

Preface

The number of large landscape projects that include elements of integration between disciplines has been steadily growing since the mid 1990s. Whilst disciplinary projects can often be researched by applying well-known and tested methods, integrative research frequently demands the application of new and specific interdisciplinary and/or transdisciplinary techniques. PhD students are increasingly involved in integrative projects where they are confronted with the problems and benefits of integrative landscape research – either as a member of an interdisciplinary or transdisciplinary research team or working as an individual on a problem demanding integration across disciplinary boundaries. The challenges facing PhD students working on integrative landscape research projects include deciding upon appropriate methodological approaches for their specific research question and how to integrate disciplinary knowledge to solve complex planning and management problems.

To help PhD students cope with the increasing demands of integrative landscape research we organized an international PhD master class on “Integrative research for the planning and management of sustainable landscapes”. The class offered opportunities for PhD students to be exposed to and actively discuss a range of methodological approaches for integrative research from the natural sciences to landscape design with a team of leading international landscape researchers. The course specifically addressed the challenges facing students who wish to integrate knowledge across disciplinary boundaries and between knowledge cultures. Techniques for overcoming practical and theoretical problems were presented by the course teachers and discussed in relation to the concrete projects of the participants. Further themes that the course explored were the institutional infrastructures necessary for successful integrative research, communicating successfully in an interdisciplinary environment, and publishing the products of integrative research. The master class was especially timely as there are many ongoing and planned large-scale international landscape research projects involving PhD students. However, the support given to PhD students to achieve both research and problem-solving goals is often inadequate. We therefore focused the end of the course on survival strategies for PhD students in bridging disciplinary cultures and completing their thesis work.

The PhD master class had three objectives: (i) to provide insights into the different concepts and theories that exist in landscape research today for the management and planning of sustainable landscapes, (ii) to give an overview over integrative approaches (interdisciplinarity and transdisciplinarity) and (iii) to discuss how these can be applied successfully in landscape research.

The one-week PhD master class was held at a course centre near Bakkeveen in the North of The Netherlands in June 2004. We received enormous interest after we announced the course, and selected 30 PhD students out of over 60 applicants. The students had backgrounds in the natural sciences, social sciences and humanities and represented 15 countries in Europe, America and Australia. The course staff represented 10 international experts in the broad field of landscape research with expertise in landscape ecology, landscape planning, landscape architecture, psychology, geography and integrative research. The students were given the opportunity to present a short lecture discussing a general or specific question within their PhD projects. Each teacher tutored three to six students, and discussed aspects and questions of their individual PhD projects with them. The teachers were allocated

to the students in advance according to their expertise. Teachers presented lectures covering different aspects of integrative research and thus contributed to a broad overview of the theme of the master class. Prior to the class, the students had to submit a paper related to one aspect of their PhD project. The paper was discussed with the class and reviewed by the tutors.

Course themes and student projects covered a wide range *from landscape research to landscape planning*. We discussed aspects of *integration*, where potentials but also problems were identified. We had debates about the epistemological challenges of integrating different knowledge cultures, took a critical look at stakeholder involvement and talked about towards which end and to what degree integrative research should proceed. We discussed aspects of *education*, especially in relation to PhD students. What are the challenges facing PhD students and how can they master the different demands? We also discussed aspects of *application*. When and how can we use integrative research concepts and how do we identify when we are moving between research and practice? We debated scientific as well as artistic concepts and tools for management and planning of landscapes, quality of green-blue networks and socio-economic as well as psychological approaches of valuing landscapes. Finally, we approached the question of how to be successful in reaching integration in landscape research projects.

This book – *From Landscape Research to Landscape Planning: Aspects of Integration, Education and Application* – is the outcome of this international PhD master class. It contains four parts with chapters related to integration, education and application. Only selected papers were included and all papers had to pass a review process.

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