



Association of Heterodox Economics

*Fourth ESRC funded post graduate workshop on
advanced research methods*

*4th-6th February 2005
Chancellor's Conference Centre
Manchester U.K.*

Welcome and Introduction

Dear Participant,

On behalf of the Association for Heterodox Economics we would like to welcome you to this workshop. As well as finding the formal workshop sessions stimulating, we also hope that you enjoy the opportunity of informally socialising with other members of the heterodox economics community in order to help with your research and to build up a network of contacts.

Professor Peter Davies
Dr Paul Downward
Dr Wendy Olsen.

Some Background

The Association for Heterodox Economics

The Association for Heterodox Economics (AHE) was formed in 1999, largely through the organisational energy of Professor Fred Lee, then of De Montfort University in the UK, because of the Royal Economic Society's reluctance to allow sessions to be organised at their annual conference by outside organisations; much in the same manner as allowed at the ASSA meetings.¹ The main issue at stake was that the RES conference programme typically emphasised neoclassical economics which constrained intellectual diversity. As a result a successful one-day fringe conference was held at the 1999 RES venue which was the University of Nottingham. It was planned to hold a further fringe conference the following year, at St Andrews University, which would be more formally linked to the RES, to promote dialogue and compromise. The response from the RES committee was outright rejection. As a result, a fully independent conference was held at the Open University Conference Centre in London. Since then there have been further conferences in London, Dublin, Nottingham and Leeds with the current conference scheduled to take place at the City University, London.

The success of these conferences has meant that the AHE has evolved into an unincorporated, non-profit making body with the aim of promoting pluralist and policy relevant discourse in economic analysis. Details about the AHE are available on the website; www.hetecon.com.

Typically conference sessions are organised by theme rather than schools of thought. The conference organising committee is elected each year at the conference by participants. There is no membership list, reflecting the openness of the organisation and its learned society status. Its participants are typically UK based, though its substantive interests are global. Members are drawn from the International Association for Feminist Economics, the Post-Keynesian Economics Study Group, the Society for the Advancement of Socio-Economics, the European Association for

¹ For further details see Lee, F.S. (2002) The Association for Heterodox Economics, *Journal of Australian Political Economy*, No 50, pp29-43.

Evolutionary Political Economy, The International Association for Critical Realism and others such as the Post Autistic Economics Movement. Many of these associations are in turn all affiliated (along with AHE) to the International Confederation of Associations for Pluralism in Economics (ICAPE, recently renamed from its prior title of The International Conference of Associations for the Reform of Economics). International participation does take place though the Association is primarily UK based.

Post Graduate Training

The AHE includes post graduate training as part of its mission to promote intellectual pluralism in economics. To this end the AHE has secured funding from the Economic and Social Research Council for four post graduate training workshops to try to serve an emerging need among economics researchers.

It is intended that the training will be advanced in the sense that it includes a rethinking of the ontological underpinnings of economic concepts and their measurement and application. The training will embrace the fact that empirical work that underpins policy advice needs to be interpreted with explicit reference to philosophical categories and interdisciplinary concepts to capture the complexity of an organic social system. Excellent empirical work will thus include a degree of scepticism about formal models and statistical analysis rooted in a desire for deeper understanding about economic processes.

There is an emergent need for this training for economists because research training in economics tends to focus upon formal deductive models and advanced statistical methods. Economists are encouraged to develop research and analytical skills that emphasise highly deductive, and logical analysis in assumption-based models. In addition, economists are encouraged to develop numeracy, statistical and computing skills in which relationships are examined for the adequacy of their measurement as well as testing for their statistical significance in econometric analysis (For example see the Quality Assurance Agency Benchmarking statements for economics education in the UK <http://www.qaa.ac.uk/crmtwork/benchmark/economics.html>).

Yet there are serious methodological criticisms with this approach as, for example, presented in Lawson (1997; 2003). As the ESRC, among others, including policy making bodies recognise the need for a more pluralist evidence base for policy discussion, economists need some opportunity to develop their training in this way. Currently, the AHE feels that such a methodological approach is under-represented or sometimes ignored by existing institutions in the UK economics discipline (Dow, 2000). Yet such an explicit methodological approach to economics is developing as a serious sub-division within economics, and new journals and book series are currently emerging. It is hoped thus that the workshop will offer participants an opportunity to become part of this emergent perspective in economics thereby making a real difference to the future of economic discourse. It should be emphasised that the AHE clearly recognises the importance of clear analytical reasoning and the use of mathematical and statistical analysis. However, it also argues that because of the complex organic structure of society economic analysis also needs to involve verbal

and hermeneutic skills as well as ability, for example in policy discussion, to engage in the synthesis and triangulation of insights from a variety of sources.

Aims and Learning outcomes of the current workshop:

Two previous ESRC-funded training workshops organised by the AHE, focussed upon a conceptual reorientation of economic analysis drawing typically upon ontological and epistemological discussion. In 2004 a successful workshop focussed upon linking this philosophical reflection to the practice of economic analysis. The current workshop seeks to replicate this format and has three aims with related learning outcomes:

Aim: To show that applied, policy oriented and publishable research can be developed from heterodox economic and interdisciplinary analysis.

- *Learning Outcome:* Participants will be able to evaluate the potential value to policy and practice of examples of heterodox economic and interdisciplinary analysis.
- *Learning Outcome:* Participants will improve their ability to use heterodox economic and interdisciplinary analysis to develop research programmes that will have direct policy relevance.

Aim: To reassess quantitative and qualitative research methods and to show how triangulation can provide a strategy for producing applied interdisciplinary research. Triangulation is employed in education, management, health and sociological analysis but not economics. It will be shown how policy oriented results can be generated that link insights from heterodox schools of thought.

- *Learning Outcome:* Participants will understand underlying principles in triangulation and be able to apply these principles in designing their own research.

Aim: To illustrate strategies for generating publications from an interdisciplinary approach and to analyse how course participants can employ economic analysis that embraces a more sophisticated view of the economic process whilst communicating with a wider audience than implied by mainstream economic journals.

- *Learning Outcome:* Participants will understand criteria for evaluating papers which include an economic analysis within an interdisciplinary approach and which aim to communicate with a wide audience.

Programme

All three of the aims will be addressed through a series of sessions. These first of all present an ontological rethink of the nature of the economy and hence economics. Epistemological issues are then discussed and, in particular, a critical review of the role of econometrics and the need for triangulation. Students are then introduced to case-based methods of enquiry both conceptually and practically. Finally, guidelines for publishing heterodox research is discussed.

4th February 2005 Day 1: Registration/coffee 1p.m.-3 p.m.

3.15 – 6.15 p.m.

Rethinking economic research: The economy as a complex open social system

Presentations

Dr Tony Lawson: Reorienting Economics: Matching method of analysis to social material

4.15

Tea Break

Professor Sheila Dow: Pluralism in Economics

Discussion with students on implications for their research

The above presentations provide overviews of various concerns with the theoretical and empirical strategies employed in the neoclassical economics research programme. They also suggest alternative research strategies. The presentations will provide a framework within which participants can review and think critically about their research strategy.

6.45 p.m.

Evening meal

5th February Day 2:

Breakfast

Applied Heterodox Economics

This day will focus on critically reviewing the applied tools and epistemology of economics and then discussing the use of multiple methods of analysis. It is intended that students, by the end of the day, will be able to critically reflect upon how various methods of analysis can be employed in their own research.

9.30 – 12.30

Presentations

Dr Steve Ziliak 'Against Testimation: On the Measurement and Interpretation of Economic Significance'

Dr Paul Downward and Dr Andrew Mearman: 'Retroduction as Mixed Method Triangulation in Economic Research: Reorienting Economics into Social Science'

Student discussion on issues for their analysis

12.30-1.30

Lunch

1.30 -4.30

Presentations

Professor Fred Lee: Grounded Theory in Heterodox Research: Pricing Theory

Professor David Byrne: Case-based methods of research: A Review

Student discussion on issues for analysis

4.30-5.00

Tea break

5.00-6.00

Student presentations on potential role in thesis work

6.45

Evening Meal

6th February Day 3:

Breakfast

Publishing and Applying Heterodox Research

Sessions on this day will focus on the practicalities of heterodox research. Software relevant to non-typical research methods for economists will be presented and discussed. A roundtable discussion on strategies for publishing heterodox economics, to seek external audit for PhD work, will also take place.

Of most importance students will then be invited to critically review the workshop, drawing together their previous deliberations on how ideas, concepts and techniques presented in the workshop may help shape their future research.

9.30-12.30

Syndicate Sessions led by Dr Wendy Olsen: Epistemology and Statistics

- *Qualitative Analysis Software*
- *Using Software to investigate complex causality*

Roundtable session on writing heterodox ideas for publication and negotiating the editorial process.

Led by Professor Peter Davies, editor International Review of Economics Education, other contributions.

12.30-1.30

Lunch

1.30-2.30

Student review of workshop