

CCRI Winter School 6th – 7th March 2025



The University of Gloucestershire's Countryside and Community Research Institute (CCRI) continues its annual Winter School for PhD researchers based at UK institutions, guided this year by the theme of *Innovative research methods and methodologies for social change*.

The two-day Winter School offers current PhD researchers a chance to present work-in-progress to a group of peers in a conference-type setting. Experienced staff from the CCRI and other departments of the University will attend to offer constructive, friendly and critical responses to the presenters.

Call for abstracts

Writing about participatory approaches to planning for climate change, Smith et al. (2024) recently asked whether or not

'... public participation around climate governance ... [is] different to public participation around any other social issue.'

This question points to a range of innovations in social science which have sought to build cross-sectoral alliances, ensure policy and practice are informed by evidence, complement science with local and indigenous knowledge and attempt to foreground justice and democracy in processes of change. This has especially (but not exclusively) been the case in relation to transdisciplinary and interdisciplinary research around climate transitions and transformations, covering topics from rural food system governance to the 15-minute city.

Important innovations in recent research include:

- Applying living labs to structure and refine IT innovations (such as buying platforms and data dashboards) as well as to prototype inclusive policy at different spatial scales;
- Including intensive and rapid techniques to discuss alternative land use scenarios (such as seasonal flooding or urban rewilding) which might help mitigate anticipated climate impacts;

- Using role-playing, story-telling, visual and performance arts, walking and creative ‘games’ to foster consensus in regeneration, knowledge exchange and governance proposals.

These techniques recall concepts such as post-normal science (Funtowicz and Ravetz 2018), where evidence may offer several conflicting (but valid) possibilities for action, disagreements are based on values, and a high level of uncertainty surrounds a sense of urgency (e.g. climate ‘emergencies’). An associated risk, identified by Nassehi (2021), is that society feels overwhelmed by the complexity of challenges, with limits becoming evident in the capacity of existing institutions to act decisively.

More positively, though, it is an exciting time for research. Iterative and experimental approaches to research are being systematically applied to many practical challenges. In this year’s Winter School, we want to celebrate, and take encouragement from, postgraduate research which is innovative in its techniques and methods, and geared towards inclusive, transformational and sustainable policy and practice, for example (but not exclusively):

- Digital and AI innovations
- The translation of hyperlocal knowledge into policy and practice
- Inclusive and socially just methods for envisioning better futures
- Creative and artistic techniques that relate to persistent social and environmental challenges
- Intensive and immersive methods, such as climathons, hackathons and model visualisations
- Methodologies that are incremental and flexible, responding to research progress
- Research sensitively directed towards changing practices that may be generationally, geographically or culturally entrenched

Please send abstracts for consideration of **no more than 250 words**, stating your name and host institution to both Daniel Keech (dkeech@glos.ac.uk) and Aimee Morse (amorse1@glos.ac.uk) by noon on Wednesday, 8th January. Decisions will be communicated by Friday 17th January 2025.

References

Funtowicz, S. and Ravetz, J. (2018) *Post-normal science* in Castree, N., Hulme, M. and Proctor, J.D. (eds.) *Companion to Environmental Studies*, Routledge, London.

Nassehi, A. (2021) *Unbehagen: Theorie der Überforderten Gesellschaft. [Unease: Theory of overwhelmed society]*. München, C.H. Beck.

Smith, C., Bain-Kerr, F. and van der Horst, D. (2024) Participatory Climate A: Reflections on Community Diversity and the Role of External Experts. *Urban Planning*, 9, Art. 8182.