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Dear EurSafe members,



As we approach the end of 2024, following a wonderful anniversary EurSafe Conference in Ede, I am pleased to present the final issue of EurSafe News. This edition focuses on the theme of interdisciplinarity in

research and teaching. In my previous commentary, 'Betwixt and Between?!' published in the December 2021 EurSafe News, I reflected on the potential disciplinary identity crisis that may arise in interdisciplinary environments. With this in mind, I invited colleagues from various roles – whether conducting interdisciplinary PhDs, leading interdisciplinary projects, or teaching interdisciplinary courses at the university – to share their insights and expertise on this important topic.

In the first contribution, '*Beyond disciplinary boundaries? (Auto)biographical reflections on my way in/between veterinary medicine, sociology, and empirical ethics*', Marc Bubeck reflects on his interdisciplinary journey at the intersection of veterinary medicine, sociology, and veterinary medical ethics. He focuses on epistemological tensions, structural barriers faced by early career academics, and the formation of professional identity. Initially confined by the structured curriculum of veterinary medicine, he transitioned to sociology, which enriched his understanding of veterinary practices. Marc Bubeck highlights the challenges of bridging different knowledge systems and the need for institutional support for interdisciplinary work. He also discusses feelings of alienation between disciplines, ultimately showcasing how his



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experiences foster innovative thinking and demonstrate the transformative power of interdisciplinarity.

In the second contribution, 'Research among and between disciplines – A personal report on interdisciplinary experiences', Kirsten Persson reflects on her journey into interdisciplinarity, sharing her experiences in bioethics, sociology, and the natural sciences. She emphasizes that effective collaboration relies on a shared understanding of terminology. Persson identifies key challenges, including differing interpretations of terms, the divide between science and ethics, and publishing hurdles. She advocates for patience, flexibility, and openness, expressing gratitude for the supportive EurSafe community. Ultimately, her contribution highlights the value and richness of interdisciplinary collaboration.

In his piece, 'Interdisciplinary teaching', Rick Szostak discusses how instructors can foster interdisciplinary skills in the classroom, focusing on evaluating disciplinary literature and integrating insights from various fields. He emphasizes that interdisciplinary evaluation encourages students to critically question established theories and methods. Szostak outlines strategies such as redefining key terms and expanding theories to incorporate diverse perspectives. He underscores the importance of perspective-taking and collaboration to enhance creativity among students. He also touches on transdisciplinarity, which involves engaging stakeholders beyond academia, and advocates for structured teaching to equip students with essential interdisciplinary skills.

In addition to these contributions on interdisciplinarity in research and teaching, I am pleased to highlight a prize winner among EurSafe members. I would like to congratulate Helena Röcklinsberg for receiving the Marie-Claire Cronstedt Foundation Prize in recognition of her lifelong and significant contributions to theoretical animal ethics. I also want to thank my colleague Jes Harfeld from the editorial board for providing a thoughtful report on Helena Röcklinsberg's award.

With the Christmas season and year-end approaching, I invite you to participate in the EurSafe X-Mas Quiz. You can take the quiz, which features 12 Christmas-related questions, during your lunch breaks at the office or while working from home. Additionally, consider making it a fun experience by involving your

colleagues, family members, or friends. It could be an opportunity to enjoy quality time together, share some laughs, and spark exciting discussions while engaging with the quiz.

Lastly, I would like to draw your attention to Franck Meijboom's update on the work of the Executive Committee. You will also find a list of upcoming events and congresses in 2025.

If you are interested in contributing to EurSafe News in the future, please feel free to contact any member of the editorial board. We look forward to your ideas and suggestions for further articles, book reviews, conferences, and symposia.

I hope you enjoy reading this newsletter, and I wish you and your loved ones a Merry Christmas and a Happy New Year 2025.

With warm regards and best wishes,

Svenja Springer

paper

Beyond disciplinary boundaries?

(Auto)biographical reflections on my way in/ between veterinary medicine, sociology and empirical ethics

Marc Bubeck



In this essay, I reflect on my journey into interdisciplinarity at the intersection of veterinary medicine, sociology and (veterinary) medical ethics. In recounting my personal journey, I want to discuss three dimensions of thinking about interdisciplinarity: episte-

mological tensions between contrasting forms of knowledge, the structural barriers that make this journey particularly challenging for early career academics, and the challenge of developing a professional identity as an 'interdisciplinary' scholar.

When I left school, I was sure that veterinary medicine was the right choice for me. I had always enjoyed spending time with animals and was attracted by the scientific and mathematical knowledge it promised. However, once I began my studies, I quickly realized that the structured curriculum, with its emphasis on technical skills and factual knowledge, left little room for critical reflection. Questions that intrigued me - such as why we treat a dog differently from a cow, how animal welfare legislation evolves, and how the human-animal relationship shapes and is shaped by veterinary medicine - seemed peripheral, if not absent, from the standard veterinary curriculum.

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This realization sparked a search for alternatives. Thanks to a scholarship, I ventured into another field. After two years of veterinary studies, I began a parallel course in sociology and statistics, hoping to acquire the methodological tools that I felt were missing from my veterinary training, such as research design, scientific writing and statistical analysis. What I discovered, however, went far beyond scientific skills. The disciplines of veterinary medicine and sociology were not only different in terms of subject matter; they offered fundamentally different ways of engaging with knowledge. Veterinary studies were structured, linear and lecture-based, while sociology emphasized critical thinking, self-directed research and lively debate.

Entering this new academic world was transformative. Sociology introduced me to theoretical frameworks, qualitative methods and a way of asking questions that felt radically different – and deeply liberating. At first, the two fields seemed worlds apart.¹ Veterinary medicine largely ignored the social and historical contexts of its phenomena, while sociology barely acknowledged the existence of animals as subjects worthy of study.² But as my studies progressed, I found opportunities to bridge these gaps. In sociology seminars, I began to explore how veterinary medicine could be analyzed through a sociological lens, drawing inspiration from foundational texts such as ‘Blue Juice: Euthanasia in Veterinary Medicine’ (Morris 2012).³ Encouraged by the mentorship of Dr Irmhild Saake, who valued my unique perspective, I even developed and taught a seminar on human-animal relations and the sociology of veterinary medicine during my Masters. My interdisciplinary journey also found a second intellectual home at the Messerli Research Institute in Vienna, Austria, an interdisciplinary hub where I had previously interned and later returned as a visiting researcher. This environment, where veterinary ethics, humanities and social sciences converged, was both challenging – in the best

way possible - and inspiring, providing a space to develop creative methodologies and to contribute to a growing field of inquiry. These experiences allowed me to reconcile the simultaneous separation and overlap of my two academic worlds. The interdisciplinary grounding culminated in my independently funded dissertation on veterinary death work, in which I applied sociological insights to a central but under-researched aspect of veterinary practice. The project opened new possibilities for sociological engagement with animals and veterinary issues, bringing together veterinary ethics, human-animal studies and science and technology studies.

1. Epistemological Challenges: Knowledge and Truth in Different Disciplines

One of the key challenges of interdisciplinarity is bridging the fundamentally different ways in which disciplines define knowledge and truth. Sociology, with its emphasis on social construction and theoretical pluralism, often approaches categories such as gender, species or even ‘truth’ itself as contingent and contextual. Veterinary medicine, on the other hand, operates within the natural sciences, prioritizing empirical evidence and treating categories such as sex or species in practice as stable biological facts. Reconciling these perspectives requires not just dialogue, but the creation of a hybrid epistemology – one that critically integrates insights from both fields. Consider the concept of sex. In veterinary reproductive medicine,⁴ sex is often framed as a straightforward biological reality linked to reproduction and health. However, sociology and feminist science studies show how even these biological categories are shaped by cultural, historical and social contexts. For interdisciplinarity to flourish, these perspectives need to inform each other. Sociological critiques can challenge oversimplified biological assumptions,

while veterinary science can ground sociological theory in empirical, material realities.⁵

The development of such a hybrid framework resists the extremes of relativism or reductionism. It recognizes animals as bio-social beings and veterinary medicine as embedded in societal structures, while respecting the empirical rigor needed to address practical challenges in animal health and care.

2. Material Tensions: Structural Challenges of Interdisciplinarity

Although celebrated in theory, interdisciplinarity faces significant structural barriers, especially for early career researchers. Academic institutions and funding bodies - especially in Germany - are organized along disciplinary lines, making it difficult for those who straddle fields to find positions. Job advertisements often prioritize narrowly defined expertise, so that interdisciplinary scholars are perceived as neither ‘real’ sociologists nor fully part of another discipline, such as veterinary medicine.

This creates a precarious situation for early career researchers. Without a clear disciplinary orientation, securing jobs, funding or publication in high-impact journals becomes an uphill battle. For example, an interdisciplinary researcher combining sociology and veterinary ethics may struggle to meet the rigorous qualifications expected by either discipline, despite offering unique insights. Interdisciplinary researchers often have to make an extra effort to explain their relevance, at the risk of being seen as unfocused or unconventional.

To address this, institutions need to rethink hiring practices and funding models to better support early-career interdisciplinary scholars. Creating pathways that recognize and reward boundary-spanning perspectives is essential to fostering innovation and addressing complex, real-world problems.

3. The Personal Dimension: Identity Formation in Interdisciplinarity

Interdisciplinary work is not only an intellectual endeavor; it is also deeply personal. It challenges researchers to navigate between disciplines, often questioning their own academic and professional identity. I have often asked myself: Am I a veterinarian or a sociologist? An empiricist or a theorist? Or somehow both? This in-betweenness can lead to what Springer (2021) calls an ‘identity crisis’, where one feels like a perpetual outsider - never fully belonging to either discipline.

This experience is comparable to the social mobility of first-generation academics, who often feel caught between their original social class and the academic culture and class they enter. Social mobility doesn’t only mean moving into a new position, but also leaving the ‘old’ one while still carrying its ‘habitus’ of socialization – and at the worst belonging to neither (Eribon 2011). Like social movers, interdisciplinary researchers navigate conflicting norms, values and expectations, constantly negotiating their position between different epistemic communities. For me, this has meant being seen as ‘too sociological’ in veterinary contexts and ‘too veterinary’ in sociological ones.

This sense of alienation is not entirely negative, however. It has also been the source of a critical distance that has allowed me to see more clearly the boundaries and assumptions of each discipline. For example, during my dissertation research on veterinary euthanasia, my sociological perspective helped me to question the unspoken norms that guide veterinarians’ decisions about euthanasia.

At the same time, my veterinary training allowed me to challenge sociological analyses that overlooked the practical and technical realities of practicing veterinarians. This dual perspective allowed me to highlight the interplay between social embeddedness, the practicalities of care and ethical principles in a way that neither discipline could fully achieve alone.

¹ This perceived distance is also reflected by philosopher and medical doctor Annemarie Mol (2002), who describes her experience of studying two subjects simultaneously, working on Foucault texts in mornings and human anatomy in afternoons (p. X). She describes her own work as a crossover between disciplines (p. 17).

² This has to do with the marginalisation of veterinary history and ethics of veterinary medicine as well as at the faculty I studied at (at least at the time); and also, the animal in sociology, which is of increasing interest in recent decades (Carter/Charles 2018; Hobson-West 2007; Wiedemann 2015). Much has happened in both areas, so I hope to see more integration between them.

³ A very good review of the sociological-empirical state of research is Bonnaud and Fortané (2021); for a sociologisation of veterinary ethics see Bubeck and Springer (2024).

⁴ Which is developing interdisciplinarily, bridging human and animal medicine and other disciplines (Clarke 1988).

⁵ For example, the Collaborative Research Centre (CRC) ‘Sexual Diversity. Determinants, Meanings and Implications of Sexual Diversity in Sociocultural, Medical and Biological Landscapes’ at the University of Lübeck, which started this year to study ‘sex’ with an interdisciplinary approach.

Thus, while interdisciplinary work often involves a sense of not quite belonging, it also opens space for innovation. The critical perspective gained from straddling two fields allows for a nuanced engagement with their respective strengths and limitations. It is in this in-between - this dynamic tension - that interdisciplinarity finds its transformative potential.

Conclusion

*Two roads diverged in a wood, and I-
I took the one less traveled by,
And that has made all the difference*

(Frost 1916)

Looking back, my journey into interdisciplinarity has been anything but straightforward. It has been marked by intellectual challenges, shifting identities and structural obstacles, but it has also offered profound opportunities for growth and discovery. Interdisciplinary work requires navigating the uncertainties of blending different fields, bridging different claims to truth, and rethinking traditional academic boundaries.

By integrating veterinary medicine, sociology and ethics, I have sought to shed new light on medical and societal issues. My path has been guided not only by deliberate choices but also by unexpected opportunities, such as the chance to work in human medicinal ethics. This detour has allowed me to explore the common challenges and unique features of human and veterinary ethics, while experiencing what it means to work in truly interdisciplinary teams. The openness to new intersections has recently led me to another field: social robotics in elderly care. As I prepare to complete both of my PhD projects next year, I am excited to see where this path, full of uncertainties and unexpected turns, will take me next.

Much like Frost's poem, my journey has not followed the well-trodden path but has embraced complexity and uncertainty. This less travelled path 'in between' has made all the difference - not by providing easy answers, but by opening new ways of thinking, working and connecting across disciplines. It reminds me that the value of such a path lies not only in where it leads, but in the richness of the journey itself.

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EURSAFE XMAS QUIZ

The Christmas season and year-end are just around the corner, and I would like to invite you to make the most of it by taking part in the **EurSafe X-Mas Quiz**. I am aware that not everyone celebrates Christmas, but maybe you can still find joy in the questions and view it as fun year-end activity.

You can take the quiz, which includes 12 Christmas-related questions, during lunch breaks at the office or while working from home. Or, why not make it a fun experience and take the quiz not just at your desk at home or in the office, but also involve your colleagues, your family members or friends?

The quiz is open until December 31, 2024.

There will be no winner, but hopefully a lot of fun with the quiz! Invite colleagues, friends, and family members to join you in taking it.

**WARM REGARDS, AND I WISH YOU A PEACEFUL
AND JOYFUL END OF THE YEAR**

Svenja Springer

GO TO THE QUIZ

Research among and between disciplines

A personal report on interdisciplinary experiences

Kirsten Persson



When I received an email from Svenja Springer asking if I wanted to write a contribution on ‘interdisciplinarity’ for the next EurSafe newsletter, I felt honoured and delighted. Not only as it is – of course! – an honour to add to this valuable collection of thoughts,

ideas and reports by the smart, empathetic and manifold members of the EurSafe family, but also because Svenja asked me, so she said, “as an already interdisciplinary person”. To me, this felt like a huge compliment and an appreciation of one of my core academic features and an important part of my identity. And that is why I chose to report from my personal experience in interdisciplinary research, here, rather than exploring an abstract concept.

In his famous speech (and subsequent book), C.P. Snow claimed that there was an unsurmountable gap between the ‘two cultures’ which he thought to be the ‘writers’ and the ‘scientists’ (Snow, 1959). Like Snow himself, who was a novelist but also a scientist, I would not have known which of the two groups I should feel I belong to!

When I had finished school, I could not immediately decide on what subject to study. Instead of traveling the world or spending a year as a volunteer, I was lucky enough to earn a spot at the ‘Leibnizkolleg’ in Tübingen, Germa-

ny, where young people can spend a year between school and university on what is – a little pompously – called a studium generale. During those three trimesters I not only found lifelong friends but also became, I believe, a multi-disciplinary person with a few glimpses into ‘everything’ from the history of art and biochemistry over the theory of science, empirical cultural studies, medicine, psychology, and religious studies to astronomy, movie making, and a little Italian. I also learned, and that is something I carry with me like a treasure, as a piece of secret knowledge that not everyone (but, fortunately, e.g., many members of the EurSafe community) seems to share, namely, that life around us is not cut into disciplines. It is our perspectives that are the disciplines, but life, per se, is interdisciplinary, or rather non-disciplinary. And life, that was what fascinated me the most, which is why I decided to study biology and philosophy. To me, it seemed I had covered two of the most important perspectives on life with that – but certainly, that claim is debatable.

When hearing about my choice of subjects, people usually asked: So, you want to become a teacher? I didn’t. I wanted to become an interdisciplinary person, which is why I learned about life. I read (among other things) Immanuel Kant and Richard Dawkins, drew blossom leaves, diagrams, and mind maps, learned about algorithms and arguments, captured (marked, released, and re-captured) bees and frogs, discussed about the freedom of will, the differences between human and nonhuman animals, decision-making in the beginning and at the end of life, population dynamics in natterjack toads (*Epidalea calamita*), the evolution of morality, distributive justice, and if we can know anything at all. And, finally, through my PhD in empirical animal ethics I became a bioethicist.

Even though ‘ethics’ (as a sub-discipline) is occasionally merely considered a part of philosophy, it is to me (as a research practice and part of my professional identity) a fundamentally interdisciplinary endeavour. In descriptive empirical ethics, for example, we make use of the methods of social sciences or psychology (methodological interdisciplinarity) to discover needs for clarifications, (re-)definitions, debate and guidance. In applied ethics, we are building on the work of, e.g., natural sciences and descriptive ethics to combine our knowledge on human (and animal) nature and society with normative argumenta-

tion. And in many bioethical research projects, even more disciplines are involved such as law, medicine, public health, agricultural or veterinary sciences.

In my experience, being an interdisciplinary scholar is one thing, but working in an interdisciplinary project is another, which is why I want to give a few thoughts on that aspect of interdisciplinary research, too. My experience is limited to the field of bio(medical) ethics but I assume that some aspects are transferable to other interdisciplinary contexts.

First, a project of many disciplines is not necessarily interdisciplinary. Already as a student, but mostly as a PhD candidate and as a postdoc, I have worked on several projects in bioethics. All of them combine methods and/or perspectives of different disciplines but on some occasions, those sub-projects or disciplines have been working next to each other rather than collaborating. It happened, e.g., more than once that I (or we as a team) was or were asked to ‘add some ethics’ (which meant, I guess, normative aspects) to a piece of scientific writing, or an extra chapter to texts written by other ‘cultures’, to come back to Snow. However, interdisciplinary collaboration means more than putting together puzzle pieces – it also means starting from a common ground. To illustrate this, I quote from a quite amusing interdisciplinary study group meeting on new approaches to environmental ethics in Tübingen back in 2010 (originally in German, my translation):

“But”, says the biologist, “where does the value come from?”

“I assume”, replies the historian, “it all has to do with stardust.”

The physicist comments: “Well, that is a rather romantic idea!”

To which the historian responds: “I can imagine more romantic things than dust!”

Second, having truly interdisciplinary exchange can, accordingly, be challenging, for instance, because the other discipline’s expertise might be perceived in different ways. This already starts with the wording. Have you noticed, for example, that quite frequently a difference is drawn between ‘science’ on the one hand and ‘philosophy’/‘ethics’/‘humanities’ on the other, or, correspondingly, between ‘scientists’ and

'ethicists'/'philosophers'. Even though it is common to refer to the natural sciences as 'science' in the English-speaking world, the term should comprise all scientific branches. If ethics is, in that sense, considered un-scientific or in opposition to science, it is no wonder it is sometimes not understood as a scientific endeavour but rather instrumentalised as the legitimating tool for some procedure in natural science ("We did a harm-benefit analysis, so our action is justified"; "We got an ethics approval"). Third, meetings in collaborative interdisciplinary projects often quickly reveal that despite using similar or even the same expressions, researchers might refer to different meanings. What is 'good', 'necessary', 'avoidable', 'a value', 'autonomous', or 'permitted' can be quite different for, let's say, three scholars with a background in law, medicine, and ethics. It can be fruitful to at least briefly acknowledge these differences at the beginning of a project, but they might also give the opportunity for clarifying work on joint (or clearly distinct) definitions as a first step, resulting in publications that might provide a basis for future projects to build on.

And, fourth, another hurdle to interdisciplinarity – for individuals as well as for projects – is the currency of research: publications. When I started my PhD I realised that both methods and topic, and especially a combination of both, occasionally make it difficult to place research results in journals. For empirical animal ethics that can mean finding a journal that publishes animal ethics topics (and yes, even bioethics journals rejected articles for that reason!) that are based on empirical work (not easily accepted by philosophy/ethics journals), and that is open to a word count which allows for the presentation of qualitative data. If you want to give credit to your interview or focus group participants, for example, 3500 words are usually not enough room for a thorough results and discussions section. For interdisciplinary co-authors the debate extends on criteria like impact factors – which seems to be more important in some disciplines than in others – the potential availability of adequate reviewers – in particular regarding familiarity with the methods – and, last but not least, language and audience. In law, for instance, dealing with national law, it is not uncommon to publish in national journals with a national readership, which would be rather unusual in the natural sciences.

Fifth, coming back to me as an individual, interdisciplinarity has consequences for the choice of confer-

ences to present research results or work in progress. When I, as an animal ethicist, attended rather philosophical conferences, other participants were, in the best case, curious, and, in the worst case, extremely sceptical regarding the role of empirical data for ethics research. Some of them suspected me of committing the is-ought fallacy without even having a look at my research questions or outcomes. When I as an animal ethicist attended events that were mainly frequented by veterinarians or animal researchers they were often politely interested in my results but, for obvious reasons, hardly able to give me feedback regarding methods or conclusions. Additionally, their presentations were often interesting to me but rather irrelevant for my research. And when I as an empirical animal ethicist attended gatherings of other empirical bioethicists I was considered the 'animal person'. Finally, I arrived at my first EurSafe conference a couple of years ago, and, at last, I had found the crowd that was at the same time interested in my research, experienced in a similar field and able to give me profound feedback, presenting their research and work in progress that I could relate to, and generally benevolent towards new members and ideas!

To conclude, interdisciplinary research needs time, patience, courage, openness, flexibility, curiosity, composure, life-long learning, reflectivity and the willingness to look at life (or whatever your research object might be) from various different perspectives. I am grateful to connect my own work with the EurSafe community where it is embedded in a truly interdisciplinary research landscape!

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paper

Interdisciplinary teaching

Rick Szostak



How might an instructor introduce some interdisciplinary skills into the classroom? I will focus here on two of the most important skills: evaluating disciplinary literature, and integrating insights from different disciplines. I will close with a brief discussion of some other skills.

The first point to stress is that interdisciplinary evaluation of a piece of disciplinary research complements disciplinary evaluation. A disciplinary author, and the editors and referees for disciplinary journals, will focus on whether the discipline's favored theories and methods have been applied appropriately to the sort of research question that the discipline engages. An interdisciplinary scholar or student can ask a different set of questions that will generally not have occurred to disciplinary referees or editors. What are the weaknesses of the discipline's favored theories or methods in answering this particular research question? Are there alternative theories or methods employed in other disciplines that might add important insight? Are there phenomena (variables) studied in other disciplines that could have usefully been included in the analysis? Is there research in other disciplines on the same or similar research questions that reaches different conclusions, and if so why?

This set of questions is empowering. Some students hesitate to criticize published work. They feel ill prepared to argue against some professor who may know far more about a subject than themselves. Tell them that they can ask a set of questions that will likely never have occurred to the author. Note here that the sort of questions asked by disciplinary referees or editors may be challenging for (especially undergraduate) students to pursue, for they require a deep understanding of disciplinary theories, methods, and subject matter. Interdisciplinary questions are much easier for them to grasp. They will find these questions even easier to answer if they have some familiarity with the strengths and weaknesses of different methods and theory types. Repko and Szostak (2025) provide tables that summarize key strengths

and weaknesses of the ten most commonly used scholarly methods as well as important theory types. We also provide discussions of the phenomena that different disciplines investigate.

Now imagine that your students have read conflicting analyses of a particular topic from authors in at least two different disciplines. How might they go about integrating these different insights into a more comprehensive understanding? Though this is an inherently creative undertaking, there are nevertheless some simple strategies that students might employ. The first is to ask whether the different authors are defining key terminology in the same way. Often, authors seem to disagree simply because they define words differently. There are different definitions of sustainability, for example, and different authors might reach different conclusions about whether a particular practice is sustainable just because they are employing different understandings of sustainability. In the strategy of redefinition, the student reinterprets the results achieved by different authors when the same definition is applied to each.

A second common source of differences in opinion across disciplines is that each discipline naturally emphasizes the phenomena it studies. In investigating the causes of crime, for example, an economist naturally thinks about the costs and benefits associated with criminal activity, a sociologist thinks naturally about peer pressure and attitudes common within certain subcultures, and a psychologist worries about whether particular personality types are more likely to perform criminal acts. At times, a student may be able simply to add the phenomena studied by one author to a theory posited by another. We call this theory expansion. Sometimes the assumptions of a theory have to be tweaked in order for it to be possible to add other variables. If the economist has assumed rational decision-making, it may be necessary to change the assumption in order to deal adequately with peer pressure.

Often, though, the student will find that the phenomena emphasized by different authors interact in complex ways. Peer pressure may affect the economic calculations of individuals, with certain personality types reacting in particular ways. In the strategy of organization, students visually diagram how the phenomena identified by different authors interact.

In the cases above, disciplinary conflicts are more apparent than real. Disciplinary authors are not explicitly disagreeing: They may indeed be blissfully unaware of the differing definitions employed or different phenomena investigated by scholars in different disciplines. There are cases, though, where scholars from different disciplines really are talking about the same thing and still disagree. An economist may employ rational analysis to examine why a student chooses a particular Major. A sociologist may assume some sort of non-rational decision-making. The interdisciplinary student can ask where they think a typical student may lie on a continuum from perfect rationality to perfect non-rationality (or they may think that different students lie at different places along the continuum). They can then borrow from each theory appropriately. Note that it is often the case in interdisciplinary analysis that we seek not to accept one explanation while rejecting another but rather to combine elements of each.

There are a variety of other interdisciplinary skills. In Repko and Szostak (2025), we talk in turn about crafting a good interdisciplinary research question, justifying the need for an interdisciplinary approach, performing an interdisciplinary literature review, reflecting on both disciplinary and one's own biases, evaluating the result of interdisciplinary analysis, and communicating results to diverse audiences. One important skill we emphasize along the way is perspective-taking. We invite students to see an issue from the perspective of scholars in different disciplines. We stress that each discipline has a unique way of looking at the world. It chooses methods that are good at investigating its theories, and a set of phenomena to which its theories and methods can readily be applied. This coherent set of theories, methods, and phenomena is then justified epistemologically. Disciplines that pursue quantitative methods generally have epistemological beliefs that precise objective understandings of the world are possible. Disciplines that pursue qualitative methods instead tend to doubt that such understandings are possible. If you have students from different disciplines in your class, you could consider an exercise in which they answer a questionnaire with a set of epistemological and methodological questions and then discuss their answers. The general finding (with both students and interdisciplinary research teams) is that participants moderate their answers

as they come to understand alternative viewpoints (See O'Rourke et al., 2024, for many examples of how this approach has been applied in classrooms).

There are close links between interdisciplinarity and creativity. Interdisciplinarity practices of perspective-taking and seeking to draw connections across diverse bodies of information encourage creativity. By performing such tasks repeatedly, students become more creative (Darbellay 2024). We need to get our students to see past the idea that only a minority of creative geniuses can be creative. The key lessons are that we all have creative potential, and that we can learn to be more creative. [Interdisciplinarity encourages yet other important skills such as information literacy and citizenship. See Brooks (2024) and Stoller (2024).]

I should also briefly mention transdisciplinarity. Though this word has had many meanings over the years, it today most often means interdisciplinary research that not only brings together academics from different disciplines but also stakeholders from beyond the academy. Environmental research might involve farmers or government bureaucrats. One key lesson is that such research partners need to be involved throughout each stage of the research process. One key skill is to manage the tendency of academics to focus on publishable results and of non-academic partners to seek practical real-world solutions.

Instructors can judge which interdisciplinary skills are most important for particular students. The key lesson I would hope to impart is this: If you think that students need particular skills you should definitely try to impart these. We never expect students to master disciplinary theories or methods on their own. Yet it is unfortunately common in supposedly interdisciplinary programs around the world to expose students to insights from different disciplines and leave them to struggle alone to evaluate and integrate these. This is intellectually irresponsible. It might have been understandable decades ago, but there is now a robust literature on how to teach students how to perform interdisciplinary analysis. I naturally think that Szostak (2024) and Repko and Szostak (2024) are good entry points to that literature. There are other textbooks: Augsburg (2016), Keestra, Uilhoorn, and Zandveld (2022), and Repko, Szostak, and Buchberger (2025), The websites of the

Association for Interdisciplinary Studies (interdisciplinarystudies.org), Transdisciplinarity-net (transdisciplinarity.ch/en), and the Global Alliance for Inter- and Transdisciplinarity (itd-alliance.org) are all useful sources of information.

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Helena Röcklinsberg receives the Marie-Claire Cronstedt Foundation Prize

Written by Jes Harfeld

Helena Röcklinsberg, researcher at Swedish University of Agricultural Sciences and a EurSafe icon, has received the Marie-Claire Cronstedt Foundation Prize for her lifelong and significant contributions to theoretical animal ethics.

From her doctoral thesis ‘Das Seufzende Schwein. Zur Theorie und Praxis in deutschen Modellen zur Tierethik’ (2001) to, for example, her recent work on ‘Double standards regarding animals as silent agents in legislation’ (2024), Helena has been a force of nature in the European animal ethics community. She has never been bogged down by some of the trench wars of animal ethics and is known for a constructive engagement and criticism in academic discussions. Her engagement with the relationship between ethical theory and practical application in the various

fields of human-animal interactions is varied and fruitful and has benefitted both her many students and her animal ethics colleagues around the world. It is a prize well earned.

The jury’s formal motivation was: *For her tireless work in highlighting the field of theoretical animal ethics and for her great commitment to ethical animal management, both at a scientific level and on a practical foundational level.*

Besides the honour the prize included 8700 Euros. The prize was awarded at the World Wildlife Fund’s (WWF) autumn meeting in Stockholm.

updates

EurSafe Executive Committee

Franck Meijboom



It is a good practice, as president of EurSafe, to look back briefly at the last congress at this section of the newsletter. In this case, it feels a bit odd to reflect on the congress that Bernice Bovenkerk and I organised together with our team ourselves.

We will evaluate the congress further at the December board meeting. Nevertheless, I look back on the congress celebrating 25 years of EurSafe with great pleasure. It was wonderful to welcome many of you in Ede and it was wonderful to see how old friendships were celebrated and new contacts made. In terms of content, too, it was, in my opinion, an inspiring congress with a wide range of themes that did justice to the different visions, disciplines and nationalities that EurSafe is rich in.

We also held our General Assembly on Friday 13 September. During that meeting we discussed our financial position and some parts of the strategy. We thank the members for the fruitful discussion and feedback. Furthermore, we re-elected Diana Dumitras, Herwig Grimm and Per Sandin. We are happy that these colleagues are willing to serve the board for a new term. But also that they enable us to further work on our strategy to renew the board towards the GA of 2026. The aim is to strive for more early career colleagues while keeping the diversity in terms of gender and national and disciplinary background.

The congress in Ede was also the moment to honour prof. Frans W.A. Brom as honorary member of EurSafe. Frans Brom is one of the founding fathers of EurSafe, organizer of the first Congress in 1999, first Secretary and has been an active supporter of our society since the start. With this life-time membership we mark this important role and express our great thanks to Frans.

Finally, it was our great pleasure to announce the next EurSafe conference. Sinan Akilli presented Cappadocia University as the host for the EurSafe 2026 conference (9-12 September 2026). More information is available via EurSafe 2026-Home.

Best regards,

Franck Meijboom

On behalf of the Executive Board, 28 November 2024

conferences

JANUARY 16-17, 2025

Political theory, applied ethics, and animals conference
Department of Politics and International Relations, University of Sheffield, UK
[website](#)

JANUARY 16-17, 2025

Defund meat conference
Max-Planck-Institut, Heidelberg, Germany
[website](#)

JANUARY 23-25, 2025

Climate Change: Impacts & responses – 17th international conference
Sustainable Development for a Dynamic Planet: Lessons, Priorities, and Solutions
Florida International University, Miami, USA + Online
[website](#)

FEBRUARY 19-20, 2025

Animal ethics and animal welfare: Values informing outcomes
RSPCA Animal Welfare Conference, Online
[website](#)

MARCH 28-29, 2025

The international association for environmental philosophy: Affiliate session at the North Texas Philosophical Association
The University of Texas at Dallas, USA
[website](#)

APRIL 3-5, 2025

BSHP annual conference 2025: Animals and the environment in the history of philosophy
University of Cambridge, UK
[website](#)

APRIL 14-15, 2025

34th World Conference on food and beverages
Nutrition, health, and well-being: the new food paradigm
London, UK
[website](#)

MAY 8-10, 2025

Same and/or other? Animals in East Asian history
Institute of Sinology and East Asian Studies, University of Münster, Germany
[website](#)

JUNE 2-4, 2025

Rational Animals? Developmental, comparative, philosophical and methodological perspectives
The University of Stirling, Scotland, UK
[website](#)

JUNE 2-5 JUNE 2025

16th FELASA Congress: Reducing severity in animal research
Athens, Greece
[website](#)

JUNE 19-20, 2025

International Conference on applied animal behaviour
NH Vienna Airport Conference Center, Vienna, Austria
[website](#)

JULY 2-5, 2025

Animal advocacy conference 2025
University of Edinburgh, Scotland
[website](#)

AUGUST 4-7, 2025

Oxford animal ethics summer school 2025: The ethics of captivity
Merton College, Oxford, UK
[website](#)

SEPTEMBER 12-13, 2025

Human-animal-studies in classics: Emotions
University of Zurich, Switzerland
[website](#)



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