

Summer School Report, Day 1:

The first day of the KNOTS Summer School 2018 has started with a warm welcome from the Associate Professor Thapin Phatcharanuruk Dean, Chiang Mai University and with a speech from Prof. Christoph Antweiler, UBO.

To break the ice and to have an overview of the participants, we played some games to get to know each other. We had to try to place ourselves according to our birth month and our knowledge about transdisciplinarity. This was the first opportunity to get to know the other participants. Before we started the actual topics of the Summer School we took pictures of all the participants to stick on the posters we will elaborate with our Field Trip Groups.



The first input was from Prof. Christoph Antweiler about the concept and theories of transdisciplinary research. He tried to introduce the participants to the topic and talked about the difficulties and challenges but also the chances of using transdisciplinary research. We also discussed about the problems of the existing disciplinary boundaries. He addressed the existing difficulty of transdisciplinarity that the involved actors have different interests and positionality in the society which affects the interaction in a research process. Prof. Antweiler also made a short introduction to research methods we could use in TDR, such as participant research, action research and citizen research. All of them are always including Non-Academic stakeholders as well as diverse academic disciplines. The motto was “working with and for the people”.



Afterwards we had time to discuss about transdisciplinary studies in our Field Trip working groups. We split up in 8 teams to relate the TDR to our fieldtrip topics which are diverse and include topics regarding migration, environment and social justice, for example banana plantations, eco-tourism and also boarder issues. For some of us it was the first time to try to use TDR on a practical example which led us to very interesting discussions with each other. In our group we will work on the Case of the Mae Kha Canal in Chiang Mai City, which is an old issue which cannot be solved for many years now. We tried to reflect about how we are going to work together with the people and not only for them.



In the afternoon Chiang Mai University Staff members and Professors presented some socially-engaged research which is conducted at the Chiang Mai University. First, Vice President for Societal Engagement Avorn Opatpatanakit, talked about Sustainable Natural Resource Management: SAMPART. It was about the forest resources and the different types of land-use in Thailand.



Then, Chartchai Khanongnuch, Faculty of Agro-industry and Anan Ganjananpan, Faculty of Social Sciences introduced their multidisciplinary research about Miang Fermented Tea in Northern Thailand.

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We had the chance to ask a lot of questions and learn more about the recent research in Chiang Mai University and the context in which we will be staying for the next two weeks.

We let the first day come to an end at the reception at Luang Khao Lam Restaurant. This was the official starting point for the upcoming Summer School.

We gained the first insights on transdisciplinary Research and Studies and realized the importance of it for all the participating students. It was pointed out and made clear that to address complex real-life problems there is a need for a new and complex approach which addresses more than one issue and from more than one perspective at a time. TDR addresses the root causes of these problems together with stakeholders in different levels. We especially liked the comparison between the problems in academic context, which, according to TDS, consist in the boundaries of disciplines and the problems in real-life.



We still had a lot of open questions which we discussed with our colleges during lunch and the coffee breaks and tried to take them with us for the upcoming days of Summer School and to the Fieldtrip. Our questions were mainly regarding the inclusion of different stakeholders and actors to the research process. We heard that it should be a “working with and for people” and asked ourselves how this can be applied in practice. Such a research needs time and means a lot of work, which is hard if one has other duties, which most of the non-academic actors do. There must be a great willingness for joining such a long process. Another question came up regarding the time-aspect during the upcoming fieldtrips. The students had the concern how to apply TDR and participatory research methods in such a short time. We especially asked ourselves how to address shared problems in a research, where different interests and different levels of power exist.