AHRC Research Network
The Silences of Science
Patterns of Silence and Contemplation in the Work of Scientists

Imperial College London
Thursday 12th June, Room 1.31 Royal School of Mines

10.00 Registration

10.30-10.50 Introduction
‘The Sound in Silence, the Silence in Sound’, by Ed Prosser

10.50-12.20 Do scientists need silence?
Current research policy rewards communicativeness, encouraging high
publication rates, large collaborations and 'impact'. Yet we know that periods
of non-communication are also important to scientists. What is the role of
contemplation in intellectual endeavour and can silence fuel creativity? If
getting stuck frequently prefigures scientific success, does it matter if a
research training emphasises haste and competitiveness as key values?
Finally, is there a link between speed and research misconduct? This session
will explore the contours of silence in the scientific life.

Dr Hassan Abdulrazzak (playwright and postdoctoral scientist)
Dr Peter Lawrence (Department of Zoology, University of Cambridge)
Professor Clare Lloyd (National Heart & Lung Institute, Imperial College)
Professor Neil Stoker (Department of Pathology and Infectious Diseases,
Royal Veterinary College)
Chair: Ehsan Masood (Editor, Research Fortnight)

12.20-12.50 A Poet in the Arctic
Nick Drake is a poet and writer who travelled with the 2010 Cape Farewell
expedition to the Arctic. In this session Nick discusses his experiences
in the Arctic, the challenge of writing about the Arctic and climate change, and
reads a selection of his work.

12.50-2.00 Lunch
2.00-3.45  

**Being silent and being silenced: the case of climate change**

The public debate about climate change can be characterised as a battle to control communication – whose voice is heard and who is silenced? From the forced communication of a Freedom of Information request to the threat of libel actions, climate sceptics have resorted to legal means in attempts both to break silences and to impose silence. In such a charged public arena, do scientists have any choice but to speak up? And if they do speak up, how can they be heard above the noise?

Professor Kevin Anderson (Tyndall Centre for Climate Change Research, University of Manchester)

Professor Joanna Haigh (Department of Physics, Imperial College)

Professor Sir Brian Hoskins (Grantham Institute for Climate Change, Imperial College)

Michael Le Page (Environment Features Editor, *New Scientist*)

Bob Ward (Grantham Research Institute on Climate Change and the Environment, LSE)

Chair: Dr Felicity Mellor (Science Communication Unit, Imperial College)

3.45-4.15  Tea

4.15-5.45  

**The silences of public engagement**

Our final session looks at the limits of openness and offers a critique of the current drive to engage the public with science and technology. We will consider whether events aimed at public engagement can mask significant silences and whether public dialogue about science requires scientists to be silent as they listen to public concerns. With science museums, how can curators evoke a spirit of contemplation in visitors? As for policy, are there silences within democratic processes, and what do these mean? More broadly how does silence intersect with notions of trust and power?

Dr Alice Bell (independent writer and researcher)

Dr Sarah Davies (Department of Media, Cognition and Communication, University of Copenhagen)

James Peto (Chief Curator, Wellcome Collection)

Professor James Wilsdon (Science Policy Research Unit, University of Sussex)

Chair: Dr Stephen Webster (Science Communication Unit, Imperial College)

5.45-6.00  Closing remarks.