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DESIGN
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PROGRAM

INTERDISCIPLINARY KNOWLEDGE EXCHANGE IN DESIGN PRACTICE

THE LIMITS OF COLLABORATION AND THE NECESSITIES
OF CONVERSATION

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ABSTRACT

A well-adopted theme in both professional and academic practice, interdisciplinary knowledge exchange has become one of the central conditions for the act or process of design, and deemed valuable for producing impactful outcomes. While the impetus and demands of interdisciplinary knowledge exchange are high, the realities of interdisciplinary activities in design practice are seldom examined, contributing to the general misconception that combining multiple fields of specialty will result in effective knowledge expansion, and increasing the potential for its misuse.

Lack of knowledge of interdisciplinary interactions and communication processes is problematic because an interdisciplinary exchange relies on a synergy between diverse knowledge fields through iterative conversation, which in turn can result in an ineffective use of time and resources, undue pressure on the participants, and burden the overall collaborative process.

At the heart of interdisciplinary exchange is conversation, the cornerstone of collaboration. The value of conversation is less a matter of establishing shared knowledge or reaching alignment amongst participants but more so the experience of reciprocity itself - the cyclical process of correspondence and argumentation that truly sustains an interdisciplinary exchange and determines its success.

The purpose of this paper is to establish an understanding of interdisciplinary collaboration through explicating the main components and process of interdisciplinary exchange. As a result of the research, this paper will attempt to increase the awareness of both the value and limits of the interdisciplinary approach, and start a new conversation for realizing its full potential in design practice.