

Seminar 2007-12-14: **What are these things called environmental science and environmental knowledge?**

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Literature: Chalmers, A.F. (1999), *What is this thing called science?*

Nygård, O., Loiske V-M., Saunders, F. & Hassler., B. (2007-11-30), *A Research Framework – Socio-ecological complexity in Environmental Science: Building Interdisciplinary through biodiversity research.*

Robertson, D.P. & Hull, R.B. (2001), “Beyond Biology: toward a More Public Ecology for Conservation”, *Conservation Biology* 15(4): 970-979.

1. What is environmental knowledge?

Environmental Science is a mix of disciplines (Nygård et al 2007) and has been established as a multidisciplinary program at Södertörn University College. Environmental knowledge is a interdisciplinary and all consuming. It is a mixture of nature science and social science and this interdisciplinarity raises new questions and enriches the understanding of environmental problems.

Environmental knowledge takes into account that we are a part of nature. People are a part of the equation when it comes to managing the whole environment but there are also great uncertainties. How the world works is quite chaotic, complex and changing and in the end we know very little about it. This ambiguity limit's the role of science in environmental decision making (Robertson & Hull 2001).

2. In what way is/should environmental science be different from or similar to other fields of science?

It should be similar in the sense that it should have the same importance. In the society of ours, we cannot neglect the importance of environmental knowledge. One difference is the modernity – the interdisciplinary approach of environmental science which integrates knowledge from different disciplines through a shared framework.

Just as Conservation Biology, it lays in the interest of Environmental Science to protect Earth's biodiversity and to find solutions to current and future environmental crises (Robertson & Hull 2001). This has come forward as a significant global issue ever since Rio 1992 (Nygård et al 2007).

3. Which area of environmental science is most relevant/interesting for you? Have you identified a research topic / research questions that you indent focusing your research proposal on?

I find the political part of environmental science more and more exciting every day. From being a typical Nature Science-person I nowadays find the area of environmental policy making very engaging. It is important that all people are aware of the environment we live in and that they are guided to act in a way that does not hazard the extinction of species or act against human rights. In Swedish society we have been able to neglect the huge impact our behaviour has on the worldwide environment. As my undergraduate program called "Environment and Development" might propose, my main interests for the future are to work with environmental issues in developing countries.

My plan so far is to write my master thesis about waste handling in Bangkok in Thailand. The research questions I have formulated concerns the actors involved in municipal solid waste management in a suburb of Bangkok. I want to study what the current problems are and what the future solutions could be in a short-term and a long-term time frame.