MISTRA
URBAN
FUTURES

Co-producing knowledge in transdisciplinary research – From practice to theory

Two PhD courses for 2017-18 at Urban Futures Open Research School, 2x7.5 ECTS
Organized by Mistra Urban Futures/ Chalmers
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INTRODUCTION

Sustainable urban development is one of the greatest challenges of our time. Cities face the challenges of changing climates, large demographic changes, stressed relationship with hinterlands, complex governance structures and increased segregation. The Sustainability Development Goals have been set out by the UN in order to reduce social inequalities worldwide, which also puts the cities under deep pressure, as the highest income layers correlate with unsustainable living patterns. An integrated approach to address these challenges is necessary, and an overarching question for sustainable development becomes: how do we also realise just cities?

To reach knowledge about a process of change towards a just and sustainable society, new research approaches are emerging. These innovative approaches take place out of necessity but also as part of an intentional qualitative transformation of the research process itself. Co-produced research is such an emerging approach, addressing the complexity of societies' transformations by integrating different research actors into the same creative process. The outcome is a new kind of research. First, it is transdisciplinary and developed in the emerging fields between disciplinary spaces. Second, it aims to be transformative, meaning changing present patterns of behaviour into more just and sustainable forms.

AIMS

This course, divided into two parts, (2 x 7,5 ECTS), is directed for you who are dealing with so called 'wicked urban problems' in your daily practice *or* who aim to address such current and future urban challenges in your PhD research, and who see the urgency for a transdisciplinary approach in your practice. This course gives insight into urban dilemmas from both practice and academic research perspectives and provides tools and methods for transdisciplinary research. Further it will introduce and address the notion of the transdisciplinary research as boarder management, and will discuss a possible redefinition of the role of the researcher and practitioner in such collaborative processes. Finally, the full course offers insights into transdisciplinary theory and discusses what normative research means for science as well as the specific epistemological and methodological implications transdisciplinary experiences have for both research and practice. The course will be organised around lectures, seminars and method-based workshops. Group-work will be the dominant working mode.

COURSE CONTENT

The full course (fall + spring) is divided in four modules (two modules per course). These are:
Challenges and holistic thinking for the urban future (fall).
Research practice and methods for transdisciplinarity (fall).
Facilitation and border management (spring).
Transdisciplinary theory and emerging epistemology (spring).

TENTATIVE COURSE PROGRAMME

Part 1. Solving wicked problems within sustainable urban development – experiences and methods. Fall 2017.

oModule 1 – Challenges and holistic thinking for the urban future.
Tackling wicked problems: Through the transdisciplinary imagination
Co-producing knowledge for sustainable cities: Joining forces for change
Creating a common goal: Realising just cities
How to reach the SDGs?
The art of long term thinking – developing scenarios for urban futures

oModule 2 – Research practice and methods for transdisciplinarity.
Research practice – from action research to co-production
A systems-thinking approach to holistic cities
Designerly-thinking as a research approach
Visualisation and mapping – images for change
Reflexive methods

oPresentation – evaluation

Part 2. Facilitation and knowledge development through co-production. Spring, 2018

oModule 3 – Facilitation and border management.
The hybrid role of the TD-researcher: Researching with communities.
Facilitation and boundary management.
Transkillery: What skills are needed to be a boundary crosser?
Prototyping: Creating sites of construction.

oModule 4 – Transdisciplinary -theory and emerging epistemology.
The role of theory in transdisciplinary research
Reflexivity and knowledge production
A normative perspective on the boarder of politics and research: How do we deal with this in research?
Epistemologies and validation of transdisciplinary research

oPresentation – evaluation.

LEARNING OUTCOMES

After completion of the course, the student is expected to be able to:

Knowledge and understanding
-understand the complexities of urban challenges;
-be familiar with concepts of justice within the urban environment;
-apply knowledge on boarder management;
-understand transdisciplinary theory and relevant design theory, and able to position the individual research processes into a theoretical context.

Competence and skills
-design a transdisciplinary research project;
-to practice a set of methods applicable in TD-research;
-apply skills for facilitation of boundary projects.

Judgement and approach
-evaluate and compare methods for transdisciplinary research;
-evaluate the scientific and practical impact of transdisciplinary approaches to urban problem solving in different substantive areas.

COURSE DESIGN

Each course is set up as two modules. Each module contains two meetings during two days, with an interval of three weeks. PhD students should participate in all modules. Participants coming from practice, could select either one or two modules per course. All participants need to also join the final Presentation – Evaluation day at the end of each course.

Set up of a meeting (half module)
Day 1:
morning – 1 lecture by academic researcher
afternoon – 1 lecture by practitioner, students' presentation (from Meeting 2 and onwards)
Day 2:
morning – 1 lecture. Intro workshop
afternoon – supervised workshop in groups.
In between each meeting, the students conduct group-based work.

COURSE LANGUAGE

The course will be performed at the 'language spoken in the room', i.e Swedish or English depending on the participation at each moment.

COURSE DATES

Proposed Dates fall 2017
Module 1a: 20–21st September
Module 1b 2: 18–19th October (please observe the longer interval)
Module 2a: 8–9nd November
Module 2b 4: 29–30rd November
Presentation/ evaluation: 5: 14th December

Proposed Dates spring 2018
Module 3a: 14-15th February (preliminary)
Module 3b: 14-15th March
Module 4a: 4-5th April
Module 4b: 25-26th April
Presentation/ evaluation: 17th May (morning + final lunch)

ENTRY REQUIREMENTS

In order to be eligible for the course the applicant must fulfil and prove the general entry requirements for postgraduate studies i.e. master's degree or equivalent (_copy of diploma_). Each applicant should also send in _a short letter of motivation_, describing his/hers interest for co-production within the urban context. A _CV_ is also required.
Please indicate in your motivation letter if you are applying for one or two modules.

EXAMINATION (GRADES)

For examination, participation at lectures, in seminars and workshops (80%) is required. A reflective written report should be carried out, throughout course. The participation at final presentation – evaluation (_after_ 2 modules) is compulsory. The grading scale comprises Pass (G) and Fail (U). If attaining a pass degree, participants will receive a written certificate.

COURSE EVALUATION

The course concludes with a compulsory written and oral course evaluation.

LAST DATE FOR APPLICATION

May 29th, 2017 (for the fall course)
Nov 17th, 2017 (for the spring course)

LITERATURE

Required readings will be listed in time for each module.