



Tropentag, September 14-16, 2010, Zurich

“World Food System —
A Contribution from Europe”

BioDIVA – The Challenge of Inter- and Transdisciplinary Research for Equitable and Sustainable Use of Agrobiodiversity in Wayanad District, India

MELVIN LIPPE, MARTINA PADMANABHAN, MONISH JOSE, ISABELLE KUNZE, HANNAH ARPKE,
LYDIA BETZ

Leibniz Universität Hannover, Institute of Environmental Planning, Germany

Abstract

The trans- and interdisciplinary research project BioDIVA aims to generate transformation knowledge towards a gender-equitable and sustainable use of agrobiodiversity. Approaching agrobiodiversity from the disciplinary perspectives of land use change, institutions, sociology, economy and ecology establishes per se a ground for an interdisciplinary analysis of the boundary spanning complexities. At the case of rice-diversity in Kerala, South India, the paper outlines the initial steps to establish a research design for a transdisciplinary understanding of the dynamics associated with agrobiodiversity loss.

Setting out for a four-year expedition to create a development perspective for farming communities and other actors involved in the upland rice farming system, we firstly present the results of integrating disciplinary theoretical assumptions of natural and social sciences on a conceptual level. Thereby we reflect on the process and tools to identify the specific perspectives and interdisciplinary intersections. This step prepares for the confrontation with the field in an explorative case study as a means to build a common ground at the very beginning of BioDIVA research process. Secondly, we discuss the BioDIVA research design after encountering with the field.

To create a development perspective for farming communities and other actors involved in the upland rice farming system of Kerala, South India, we reflect on the predefined key terms, which guide our research, met transdisciplinarity in the field, explore the knowledge domains of farmers, scientists and development practitioners and incorporate these different kinds of knowledge and interests into a common research design. The paper is structured as follows: 1) We introduce to the key terms, which guide our research, 2) reflect on transdisciplinarity as a research paradigm, 3) explore the knowledge domains while presenting tools for generating disciplinary perspectives by merging them into intersections, 4) reflecting on the process, we proceed to build an interdisciplinary framework to prepare the transdisciplinary integration, 5) present our first findings in the field and conclude with a first critical discourse on transdisciplinary research from our perspective of South India.

Keywords: Agrobiodiversity, gender equity, interdisciplinarity, methods, rice, sustainability, transdisciplinarity