

Personal feedback on IPoS 2011:

„Sustainable livelihoods through integrative practices with emphasis on Food, Water and Sanitation in a peri-urban community“.



What is IPoS?



Intensive Program on Sustainability is a 2-week intensive course (usually based in Thailand) that was launched in 2004 by The University of Tokyo (UT) from Japan and the Asian Institute of Technology (AIT) from Thailand to promote education on sustainability in the Asian context. Project authors believe that Asia as the most rapidly growing region of the world is of a key importance for achieving global sustainability. Since 2006, the course is also supported by the Sustainability Science Consortium (SSC) and the Nissan Science Foundation. As a follow-up course to IPoS, „Nissan Workshop“ focusing on sustainable mobility is organized every year in Japan, where IPoS alumni are also invited.

The summer course theme is slightly different every year although always related to sustainability and human needs such as water, food, sanitation and energy. More information about IPoS in general can be found under the following link:

<http://www.ipos.k.u-tokyo.ac.jp/>

IPoS 2011 lectures and workshops

The topic of 2011 IPoS was „Sustainable livelihoods through integrative practices with emphasis on Food, Water and Sanitation in a peri-urban community“. To be honest, I got to know about the selection results 3 weeks prior the start of the programme and the information about the program details was limited. As a result, I didn't really know what do these „integrative practices“ really mean in this context and what to expect from the program. Nevertheless, when it started, I found most of the lectures and workshops very up-to-date and of high scientific quality . I found that I can use a lot of the knowledge and thoughts gained during the school in my own research as a PhD student. The topics covered during the school were relevant to anyone whose research is relevant to sustainability of rural and urban communities, especially water quality, agriculture, sanitation and waste management. The program's attempt was to show interrelations between these issues and to stimulate students to come up with the possible integrated solutions.



Dr Thammarat giving lecture

Main modules covered by the 2011 Summer School were following:

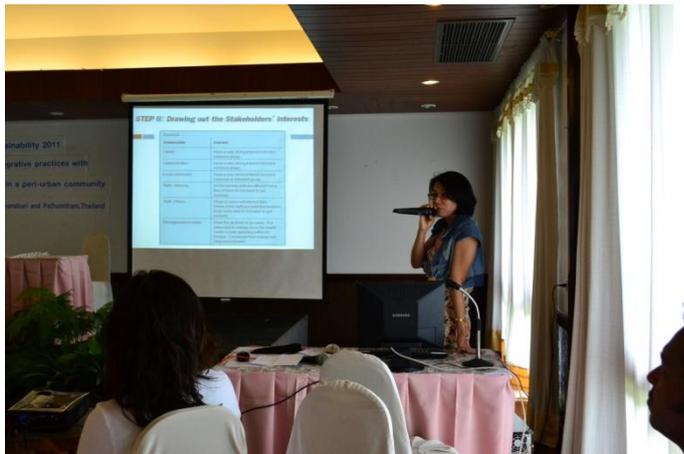
- 1. Sustainability and transdisciplinary approaches (by Dr. Thammarat Kootatep)

The module consisted of the lecture and a series of group exercises. The lecture introduced the principles and the importance of transdisciplinary approaches in science – the need for integration of social and natural sciences, when it comes to any type of research related to sustainability. A series of exercises conducted in groups were designed to teach students on how to assess the level of transdisciplinarity in a research project and how to increase it. Personally I think it was the most interesting module during the summer school and I believe any early career sustainability researcher (Master or PhD student) can benefit from these knowledge and implement it in his own work.

- 2. Reuse and recycling practices in water and waste management (Dr. Nawatch & Dr. Atitaya)

The module consisted of few lectures describing technologies that can be used for water and wastewater recycling. I think the aim was to give students some ideas on what kind of technologies can be proposed to tackle problems of communities such as the case study for the main group project (that will be described later). I think the module had fit for purpose very well.

- 3. Participatory planning and stakeholder dialogues (Dr. Anisara) and a case study of sanitation project in Nepal (Mr. Mingma).



Dr Anisara presenting

This module consisted of two lectures and a group exercise. First lecture emphasized the importance of engaging stakeholders in rural development research projects. It also introduced theories on how this can be done. The second lecture by a PhD student showed the practical application of these techniques on the example of the sanitation project that he worked on in Nepal. During the group exercise a 'stakeholder mapping' technique was introduced. I found it as a very useful and

easy way of identifying and assessing the importance of stakeholders for the community development research project that can be applied in many cases.

- 4. Rapid Appraisal Techniques (Dr. Soparth)

One interactive lecture and one group exercise attempted to describe techniques for gathering qualitative data from stakeholders in limited and difficult working conditions. These data collection techniques included observation, semi-structured interviews etc. \$

- 5. Food security and local livelihoods (Prof. Athapol and Dr. Anil)

A series of lectures explaining basic definition of food security and group exercises. Subjects covered were already familiar to me. However, for those interested I think the topics were very well covered during the given time.

- Special module I : Japanese water management from Municipal sewage system to Johkaso system (Dr. Onuki)

An interesting lecture describing the history of sewage systems in Japan and introducing the most recent technological solutions.

- Special module II: Earthquake, Tsunami, Fukushima Daiichi (Dr. Onuki)

Very informative first-hand description of the earthquake, tsunami and Fukushima disasters that recently happened in Japan. Helped me to understand better how did it affect random Japanese citizens and what is the perception on the use of nuclear energy.

- Group project



Student teams at work

During the second day of the summer school participants were divided into 5-6 persons teams consisting of people from different nationalities and academic backgrounds. These teams worked together on all small assignments related to particular modules but we also had a big task to realise throughout the school- the common group project. Every day, there were two hours after lectures reserved for the work on this assignment. The study site was located as Ban Pathum subdistrict of

Pathumthani province. Each group was choosing a role play in developing the strategic policy plan for this area. Roles included governmental office, local authority, NGO, farmer group, business man or a householder. The task was to explain the structure of actors, factors, incentives, goals, possible conflicts and dilemmas in the implementation of the strategic plan and management practices. Each group needed to be aware of the different concerns of other groups in preparation of the strategic plan. Group members needed to use Rapid Appraisal Techniques at an organized stakeholder meeting to gather the data for the analysis. Later, „Strategic Plan” was consolidated into the final report, that was presented and delivered to local authorities.



Field work

I found the task was maybe a little bit overwhelming for the given

few days and no group managed to realise it fully. Nevertheless, I found the approach innovative and interesting. Local people seemed to be also interested in the outcomes of our work and in discussions. I hope that the report that was delivered by us will be taken into consideration by local authorities when developing a real policy plan.

Beyond work – IPOS 2011 networking



Ice-breaking games on the first day

What was new and amazing to me (maybe cultural difference) was a large number of organized entertainment activities for conference participants. The aim was to bring all the students closer to each other for a better cooperation during the school and in the future. Every morning there was an „Assembly” session, where students and lecturers were performing some exercise together, playing short game or learning few phrases in a new language – the person responsible for organization (which was always one or few of the students) was free to select the content. We also had „ice-breaking games” on the first day. During the „Natsu-Matsuri cultural night” at the end of first week, (which was in fact a very good party) everyone had to come up with some way to present his country to others. There was also an organized party at the end of the programme and several excursions – including guided walking tour around our sustainable resort and a visit

to the local small enterprise selling premium farm goods. I was skeptical about these organized entertainment at the beginning but I have to say it worked very well. I feel like these organized and non-organized out-of-work common activities created a kind of bond between participant. I think that on these summer school I made not only good colleagues with whom I would like to cooperate in the future but also some good friends.



Japanese student at "Natsu-Matsuri" cultural night

Summary

The name Intensive Program on Sustainability for this program is not accidental. The workload was pretty big – morning assembly did start at 08:30 every day and we usually finished our group work at ten o'clock in the night. However, when it came to fun activities, it was also intensive and compensated everything. I can say IPOS and Thailand is full of intensive impressions every day.

I can definitely recommend IPOS program to all early career researchers (Master researchers and PhD students) who want to learn more about rural development and/or sustainability. It is a great learning and networking opportunity.



Participants together