A Case for Disciplining Interdisciplinarity

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The Thesis

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• Isn’t disciplining interdisciplinarity an oxymoron?
• No. This isn’t like starting a solipsist society, or an Anarchist Party.
  • Interdisciplinarity is a form of practice that can be studied by those interested in general patterns and common approaches.
“That effective approaches to complex real-world problems need an underpinning discipline like Integration and Implementation Sciences”

• **Effective** – to be effective? Or to improve efficacy?
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• **Need** – not a necessary condition; more like could really help or is desirable
• **Underpinning** – the metaphor suggests strengthening a *foundation* – the role of a discipline would be to *facilitate and support* approaches to complex real-world problems
• **Discipline**
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• Underpinning – the metaphor suggests strengthening a foundation – the role of a discipline would be to facilitate and support approaches to complex real-world problems
• Discipline!!!
What are Disciplines?

- **Key purposes**: organized knowledge repository, identity, community of peers, quality control, power (Bammer 2013)
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Individual POV

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Social POV
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Intrinsic

Individual POV

Focused Practice

Self-control

Efficiency

Extrinsic

Social POV

Form of Life

Identity

Shared training

Peers

Knowledge Culture

Shared interests

Common methods

Quality control
What are Disciplines?

Disciplines

- Intrinsic
  - Individual POV
    - Focused Practice
  - Social POV
    - Form of Life
    - Knowledge Culture

- Extrinsic
  - Department
  - Society
  - Market
The Main Claim

• No matter what sense of ‘discipline’ you choose, I2S stands out as something that could really help improve the effectiveness of approaches to real world problems.
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• No matter what sense of ‘discipline’ you choose, I2S stands out as something that could really help improve the effectiveness of approaches to real world problems
  
    That is, effective approaches to real world problems need a discipline like I2S
Defending the Claim

• Consider the conceptual map in two cases, *intrinsic* and *extrinsic*.
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  - The *focused practice* has existed all along, reflected in ID skills and practices
  - These constitute a common *form of life* that would be enhanced by association (see: this meeting and others where we share experiences and stories, and by how we train our students)
  - Theoretical and practical work that constitute the *knowledge culture* are undermined by fragmentation, leading us to reinvent the (square) wheel and talk at cross-purposes
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  • Funding is available—a sign of extrinsic affirmation—but would be more available if there was a disciplinary focus to rally around
  • Whether a market arises will depend in part on whether excitement continues to grow about interdisciplinary and transdisciplinary work
Residual Issues

• How we respond to this will depend on what our model of a discipline is
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- What of critical interdisciplinarity?
  - This is welcome and important
Residual Issues

• How we respond to this will depend on what our model of a discipline is
  • E.g., must there be an overarching theory that is applied? Well, not if we choose something like sociology or comm studies as our model
  • What of critical interdisciplinarity?
    • This is welcome and necessary
  • Is there a value in fragmentation?
    • Absolutely! There will still be border transgressing interdisciplinarity if I2S is on the scene