



Interactive agenda Setting

**26th and 27th May, 2005
Cosener's House, Abingdon**

Interdisciplinary fields and fashions

This is the third workshop in a series of six on 'interactive agenda setting in the social sciences', funded by the Economic and Social Research Council.

The purpose of the series is to consider the ways in which non-academic interests and influences shape academic research agendas in the social sciences. The first workshop focused on the evolving agendas of various social scientific disciplines, the second concentrated on research centres. Somewhat different issues arise when we think about how interdisciplinary agendas and priorities develop.

In the course of this workshop we want to investigate interdisciplinary fields and fashions from different angles. It is often argued that 'real world' problems are not structured by discipline and that special interdisciplinary efforts are required to address them. We take a critical look at this issue. In the process, we consider the extent to which institutional developments in knowledge production (for example, the Mode 1/Mode 2 debate) generate new agendas and new lines of enquiry. How do deliberate efforts to engender interdisciplinary research work out within universities, departments and research groups and for individual researchers? Equally, how have interdisciplinary fields (management, science studies, women's studies, leisure studies, cultural studies) come into being and how have they developed?

With these issues in mind, the programme is in four parts.

Programme

Thursday 26th May

12.00 – 13.30 Arrive, Lunch.

13.30 – 13.45 Introductions.

13.45 – 15.45 **Session 1:** Crossing categories

Harriet Bulkeley, Department of Geography, Durham University

Kathryn Earle, Berg Publishers, Oxford

This session considers experiences of doing, writing and publishing research that lies between academic disciplines. As well as considering the challenge of 'selling' ideas and books that are positioned between or across conventional categories, we want to think about how interdisciplinary debates are initiated and how they relate to the 'home' disciplines on which they draw.

15.45 – 16.00 Tea/Coffee break

16.00 – 18.00 **Session 2:** Institutions, issues and interdisciplinary agendas

Michael Kuhn, University of Bremen

Elena Rockhill, University of Cambridge (Interdisciplinarity and society – science in society programme)

Paul Wouters, NERDI, The Netherlands

In this part of the workshop we are interested in the ways in which international and institutional pressures influence and structure the shaping of interdisciplinary agendas. It is useful to analyse these trends in general terms but we also plan to home in on what they mean for specific forms of interaction between natural and social sciences; for methodologies and for intellectual priorities. We finish this session by considering the history of science studies, using this as a case through which to think about the conditions under which interdisciplinary fields emerge.

19.00 Evening meal

Friday 27th May

From 7.30 Breakfast

09.00 – 11.00 **Session 3:** Engineering interdisciplinarity

Philip Lowe, Director RELU

Elizabeth Shove, Lancaster University

The Rural Economy and Land Use programme is a major interdisciplinary initiative designed to 'harness the social and natural sciences for sustainable rural development'. This programme is an example of an interdisciplinary agenda that has been deliberately set around a variety of non-academic concerns and that requires equally deliberate engineering.

Many of the UK universities built in the 1960s were quite literally constructed around a set of interdisciplinary ideals and ambitions. These were embedded in building design and in planning. How has this kind of also deliberate engineering worked out in practice?

11.00 – 11.30 Coffee

11.30 – 12.30 **Session 4:** Interdisciplinary, disciplinary and institutional dynamics

In this final session we want to draw together the different issues and perspectives explored along the way. We will do so with reference to the workshop discussion paper to be circulated before the workshop.

12.30 Close.

Further information on previous workshops and on the programme as a whole is available at:

<http://www.lancs.ac.uk/fss/sociology/research/projects/iass/isshome.html>