

Transfusion and Transformation: the creative potential of interdisciplinary knowledge exchange, 15-17/07/14, Institute of Advanced Study, Durham

This conference brought together a host of interdisciplinary researchers, academics, and practitioners from around the world to discuss the place, practicality, and future of interdisciplinarity. There was a plethora of projects represented at the conference; far too many to give a full account of. However, what is clear is that interdisciplinarity has moved past its cute (re)birth stage when most were willing to gaze doe-eyed into the crib and coo. Instead, it has shakily taken to its feet and both well-wishers and sceptics have begun placing their bets on whether it will walk or fall.

The question of how we practically run interdisciplinary conferences, projects, and modules continually reared its head. It is a lot more difficult to successfully facilitate interdisciplinarity at these events than one might think. Indeed, although the conference audience were mainly from the sympathetic camp, reports of difficulties abounded. These generally took two forms: disciplinary boundaries such as terminology, methodology, outlook, and so on, and achieving *genuine* interdisciplinarity. In relation to the latter issue, multi- or cross-disciplinarity can often be (accidentally) disguised as interdisciplinarity...particularly when presented by an interdisciplinary enthusiast. That is not to say that multi- and cross- are less valuable than interdisciplinarity. Interdisciplinarity, as fascinating, interesting, and in-funding-vogue as it may be is not necessarily *always* the way to go, and we must not only take caution to reflect on whether an event was actually interdisciplinary but whether an interdisciplinary approach was warranted in the first place.

Other pertinent questions that needed answering for the sake of interdisciplinarity's academic future included: Who can judge or evaluate the quality of interdisciplinary work? Is interdisciplinarity a subject in itself? Have we created a system where interdisciplinarity may be lauded but not valued as an attribute on the academic market?

The fact that few answers were found to these questions testified to the need for more focused attention on what exactly interdisciplinarity is, what it is seeking to achieve, and where its true value lies so that we might aim for and facilitate it with a much clearer picture in mind. What the conference did act as was an opportunity to found and develop a community of best practice where techniques and insights can be shared and debated. Conferences such as this are clearly still in their infancy, however, and will not be enough by themselves. It is up to those of us who see a true value in interdisciplinarity to maintain connections beyond event boundaries and to continue the community's growth.