

Title: Knowledges apart. How to converge disciplinary, epistemological and social realities?

Conveners: Petra Dannecker & Alexandra Heis, University of Vienna, Department of Development Studies

Single-session Panel Proposal / Abstract

Migration, access to natural resources, and social inequality are closely linked phenomena, globally as well as across Southeast Asia. The collapse of a dam wall in Champasak Province, Laos, in July 2018, caused a major flooding, which dramatically demonstrated the urgency to address the interrelatedness of these issues. The tragedy made clear that those who profit least from growth-oriented “catching up” development processes often must bear the highest costs. To provide convincing answers and workable alternatives to such and other highly relevant problems, intensified exchange and collaboration across national boundaries, but also across disciplinary and academic ones is required.

While the idea of transcending boundaries to further collaborative knowledge production is at least as old as the boundaries themselves, methodologies of such collaborations are tagged differently across the world, and based on different epistemological traditions. The working concept of transdisciplinarity is an attempt to systematize these efforts and to encourage ongoing discussion. The KNOTS Erasmus+ project, which started in 2016, aims exactly at that: to connect participatory, collaborative, socially engaged and transdisciplinary concepts, methodologies, and philosophies in research and teaching.

The panel will discuss the results of the three years of joint involvement of participating universities in Thailand, Vietnam and the EU to draft a transdisciplinary teaching manual, but also look further ahead. We invite the presenters to address questions of commensurability of academic and practical knowledges as well as scenarios of collaboration under the auspices of an extended regional cooperation, linking the above-mentioned phenomena on the conceptual, analytical and political level. In particular, the panel will discuss challenges, which accompany such an endeavour; challenges arising from different perceptions of ‘relevant’ knowledges, different relationships between science and politics as well as different problem definitions with regard migration, inequality and access to natural resources.

The panel consists of presenters/discussants from the following institutions, with whom we have collaborated closely within and beyond the aforementioned KNOTS Project.

Chulalongkorn University, Bangkok (discussant)

Chiang Mai University, Chiang Mai (presenter)

Vietnam Academy of Social Sciences, Hanoi or HCMC Open University, HCMC (presenter)

University of Vienna, Vienna or RFW University of Bonn, Bonn (presenter)