

# Disciplining the City: 3 Modes of Interdisciplinarity in Urban Research Programmes in the UK

**Simon Marvin**

**SURF**

CNRS

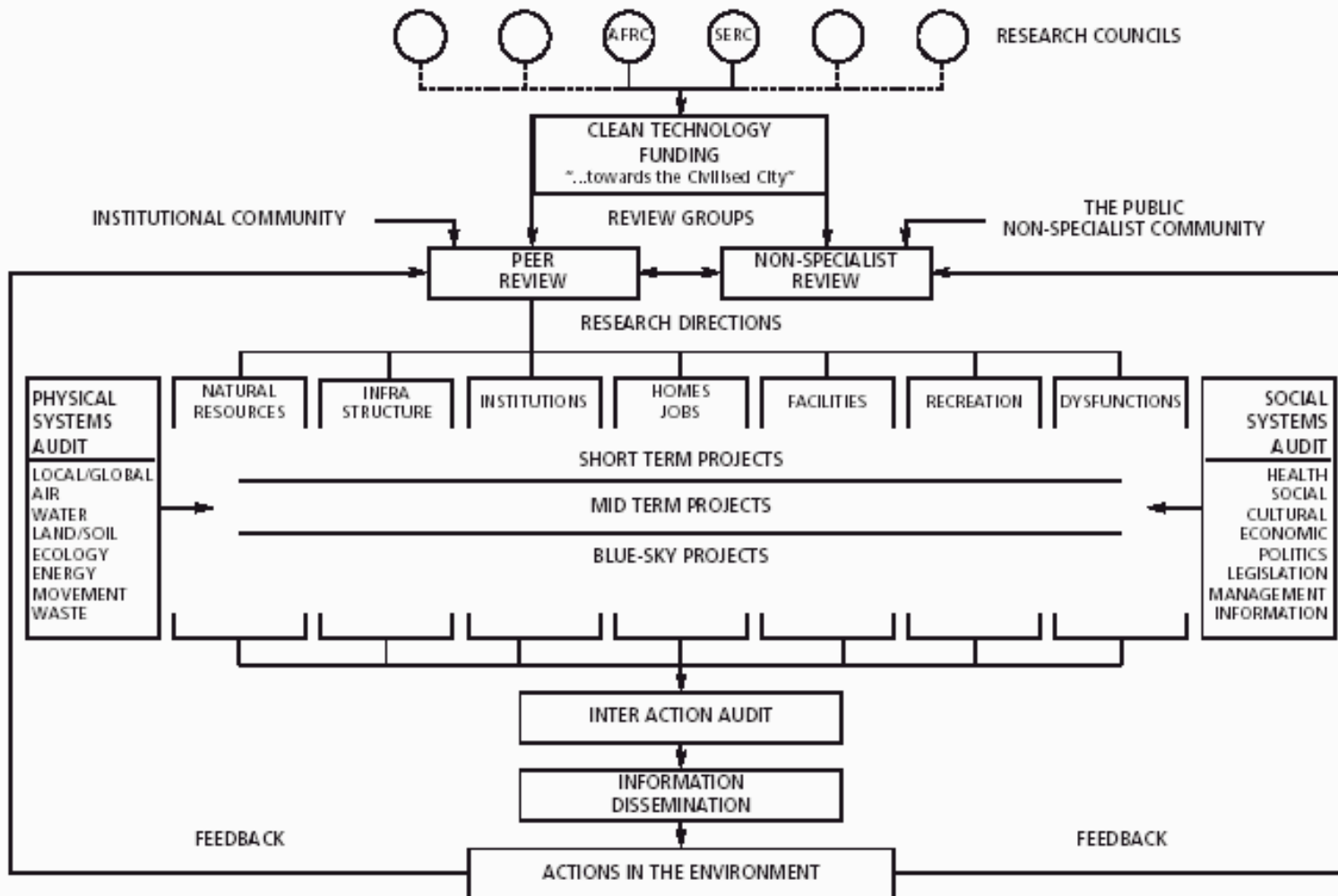
15<sup>TH</sup> FEB 2007

# Timeline of Interdisciplinarity

- 1. Radical
  - Early 1990's Civilised City and Red Bus Report
- 2. Cognate
  - Mid-1990s 3 distinct research council urban programmes
- 3. Outsourced
  - 1997 LARCI Local Authority Research Council Initiative

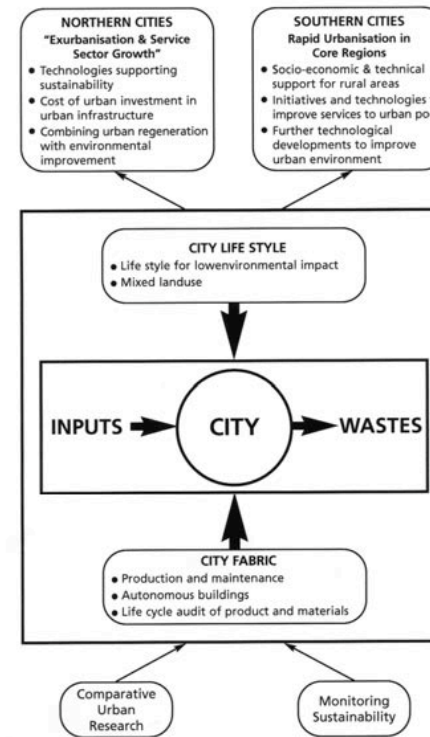
	EPSRC	ESRC	NERC
1999			Phase 3 URGENT
1998	Final Phase Sustainable Cities		Phase 2 URGENT
1997	Local Authority Research Council Initiative Launched		
1997	Phase 3 Sustainable Cities	Cities and Competitiveness Launched	Phase 1 URGENT
1996	Phase 2 Sustainable Cities	Scoping Cities Programme	Scoping URGENT Programme
1995	Sustainable Cities Network Launched		
1995	Phase 1 Towards the Sustainable City		
1994			
1993	Cities and Sustainability Clean Technology	Phase 3 GEC	
1993	Red Bus Report		
1992			
1991	Towards the Civilised City		
1990			

# Civilised City Proposal



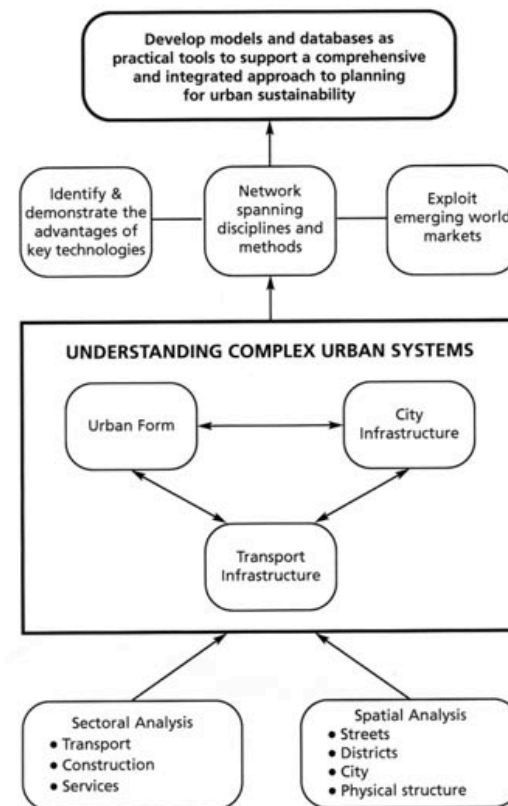
# Red Bus Report

- Key features
  - Input Output model
  - Cultural, natural and technological factors combine in city
  - Different types of city
  - Different types of sustainability?



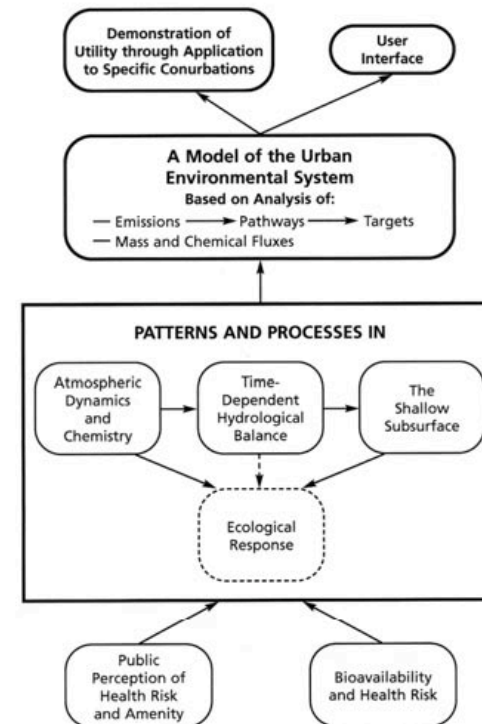
# EPSRC Towards Sus City Prog

- Key features
  - City as technology (no nature, no culture)
  - Analysis of systems
  - Models and simulation
  - (Re)engineering of infrastructure as intervention and solution



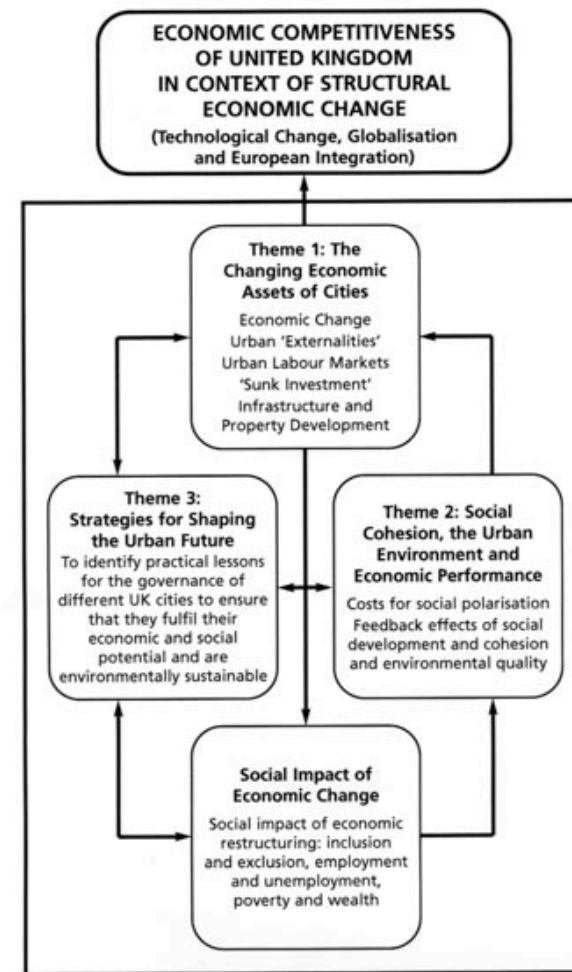
# NERC URGENT Programme

- Key features
  - City as ecological system (no technology or society)
  - System of fluxes
  - Models and patterns
  - Demonstration of application in cities.



# ESRC Cities and Competitiveness

- Key features
  - City and economy (tech & env. as assets).
  - Understand inter-relationships between economic and social.
  - Identify lessons for exploiting future potential of cities.



### 3. “Outsourced” Interdisciplinarity

- Shift away from radical agenda to collaboration between disciplines in same research council portfolio.
- Cities looked at in very different ways with no assessment of affinities between them.
- LARCI set up to fill gap between academic and users to bring together issues relation to “environment, economics and social equity”.
- Assumes “interdisciplinary users” but questions about users knowledge, expertise and time horizons...
- Support for aims of LARCI but not been able to “demonstrate its full value”

# Challenges

- A determined attempt to create an interdisciplinary approach of urban research failed.
- The city is disciplined by the different research frameworks, which construct it in different ways.
- Breaking down barriers is difficult, unpredictable and unrewarding...
- But the problem remains...potential steps to promote Interdisciplinarity:
  - Enlarge framing of questions?
  - Widening participation in debate about relevant questions?
  - Learning and translation phase in research?
  - Knowledge intermediaries?
  - Democratic process for choosing between competing claims?