

Early Career Researchers International conference 2017

Guidelines

From the last twenty years onwards, many trans-, inter- or pluridisciplinary fields of research have started to blossom within French university institutions. While the Anglophone world has begun to decompartmentalize disciplines, creating new fields of research named “studies”, back in the 70’s owing to new nomadic research objects, young researchers now feel the need to define fresh research methodologies to bring innovative understandings of complex subject matters. Following the 2016 edition on the theme of interdisciplinarity, this third one-day international conference aims at bringing together young researchers from all over the world to reflect on their research practices. The starting point of any kind of research is to question its goals, and how they can be achieved. Therefore, we need to ask ourselves which questions are at work in research. What are the purposes of research ? Which questions correspond to which types of research? What is our take on fundamental research? What is the part given to societal, involved or interventionist research ?

In the current academic context, it is more and more common to call on the expertise of other disciplines – both methodologically and conceptually – which leads to the decompartmentalization of disciplines. It is thus only logical to consider research questions as being multifaceted, as each methodology, and each discipline, can shed new light on them. Therefore, we should favour the confrontation of approaches in a pluridisciplinary aim while studying research topics. Accordingly, innovative methodologies working between disciplines should be created, and external contributions should be encouraged when analysing research data. Far from being an isolated initiative, those considerations are beginning to be tackled at international congresses, especially at ground-breaking PhD colloquia (For instance: the 2017 SAES PhD colloquium). For these reasons, this one-day international conference – organised by the PhD students of the University of Lorraine – proposes to reflect on historical and epistemological points of view. The organisation committee anticipates contributions related, but not limited to, the following themes:

1. **What epistemological and deontological approaches should researchers adopt today?**

This axis mostly addresses the researcher’s positionality towards his/her research question(s). How does the researcher define his/her concern(s)? Is it an outright objective and scientific choice, or is the researcher influenced by his life, his very personal experiences, and backgrounds? While fields of research are increasingly changing, should they all intersect and perfectly match taught disciplines, or could they be much more flexible? (For example: *Gender Studies* uses History, Psychology, Sociology, Medicine...) The researcher’s ethical positioning should also be challenged; what are the risks of the “instrumentalisation” of research? Can there be a conflict of interest between the various actors of a research project or even between the researcher and his/her topic, when it is closely related to reality?

2. **What are the implications of the human factors behind research?**

The second section is centred around the Human being behind the academic and his/her work. One often forgets that researchers are humans with an actual emotional implication and/or political bias – whether of principles or of values – with their subjects (For example, let us consider academics working on migration questions when they are themselves immigrants). What are the links, antagonisms or continuities between a scientific approach

and a personal involvement? Does this involvement necessarily imply a loss of objectivity, or can it reinforce the implication of the researcher with his/her topic(s)? Likewise, what is our take on interventionist research? To what extent should we consider these concerns comprehensive and/or committed?

3. **Which methodolog(y/ies) for which research; Where are the boundaries between disciplines?**

While the French academic institutions clearly define disciplines (as exemplified by the National Council of Universities or the definition of the French National Education system...), can research areas be as simply delimited? In order to study original research topics, should we not create up-to-date methodologies as well? How do we then legitimate the use of a new methodology or the creation of a different method? Concisely put: how do we demarcate disciplines? Should we always favour crossroads between disciplines? Should we talk about a disciplinary area or should we replace it with the definition of a research domain? If so, how do we connect them with each other? Also, there are research domains which exist in one linguistic area and not in others. In this case, how do we define these concepts across national institutions and cultures?

4. **Inter/transdisciplinarity and the contributions of research and new technologies to society: how can different perspectives be reconciled?**

Here is a questioning on the intersections between what might be called “exact” sciences and “complex” sciences. Is the creation of inter- and/or trans- disciplinary research teams always necessary? Are they really beneficial? An increasing number of companies or external investors propose collaborations and partnerships with researchers (As an example: the *CIFRE* contract). What can be the methodologies in those collaborations? How do we conciliate the researcher’s methods and the partners’ expectations? We also need to question the uses and the limits of that type of cooperation. Researchers can acquire new notions and thus establish connections between different research areas, especially with the assistance of the latest technology.

5. **How does research interact with its inheritance?**

In this final axis, our goal is to tackle the historical dimension of research as well as researchers’ educational background(s). Facing the multiplication of pioneering concepts, should research aim at restructuring its fields? (For example: comparative studies of films and literature) If so, we should question the legitimisation of these new fields within a given academic institutional system (As an example: the field of *Cultural Studies* is often strongly criticised outside of the Anglophone world). Therefore, can new technologies be considered as a tool to “free” ourselves from former methods used to master disciplines in surpassing “traditional” fields of research? Since research preoccupations are in constant evolution, we should also attempt to question the historicity of research and link it with notion of suitability – especially when dealing with current societal affairs. It is only logical to question the axiological positioning of the researcher with regard to political militancy or societal debates.