E: “Amongst his peers, I consider Bilal Butt to be one of the strongest up and coming human environment geographers and political ecologists.”

Reviewer F: “[Professor] Butt is poised to become a major figure in human-environment-development research and African scholarship.”

Reviewer G: “What makes Professor Butt’s scholarship stand out is its use of multiple methods, its basis in his deep and long-term knowledge of and experience in the field, and its interdisciplinary nature.”

Summary of Recommendation: Professor Butt is widely recognized for the remarkable breadth of his approaches and concepts in understanding and addressing complex challenges in environment and development, particularly in East Africa. He is an excellent teacher and mentor who employs innovative approaches in the classroom and in the field. It is with the support of the School of Natural Resources and Environment’s Executive Committee that I recommend Bilal Butt for promotion to associate professor of natural resources and environment, with tenure, School of Natural Resources and Environment.



Daniel G. Brown
Professor and Interim Dean
School of Natural Resources and Environment

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