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.
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• Effective – to be effective? Or to improve efficacy?
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- **Discipline**
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• **Discipline!!!**
What are Disciplines?

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- **Intrinsic**
  - Individual POV
  - Social POV

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Disciplines

- Intrinsic
  - Individual POV
    - Focused Practice
      - Self-control
      - Concentration
      - Efficiency
  - Social POV
    - Form of Life
      - Identity
      - Shared training
      - Peers
    - Knowledge Culture
      - Shared interests
      - Common methods
      - Quality control
- Extrinsic
What are Disciplines?

Disciplines

- **Intrinsic**
  - Individual POV
  - Focused Practice
  - Form of Life

- **Hybrid**
  - Social POV
  - Knowledge Culture

- **Extrinsic**
  - Society
  - Market
  - Department
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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• *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
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• Intrinsic:
  • 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
Summarizing the Argument

P1. Disciplines can be understood either intrinsically or extrinsically

P2. If you understand it intrinsically, you should want to discipline interdisciplinarity

P3. If you understand it extrinsically, you should want to discipline interdisciplinarity

C. You should want to discipline interdisciplinarity
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 necessary
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• 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