



# Interactive agenda Setting

18<sup>th</sup> and 19<sup>th</sup> November 2004,  
Cosener's House, Abingdon

## Disciplines and agendas

How do non-academic considerations influence the intellectual trajectories of different disciplines and the personal agendas of those working within them? In order to turn this into a tractable question and in order to explore the different dynamics at stake, the workshop will compare a selection of social science disciplines: anthropology, sociology, educational research and politics. In the course of the workshop we want to:

- Take stock of recent trends within each discipline: how have specialisms evolved, which areas are attracting increasing and decreasing attention
- Review and compare explanations of past and future trends, for example, considering the role of changing policy priorities, the influence of major national and international funding programmes, institutional structures, pressure from related disciplines and 'fractal' divisions within disciplines.
- Reflect on the development of individual research agendas in this context - how do ideas evolve through successive projects and how do personal priorities and intellectual aspirations shift as a result?

**Participants:** We have invited participants who are in a position to provide an informed overview of recent developments in their discipline. We have also invited people who have written about the development of knowledge in different academic fields, or who have first-hand experience of trends across a range of social sciences.

# Programme

## Thursday 18<sup>th</sup> November

12.00 – 13.30 Arrive, Lunch.

13.30 – 13.45 Introductions.

13.45 – 15.45 **Session 1:** Fashions and change in disciplines, sub-disciplines and across disciplines.

*This first session examines the emergence of new priorities – how do research topics come into and go out of fashion within different disciplines? Participants will be invited to describe and comment on such trends, either in a discipline, a sub-disciplinary field, or more generally. We expect to have examples from psychology, anthropology, political science and sociology. The idea is to focus on disciplinary developments that are in some way prompted or inspired by the 'outside' world and to compare these processes across disciplines.*

15.45 – 16.00 Tea/Coffee break

16.00 – 18.00 **Session 2:** The careers of ideas

*This session concentrates on specific developments within two fields: higher education research and economics (hopefully). The session will include the following presentations:*

Malcolm Tight - Mapping Higher Education Research

Ben Fine - Economics Imperialism

*Discussion in terms of Andrew Abbott's analysis of the 'chaos of disciplines' and the structuring of priorities inside academia and beyond.*

Elizabeth Shove/Chris Harty

Evening meal

## Friday 19<sup>th</sup> November

09.00 – 11.00 **Session 3:** Reproducing and transforming disciplines and their followers

*The session considers the idea that there are moments when entire disciplines and the careers of individual practitioners are more and less open or resistant to non-academic influence. It also provides an opportunity to think about how discipline-level trajectories intersect with the careers of their followers.*

Chris Caswill/PaulWouters

11.00 – 11.30 Coffee

11.30 – 13.00 **Session 4:** The outside world and setting priorities

*In the final session we want think about how the mechanisms of disciplinary change discussed in the three preceding sessions relate to non-academic priorities and processes of priority formation.*

Comment and view from the ESRC

13.00 Close