



Landscape &  
Environment

Research Programme  
Specification December 2005



Arts & Humanities  
Research Council

# **AHRC Landscape and Environment Research Programme Specification**

## **Executive Summary**

Landscape and environment are currently of compelling cultural significance, as fields of scholarly research, sites of artistic creativity and arenas of public concern. As both imaginative representations and material realities, landscape and environment matter as a medium for the expression of complex ideas and feelings, about beauty, belonging, access to resources, relations with nature, the past and the future, making sense of the world and people's place in it. Such concerns are topical, but they are not new. In the mind and on the ground, landscape and environment are conditioned historically by sometimes far reaching cultural forms and processes, and in complex patterns and structures which demand a range of disciplinary perspectives to understand them. The challenge for this programme is to advance knowledge, critically and creatively, of the cultural forms and processes shaping, and shaped by, landscape and environment. It will break new ground in bringing together researchers from a wide range of disciplines and approaches (including those where practice is integral to the research) to address the changing ways landscapes and environments have been imagined, experienced, designed, made and managed, and in communicating research findings to a wide audience. The programme will extend the scope and deepen the focus of enquiry by examining landscapes and environments articulated in words, pictures, performance, patterns of building and cultivation and in forms of conduct and livelihood. It will do so for a range of historical periods and places, and in a dialogue with current debates on landscape and environment in the public domain. Research of the highest quality, inventively conceived, rigorously pursued, imaginatively produced and well disseminated, will enrich understandings of landscape and environment at all levels, through a focus on the following themes: images, values and knowledge; representing, making and meaning; time, space and narrative; settlement and movement; elements and ecologies; authority and access. A wide range of funding opportunities will be available in order to deliver the ambitious aims and objectives of the Programme.

## **What is meant by Landscape and Environment?**

This is not a settled matter, indeed it is a question implicated in all the research themes of this programme, but as a starting point, to set out the scope of the programme, it may be useful to state some terminological points. Landscape and

environment are coupled throughout this specification to indicate the programme's extensive range, although they may well be differentiated in particular projects. Taken together landscape and environment include visible stretches of terrain, networks of sites and spaces and physical, multi-sensory surroundings, at various scales and, in many historical periods and places. A human dimension is taken to be integral to landscape and environment alike, including research which addresses the issue of non-human agency; the world before or apart from human presence is part of the programme insofar as it has been culturally represented. The programme aims to address a range of human relations with landscape and environment, emotional and rational, visual and visceral, active and contemplative. The programme welcomes research on and between landscapes and environments which are imagined, created, performed, built and cultivated, which are urban, rural, terrestrial, maritime, spectacular and overlooked, everyday and enchanting, lived in, worked on, moved through and looked at. It will address how meanings of landscape and environment are conditioned by attitudes to and management of people as well as non-human nature, in relations of figure and landscape, body and environment. It is recognised that meanings of landscape and environment, within and between the communities which use them, can be complex and sometimes contested. The words can both refer to a specific form, say scenic landscape or the built environment, and variously intersect in a discursive field with cognate terms such as nature, place, space, site, habitat, territory and region. In research which ventures beyond current Anglophone culture, this field is further overlain by other, perhaps contrasting, discourses of landscape and environment.

### **Programme Aims and Objectives**

The programme aims to establish distinctive, innovative and engaging arts and humanities research perspective on landscape and environment through projects of the highest quality and international significance. Across the range of its activity, the Programme will draw on a range of disciplinary expertise and resources to produce work which is critical and creative, collaborative and communicative, and seeking to change the ways landscape and environment are understood. The programme will

- make a coherent contribution to arts and humanities understanding of landscape and environment through its thematic focus

- develop a research field in terms of theory, methods, sources, materials and case studies which will enable comparative analyses of landscape and environment to be undertaken
- explore new approaches for studying landscape and environment
- promote effective working between disciplines and build new connections and understanding as an outcome
- facilitate exchange between researchers, a wide range of individuals and organisations committed to increasing knowledge of landscape and environment, including those in the creative industries, the cultural sector (including museums and galleries), urban and rural communities, government agencies, public, charitable and voluntary bodies
- develop the research community by supporting new researchers and integrating them with established ones, including collaborating with researchers in organisations beyond the HE sector
- contribute to public awareness of arts and humanities research on landscape and environment by disseminating findings and addressing current issues of public concern through outputs directed at a wide audience (including web pages, exhibitions, performances, public lectures and broadcasts)
- develop themes and approaches that are, or may, become embedded in the research agenda and resources of the arts and humanities
- make a significant international impact within the field of landscape and environment

### **Research Themes**

The following six themes, reaching across disciplinary boundaries, have been identified, informed by pre-programme consultations and framework seminars:

1. Images, values and knowledge
2. Representing, making and meaning
3. Time, space and narrative
4. Settlement and movement
5. Elements and ecologies
6. Authority and access

These themes are set out in the Annex to this specification with broad statements and indicative questions. While applicants will be asked to identify a main theme which will be addressed by their project, they are not formally required to work on a single theme, nor to address the specific statements and questions. As the

themes intersect, it is expected that some applicants will address issues in more than one theme and to pose new questions which may arise.

### **Contributing disciplines and collaboration**

The programme themes are intended to attract researchers across the arts and humanities. In order to stimulate and gauge interest pre-programme framework seminars were run in four locations with participants from a great range of disciplines, including archaeology, architecture, anthropology, area studies, art history, cultural and historical geography, creative writing, development studies, environmental history, film making, landscape management, linguistics, literature, media studies, museology, cultural policy, curation, music and musicology, performance studies, philosophy, politics, planning, religious studies and urban history. It is hoped that researchers from these areas and from other areas in the arts and humanities areas not hitherto associated with research on landscape and environment will take this opportunity to apply for funding.

In focussing on research themes, the programme will both chart common ground and break new ground. Different disciplines will contribute diverse intellectual resources and expertise. Research on landscape and environment across the arts and humanities has already produced a rich array of source materials, concepts, theory and methodology. Projects will evaluate the scope and potential of these resources, testing them in case studies. They will assess the significance for key research questions of different kinds of evidence for landscape and environmental research, including sources from the library and the field, and the analytical scope and purchase of concepts such as text, theatre, ecology, iconography and actor-network. A range of methodologies relevant to research questions will be encouraged, tried and tested procedures alongside more innovative and experimental ones. The programme will help clarify how arts and humanities research on landscape and environment both frames traditional disciplinary concerns and advances work which claims to be variously multi-, inter-, trans- or post-disciplinary.

The programme will bring together grant holders to share ideas and discuss methods, and will put them in touch with others interested in their findings or in working together on future research plans. It will make links with related programmes, Centres and research groups in the social sciences and natural sciences in order to seek out and develop new collaborative possibilities. Efforts will be made to connect the programme with other centres and programmes

funded either wholly or partly by AHRC (such as 'Diasporas, Migration and Identities' and 'Designing for the 21<sup>st</sup> Century'), by the other Research Councils and charitable foundations such as the Leverhulme Trust. Public bodies, voluntary and community agencies, private companies, performers and practitioners, and informed individuals with an interest and stake in the research and its outcomes will be involved at both programme and, where appropriate, project and network level. The programme will connect UK-based researchers with international scholarly networking and exchange. A database of researchers and others interested in the programme will be developed. They will be kept informed of progress, events, connections to other programmes, relevant funding opportunities, and future developments. A website will be launched with regular updates.

### **Programme Timetable and Schemes**

This strategic initiative first began with the deliberations of a working group, followed by the publication of a draft specification and a series of pre-programme seminars in 2005.

The £5.5 million programme<sup>1</sup> runs for five years from September 2005 to the end of August 2010 under the oversight and management of a programme director and a steering committee.

The first call for applications will be issued in December 2005. All applications will be peer reviewed and a specially convened panel will make the final funding decisions. In addition to specific research projects, workshops and networks, and studentships the programme will also support networking events. A website will be developed to publicise information about these, to feature projects, to make connections, and to disseminate research (in the form of working papers and links to publications).

Support will be provided through four schemes:

- Research Networks and Workshops (Networks up to £30k for two years full economic costs (fEC) and Workshops £15k for up to one year (fEC)).

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<sup>1</sup> The original budget of £4 million has been uplifted to £5.5 million to reflect the introduction of full economic costing for all applications received after 1 September 2005.

- Larger research grants for up to 3 years and for between £100K and £600K fEC
- Smaller research grants for up to one year and for between £20K and £100K fEC
- Collaborative research studentships -3 year full-time awards

**Workshop and Networks** will support successful applicants to run *either* a series of workshops over one year (up to £15,000 fEC), *or* a network of researchers over two years (up to £30,000 fEC) to enable researchers to share ideas, to develop collaborative proposals or publications, and to support engagement between scholars in the UK and beyond, and between scholars and other stakeholders. It is expected that up to ten grants will be awarded under this scheme. The closing date for this call is 23 February 2006

**Smaller Research Grants** (for between £20,000 and £100,000 fEC) will support projects from less established as well as established senior scholars, and from those wishing to undertake small scale innovative or short projects of up to one year. It cannot be used to fund pilot projects leading to applications for large research grants within the Landscape and Environment Programme (the timing of the schemes will not allow for this). It is expected that about ten of these grants will be awarded. The closing date for this call is 23 February 2006

**Collaborative Research Studentships** will encourage and develop collaboration between Higher Education Institution (HEI) departments and non-academic bodies under the Landscape and Environment Programme. These studentships will provide opportunities for PhD students to gain first hand experience of work outside an academic environment. It is expected that about five grants will be awarded for 3 year, full-time awards that will commence October 2006. The closing date for this call is 16 February 2006

**Larger Research Grants** will support ten to twelve projects with a duration of between one and three years. Projects will be expected to start by early 2007. Applications for three-year grants may propose a single studentship in association with the project. The competition will be conducted in two stages, an outline phase, followed by a request for full applications from short-listed candidates. The

closing date for outline applications is 6 April 2006 with the subsequent closing date for full applications 20 July 2006.

It is possible that a second tranche of funding will be available for further networks, workshops and smaller grants in 2007, but there is currently no financial commitment to allow for this. Researchers working on landscapes and environment wishing to apply for funds to support study leave are reminded of the AHRC's other competitions in responsive mode. The intention will be, where relevant, to include successful applicants to these other competitions in programme mailings and events.

### **Programme planning, management and evaluation**

The Director of the programme is Stephen Daniels, Professor of Cultural Geography at the University of Nottingham. He is supported by a Steering Committee comprised of academics from a range of arts and humanities disciplines and other stakeholders. With their help and that of a part-time programme administrator, Professor Daniels will oversee the running of the programme, develop its coherence, ensure that it meets its objectives, contribute to its dissemination, maximise its wider impact, and report annually on its work.

The Steering Committee, as part of its responsibilities, will contribute to the monitoring and evaluation of the programme (individual projects will also be monitored using normal AHRC processes). Its members will receive annual reports and the final programme report and will ensure that the objectives of the programme as stated in this specification are met. They will advise the Director, and the AHRC on the development and management of the programme.

The programme's focus on research matters of related interest provides potential for linkage, mutual reflection on common issues or findings, and the added value that comes from separate researchers and research teams coming together to extend their thinking and ambition beyond their own project boundaries. To these ends, grant-holders will be expected to attend one or more workshops at which they will share and discuss their research, to submit annual reports which will contribute to the programme report and provide material as requested for the website. To further co-ordination within the Programme, the Director will support exchanges between researchers on different projects, and between networks and projects. Existing AHRC award-holders working on relevant projects may be invited to participate in programme events and to contribute to the website

during the life-time of the programme. A final Programme conference is anticipated, and the programme will also feed into national and international conferences throughout its duration.

It is through such activities that the coherence of the programme and its impact in terms of communication, exchange and dissemination will be assured. In addition, monitoring and evaluating the amount, level and quality of activity (e.g. of conferences, workshops, lectures, media and electronic output, exhibitions, publications, creative work and performances, and other spin-outs and opportunities) will demonstrate the value added by the programme and its contributing projects to public knowledge, understanding and policy on landscape and environment. The extent to which these issues continue to be discussed and researched within the arts and humanities beyond the life of the programme will also be a mark of its success.

Enquiries about the scholarly content of the Landscape and Environment Programme, its aims, objectives and themes should be directed to Stephen Daniels at the contact address below:

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Enquiries about the application procedures, competitions and timetables, application forms and application process should be directed to one of the AHRC officers as detailed below:

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## Research Themes in Detail

- 1 Images, values and knowledge
- 2 Representing, making and meaning
- 3 Time, space and narrative
- 4 Settlement and movement
- 5 Elements and ecologies
- 6 Authority and access

These themes are set out below with wide ranging statements and indicative questions. The statements, questions and illustrative examples are intended to problematise the themes and stimulate proposals, not prescribe or specify funded projects. Even if not stated, issues of cultural identity, including class, ethnicity, gender and generation are understood to inform these themes. While some of the questions are put in the present tense, all are understood to have historical significance. While the UK is a pivot of the programme, it is understood that the themes are transnational, and that some proposals may focus on other parts of the world, including, places of cultural contact and exchange with areas in the UK.

### 1. Images, Values and Knowledge

Discussions and debates about landscape and environment are informed by a range of values, including aesthetic, commercial, spiritual, scientific, social, historical and ethical values. These values shape ways landscape and environment are imagined and described. Many values are instrumental, envisaging landscape and environment as resources for human benefit, and some are intrinsic, envisaging the earth beyond or apart from human agency. This programme seeks to explore the cultural complexities of such values, to examine their claims to knowledge and insight, their histories, interrelations, imagery, meanings and effects.

What, in particular contexts, are relations between various forms of knowledge about landscape and environment, artistic and scientific, official and amateur, local and cosmopolitan? How do they converge and diverge, combine and compete? What are the effects of contact between contrasting cultures of

knowledge and understanding, say during periods and places of exploration and empire?

As much as expressly aesthetic forms such as landscape paintings or poems of place, how can forms of earth science and commercial environmental development be examined for their rhetorical strategies, their myths and metaphors, parables and symbols? In turn how can arts and humanities researchers examine the documentary dimension of art works, in terms of empirical contexts, documentary claims or practicable effects (say in ways places are designated for their artistic heritage)? What does a focus on the language of landscape and environment reveal about cultural values, including the language of place names, regional terms, and keywords like wilderness, scenery, pastoral, sublime, sustainable, picturesque, polluted and post-industrial? How do meanings shift historically and geographically and between various discourses and genres?

## **2. Representing, Making and Meaning**

Representations of landscape and environment come in a range of discursive and material forms. Some are finished, clearly authored and comprehensively designed artefacts, whether on paper or on the ground, others articulate more processual, participatory modes of engagement which leave ephemeral physical traces. The programme will consider a range of representational forms, acoustic, tactile, visual and written. It will ask how the arts of landscape and environment draw on and help shape broader cultural practises and pursuits such as tourism, rambling and gardening. It will address the challenge of bringing together different representational forms and media in the same project, such as maps, guidebooks, paintings, installations and performances. It will consider the ways that meanings of landscape and environments are made and remade, perhaps disputed, through their changing use and interpretation, and what wider cultural claims these changes reveal.

A current priority in a range of arts and humanities research is the materiality of landscape and environment, of artefacts like pictures or books, of bodily processes of experience and representation, and of physical sites and spaces. The programme will address the issue of what constitutes materiality and material culture, of when, where and how material matters, and what difference this makes to other, perhaps more textual and iconographic, approaches to meanings of landscape and environment.

What is the relation between materials of, and for, representation, in both transportable forms like books and paintings and site specific works like installations and performances? How do issues of technology in material transformation condition the analysis or creation of meaning? As well as social and economic imperatives such as patronage and the market, how do the arts of landscape and environment respond to the physical environment? How are the meanings of such art works mediated by the spaces and places of their production and reproduction, collection, display, circulation and consumption? What are the implications for questions of authorship and human creativity, both in terms of designed landscapes which are subject to natural processes of change, and in terms of places with a long history of anonymous, collective making, management and modification?

### **3. Time, Space and Narrative**

History is integral to this research programme, in relation to both long and short term changes to landscape and environment, in the remote as well as recent past, and in relation ways people in these different times perceived such changes and narrated relations of past, present and future. It will attend to how texts in different times and places have described and explained long term processes like climate change and colonization, or sudden events like wars and earthquakes, and examine the cultural status of these stories. Projects could focus on periods and places in which landscape and environmental sensibilities have assumed a high cultural profile, when several forms of representation and practice have flourished, and consider if and how these forms are connected to transformative changes in the physical world. This theme addresses how archives of landscape and environmental history are constituted. It examines how repositories of documents, images, testimony, and physical material are collected, curated, designed, displayed and interpreted. It focuses on various archival sites and spaces, from studios and sketchbooks to physical landscapes.

How is landscape and environmental change charted, through time and across territory, to designate developments as ones of progress and improvement, decline and degradation, and describe moments of catastrophe and transformation? What is the impact of major, paradigmatic, scientific, political and theological texts on views of landscape and environmental change? How are influential texts of landscape and environmental history plotted, their story lines charted in terms of various sites and spaces? How are forms of environmental

future, predicted or prophesied, informed by accounts of the past? To what extent do narratives identify moral responsibilities for creating, accelerating or preventing such changes? And what are the implications of these narratives for the way landscapes and environments are made and managed? What are the implications of the various ways the past has been seen as emplaced in the landscape, for example as long term, sedimented change or fragments of former times? What are the relations between settling and unsettling pasts, hauntings and heritage? How have forms of history and temporality, such as antiquity, nostalgia and forms of personal and memory, been preserved and fabricated, through buildings and forms of enactment? How has the past been deployed both to aggravate and to resolve cultural conflicts over territory?

#### **4. Settlement and Movement**

Landscapes and environments are fluent, not fixed, subject to sometimes dramatic shifts in constitution and meaning. While not static, landscape and environment may in some forms, say farmland and villages, frame notions of dwelling and attachment, as in others, say metropolises and motorways, frame ideas of mobility and dynamism. This programme adopts a perspective which recognizes relations of settlement and movement in all landscapes and environments. It questions how mythologies of settlement and travel interact with material practise, and addresses the challenge of researching forms which leave little trace in the physical landscape or documentary record. It asks how conjunctions of settlement and movement, for example in ideas of homeland and exile, exploration and colonization and nomadism and encampment, articulate relations of place and space at differing scales, from the local to the cosmological.

How do patterns of settlement on the ground express and reproduce cultural ideals and practical livelihood? The question applies to places with a long, piecemeal history of shaping and reshaping as well as newly planned and perhaps grandly designed ones. How do such patterns engage with physical topography and local materials as well as the exigencies of everyday life? To what extent have powerful movements of people influenced forms of landscape, in the transfer and transformation of ideas, animals and plants? What are the effects of contact with different, perhaps resistant, peoples and environments? In what ways do forms of travel shape views, designs and uses of landscape and environment, a range of forms such as pilgrimage, tourism, commuting and rambling? What are the imaginative implications of different technologies and velocities of travel?

## 5. Elements and Ecologies

Landscapes and environments matter to people in elemental ways, despite, or because of, the extent of their technological engineering and transformation. The ritual spaces of the stages of life draw on the elements of earth, air, fire and water. In issues as various as climate change, public health, energy production and waste disposal, the elements have sustained their cultural power, as forms of reverie as well as reality. The material and mythical relations within and between elements may be traced in the cultural histories of their ecological forms:

- Terrestrial forms, including mountains, forests, landslides, earthquakes, mines, quarries, deserts, fields, houses and gardens.
- Aerial forms, including storms, clouds, mist, smog, atmosphere, climate, windmills, aeronautics.
- Fiery forms, including volcanoes, forest fires, city conflagrations, hearths, forges, furnaces, fireworks, power stations.
- Aquatic forms, including seas, shipping, coasts, lakes, rivers, canals, icefields, fens, floods, droughts, dams, millstreams, spas, irrigation.

What are the implications of permanent and temporary transformation, say reclamation of land from sea or seasonal flooding of meadows? What are the cultural complexities of contact zones like the sea shore and urban periphery? How are forms of energy production, from wind power to nuclear power, imagined, perhaps as utopian or dystopian worlds? How have relations between the human body and the physical environment, for example in issues of health, death, race, poverty and cultural progress, been imagined in terms of elemental relations and engineered accordingly? How have the elements and their ecologies offered models of and materials for human creativity and imagination?

## **6. Authority and Access**

The many and sometimes conflicting claims on landscape and environment manifest a broader domain of cultural politics, in which power and authority, over non-human nature as well as other people, is unevenly distributed and variously deployed. Public and private space takes various forms in country and city; physical and imaginative access to landscape and environment can be selectively controlled. The politics of landscape and environment may be identified in various forms, from grand schemes to small tactics, in issues of policy, regulation and investment as well as planning, design and use. Power in the land is manifold. The poetic or spiritual powers of landscape and environment, say at sacred sites or places of natural wonder may be variously related to the deployment of secular and political authority.

How are particular polities, including empires, republics and commonwealths, envisaged as symbolic landscapes? How are forms of political change, including revolution, reform and restoration, seen as processes of landscape change? How are ideas of community connected to landscape and environment? How do various forms of governmental rule, such as property rights and planning regulations, codify cultural interests, and what can disputes over such rules, such as cases of trespass, eviction and criminal damage, reveal about wider conflicts, say between custom and law, and broader issues of private and public life? How can less formal and visible, and perhaps less recorded, views and uses of landscape and environment, such as commonland and rights of way be researched?

In what ways do landscapes and environments vary in the degree and terms in which they are publicly accessible? Both physically accessible, in the regulation and configuration of sites, conditioning who can do what where and when, and discursively accessible, in the language and imagery of artworks and publications, presenting landscape and environment as cultural forms people can confidently learn about and identify with.