

Book Review

Anja Christnick, Martina Padmanabhan (eds.) 2013, *Cultivate Diversity! A handbook on Transdisciplinary approaches to Agrobiodiversity Research*. Weikersheim: Margraf Publishers, Scientific Books.

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“Agrobiodiversity is simultaneously natural resource and a cultural asset” as the inside book cover states. It is also a classic example of a commons topic and just as classic it falls between the policy agendas: not a top priority for agriculture and rural development nor at the heart of environmental departments. Similarly it requires expertise from a broad range of scientific disciplines from biology and geography, to economics, social and legal sciences. A challenging and fascinating topic as “biodiversity rests on the foundations of cultural, culinary and curative diversity”.

This handbook addresses the entire range of different facets of Agrobiodiversity Research, Conservation and Management in eleven chapters: From how land use change influences Agrobiodiversity (ABD) to its impact on food security, gender differences in approaching ABD, interdisciplinary and intercultural diversity in ABD research, joint learning, legal and ethical aspects, all the way to innovative market-based instruments (a topic apparently essential to any book these days). Each chapter consists of three parts: (1) A framework providing an overview and contextualisation of relevant terms, theories and approaches, (2) an analytical part addressing key methodological issues and how to deal with them wrapped up in conclusions on the topic, and (3) (at least) one practical example illustrating the elements presented in a real-life setting from different developing countries. These parts are complemented by boxes and figures explaining key terms and concepts as well as illustrating aspects with further practical examples, a summary of key points and useful links.

But the book is not only about Agrobiodiversity, it is about transdisciplinary approaches to sustainable development and in this sense the book is interesting

to a much larger audience than those working on farming. This means all of the topics are addressed on different levels and from different perspectives, providing content, a nice overview of recently developed and long proven methods for sustainability-related collaborative field research (“socialization of the pixels” or netmapping power relations), and interesting examples. But the book goes beyond this by providing tips and reflections on attitude, the need to be open, that there is more than one reality, that all participants learn from each other, highlighting the difficulties of communication and reaching understanding across cultural, across disciplinary and across gender differences.

The book was born out of a junior research group on conserving agrobiodiversity in Southern India but complemented by an impressive collection of similar examples from other action-oriented research projects working in different cultural settings. It is thus informative for scientific experts and practitioners alike. I found it fascinating to read: it nicely summarizes the state of the art on topics I know quite well and serves as an introduction to important issues on areas I am not so acquainted with. In all chapters I wanted to learn more, luckily each chapter has links to useful tools and further reading. With its beautiful layout and pictures doing justice to the natural and the cultural values at stake, it is not only a must but a pleasure to read for all interested in making a difference for “biodiversity conservation for sustainable food and nutrition security”.