sent the various environment impact studies which were done prior the start of the ALMA project. These covered cultural, anthropological, archaeological and biological aspects. Jürg Eschwey embarked the audience on a trip from Antofagasta to the Chajnantor ALMA site to illustrate the complex logistics necessary to build major infrastructures in such extreme conditions. He explained the numerous challenges to be solved to construct a 12m wide road that allows the transport of 100 ton antennas, on a variety of soils between 2700m to 5000m altitude and the need to take into account and protect the different biotopes along the route. One example concerned the safety of a local species of rats, named tuco-tuco, by constructing tunnels under the road to allow the animals to transit it without trouble. All this has to be done while chasing large numbers of very curious donkeys watching the progress of the roadway.

With all this information in hand to realise the enormous potential of ALMA-related education, the meeting participants embarked upon a wide-ranging discussion. It was clear from the beginning that the experience of interdisciplinary teaching is very different from country to country. It was therefore quickly realised that any material to be produced must be in modular form and be easily adaptable to the curricula of individual countries. The need to translate the material into as many different languages as possible was obvious, adding another complex element to this project.

The participants expressed a lot of enthusiasm and are eager to start the development and realisation of the project. During the discussion, a list of about 30 specific topics that could be addressed in a modular way was drawn up, serving as a useful starting point. Many of the teachers volunteered to work on them, with the goal to circulate drafts of the individual modules in some months’ time. Specific conclusions were drawn about the desirable format of the future ALMA educational toolkit and on its foci. It will be concerned with the extraordinary and unique science to be made using the ALMA observatory and the variety of challenges to build an observatory like ALMA at Chajnantor. As one participant stated, this is really about “how to make frontier science in extreme conditions”. The primary target audience is students in secondary schools, i.e. 11–18 years old.

A first draft of the ALMA Interdisciplinary Teaching Project should become available early 2005. It will then be evaluated and tested by teachers after which improvements will be made in a next iteration. It is planned to have a useful version ready for distribution via existing networks by the end of the summer of next year.

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