

Undisciplinarity

Description

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What is the value of interdisciplinary research? According to a review of research published by the UK funding councils, â??Crucially, many major discoveries and breakthroughs have occurred at the boundaries between disciplines resulting in new fields of study, such as biochemistry, health economics, social psychology, development studies and informaticsâ?• (DavÃ©, et al., 2016, p.8).

If we allow for this kind of productive engagement between disciplines, is there a place for investigations between disciplines in which the researchers can make no claims to be expert â?? the spaces between two or more disciplines in which there is rank, audacious, self-confessed, creative ignorance?

Conventionally, â??interdisciplinary research typically, combines knowledge and/or methodological approaches from two or more disciplines to search for or to create new knowledge, technology, processes or artâ?• (8). Interdisciplinary research (IDR) has several subspecies. Here are some definitions.

Discipline: â??Of or relating to a branch of learning or knowledge, field of studyâ?• (Oxford English Dictionary).

Crossdisciplinary: â??viewing one discipline from the perspective of anotherâ?• (Stember, 1991, p.4). Stember gives the example of a physicist researching the physics of music, or an art department offering a course in art history. Stemper refers to the different and often incompatible â??cognitive mapsâ?• and â??epistemological and methodological differencesâ?• between disciplines (9), as well as â??professional imperialism, myths, and the unequal powerâ?• (7) among disciplines.

Multidisciplinary: â??several disciplines who each provide a different perspective on a problem or issueâ?• (Stember, 1991, p.4). This seems to fit the main aim of interdisciplinary research in the UK (UKRI, 2018), i.e. research at disciplinary boundaries to produce â??major discoveries and breakthroughs.â?•

Interdisciplinary: â??means between disciplines suggesting the basic elements of at least two collaborators, at least two disciplines, and a commitment to work together in some fashion in some

domainâ?• â?¦ â??integration of the contributions of several disciplines to a problem or issue is requiredâ?• (Stember, 1991, p.4).

Transdisciplinary: â??concerned with the unity of intellectual frameworks beyond the disciplinary perspectivesâ?• (Stember, 1991, p.4). This sounds like the original ambitions of systems theory to understand principles underlying all disciplines (Bertalanffy, 1969). Itâ??s also the claim of much philosophy â?? not to mention structuralism and semiotics. See post: What is pansemiotics? To claim transdisciplinary expertise is a common way of avoiding the specifics of a discipline, making a virtue out of ignorance.

Against the interdisciplinary

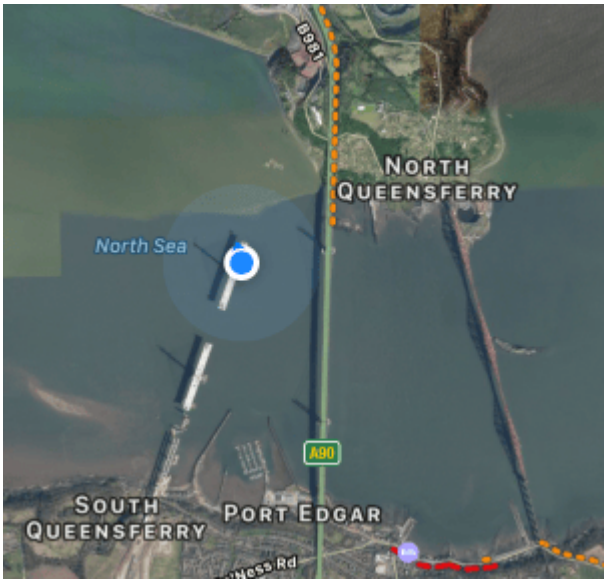
Intradisciplinary: â??being or occurring within the scope of a scholarly or academic discipline or between the people active in such a disciplineâ?• (Merriam-Webster dictionary). This simply means research within the bounds of a single discipline.

***In-disciplinary*:** Here one can reference Jacques RanciÃ¨reâ??s appeal to productive ignorance. See post: Even more radical pedagogy. Also see: The bliss of ignorance.

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Undisciplinary: If interdisciplinarity is traversing bridges between disciplines, undisciplinarity is a condition without discipline (undisciplined), rigour, decorum, completeness or bridging â?? where systems donâ??t match up.

I went looking for a suitable visual metaphor for undisciplinarity. Soon after the opening of the new Forth Road Bridge, and awaiting satellite image updates, motorists found themselves traversing clear air without bridge support. Iâ??m reluctant to say ignorance is always reprehensible, populist, uninformed, anti-intellectual and dangerous. See: Transilience.



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Category

1. Research related

Tags

1. ignorance
2. interdisciplinarity

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