

Understanding Field Science Institutions: On opportunities and conflicts

From the oceans to the mountains and the vast in-between scientists have created institutions for scientific work in the field. Long-lived or temporary, more or less institutionally authoritative, magnificent or humble in scale, these spaces and infrastructures in the landscape and seascape have provided an organizational domestication of migratory science and facilitated scientific work on nature beyond urban centers of learning. As such they have played a significant role in the history of knowledge production, yet not always in ways predicted by their founders. Opening a field research station, for example, can be an attempt to unite center and periphery, to counter potential land use conflicts, or to gather scientists from different disciplines in order to foster exchange of ideas and multidisciplinary collaboration. But it might as well result in severe conflicts between scientists, amateurs and locals as well as between scientists with different goals and interests. Furthermore, a permanent institution in the field might facilitate long-term measurement of environmental change and become a site of scientific authority, but it might also be trapped in its own tradition and eventually prevent scientific renewal and advancement. This paper draws on and present the book *Understanding Field Science Institutions*, eds. Helena Ekerholm, Karl Grandin, Christer Nordlund & Patience Schell, recently published by Science History Publications/USA, which analyses both similarities and differences within the complex history of field science institutions and their relation to other types of academic institutions, from the seventeenth century onwards.

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