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# Interdisciplinarity

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**Conceptualisation Seminar**

**Ecole Nationale des Ponts et Chaussées (Amphi Caquot)**

**28 rue des Saints Pères, 75007 Paris**

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# Interdisciplinary Projects

- EPSRC funded 'Urban Sustainability for the 24-hour city' (Sustainable Urban Environments consortium)
- EPSRC funded 'Positive Soundscapes Project' (Ideas Factory consortium)
- Defra funded 'Low Frequency Noise'
- Defra funded 'Aerodynamic Modulation of Wind Turbine Noise'
- ESRC funded 'Rethinking the urban experience: the sensory production of place' (Research Seminar Series)



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# Conference Sessions on Interdisciplinarity

- 2007 Royal Geographical Society (RGS-IBG) Conference 'Sustainable urban environments: unravelling the myth of interdisciplinarity'
- 2006 RGS-IBG Conference 'Collaborations across the divide: sustainable urban environments'





# Stages in interdisciplinary research

- Stages of the project
  - Conceptualisation
  - Methodological development
  - Data collection
  - Data analysis
  - Outputs
- Key considerations
  - Philosophical perspectives
  - Integration



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# Themes arising from RGS-IBG 2007 call for questions

- **Bringing disciplines together / working with other disciplines**
  - Taking a broad view of disciplines
  - Epistemological positions
  - Alpha discipline!
  - Shared language, viewpoint – NO
  - Mutual respect
- **Judging the quality of proposals / peer review**
  - How proposals are judged – quality
  - Who judges proposals – who is qualified?
  - Internal, ongoing peer review
- **Dissemination / exchange of knowledge / knowledge transfer**
  - Audiences
  - Who/what is marginalised, silenced?
  - Dirty linen – laundering the 'output'
- **Impact**
  - Silos of research, policy-making, practice
  - Does interdisciplinary mean, have to mean 'applied research'?
  - Is it more/less used by end users?
- **Risks**
  - Is interdisciplinary research more risky?
  - Isolation within 'disciplined' academic structures
  - Risks to career progression

*limitless*  
*possibilities*



# Who does interdisciplinary research?

- John Turnpenny's motivational classifications (RGS-IBG conference 2007, London)
  - Egotistical Motivation
  - Visionary Motivation
  - Techie Motivation
  - Facilitator Motivation
  - Reluctant Motivation
- What are your own motivations?



# Personal insights

- Vivacity 2020 (30 researchers; 5 institutions)
  - Workpackages, some very interdisciplinary, some less so
  - Innovative methodologies
  - Conceptual framework emergent and iterative
  - Abundance of data and papers
  - Full integration difficult
- Positive Soundscapes Project (10 researchers; 4 institutions)
  - Holistic, iterative approach at conceptual stage
  - Group motivation to integrate from beginning
  - Difficult to 'get off the ground'
  - Data collection stage delayed
- Defra funded projects (variable researchers; 1 institution)
  - Act as consultants
  - Strong, clear brief and objectives for research – low risk
  - Short timescales; clear research proposal, methodology, analysis and integration at conceptual stage



# Lessons - positive experiences?

- Challenges own epistemological positions
  - Frustration with colleagues who don't want to look beyond their disciplines
- High level, innovative research
  - Risky, time-consuming, all objectives may not be met
- Reaches stakeholder and user groups
  - Time-consuming interaction with these groups who have different needs and requirements to academic audiences
- Media interest – dissemination beyond academia
  - Time-consuming – some colleagues constantly in demand for TV, radio
- Expands own research interests
  - Moves individual 'beyond disciplines' – career progression/success?
- Networking experiences
- Publication/presentation opportunities
  - Not always relevant to own career trajectory



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# Thank you

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For further details of my work please see:

<http://www.acoustics.salford.ac.uk/profiles/adams/>

<http://www.sensescapes.co.uk/>

<http://www.positivesoundscapes.org/>

<http://www.vivacity2020.eu/>

