

Disability Research

THE SWEDISH INSTITUTE FOR



LINKÖPINGS UNIVERSITET



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What is IDR?

Interdisciplinary research (IDR) is a mode of research by teams or individuals that integrates information, data, techniques, tools, perspectives, concepts, and/or theories from two or more disciplines or bodies of specialized knowledge to advance fundamental understanding or to solve problems whose solutions are beyond the scope of a single discipline or field of research practice (US-NAS, 2004, p. 26).



Interdisciplinary research is any study or group of studies undertaken by scholars from two or more distinct scientific disciplines. The research is based upon a conceptual model that links or **integrates** theoretical frameworks from those disciplines, uses study design and methodology that is not limited to any one field, and requires the use of perspectives and skills of the involved disciplines throughout multiple phases of the research process. (Aboelela et al, 2007: 341)

To study a complex phenomenon and how that phenomenon is manifested at different levels of reality (Bhaskar & Danermark, 2006)

Levels (example)

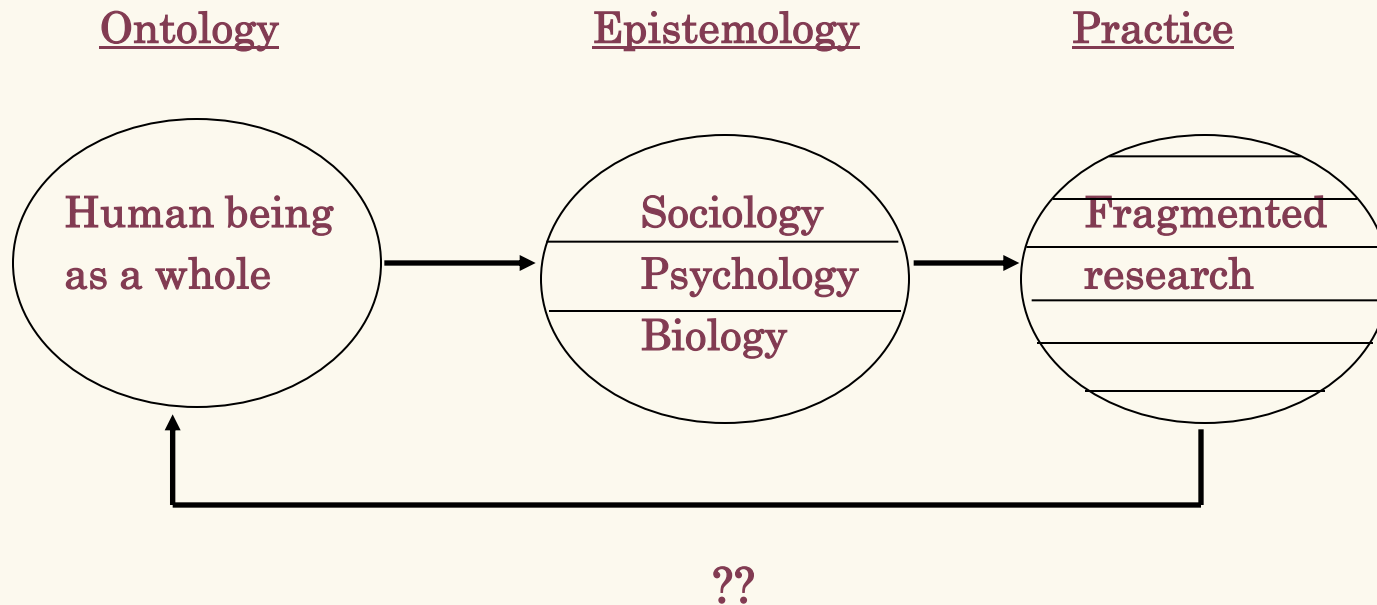
- (1) physical
- (2) biological, and more specifically
physiological, medical or clinical
- (3) psychological
- (4) psycho-social
- (5) socio-economic
- (6) cultural and
- (7) normative kinds of mechanisms

<i>Dimensions</i>	<i>Problems</i>	<i>Conditions</i>
Metatheoretical	No common team philosophy. The idea of incommensurability.	Establishing a common metatheoretical approach
Theoretical	Reductionism	Integration of knowledge. Non reductionism
Methodological	Methodological imperialism	Applying methods designed for the level of the analysis (specificity in methods)
Individual	No communication between researchers. Lack of career incentives	Communication based on understanding of IDR and respect and knowledge. Improving education in IDR and clear career structures for IDR researchers
Administrative	The tendencies among universities to have a one-discipline organisation	A supporting administrative structure with no barriers hindering IDR
Funding	Funding bodies cannot cope with IDR proposals	Transparent mechanisms to review IDR proposals

The basic metatheoretical presumptions for doing IDR

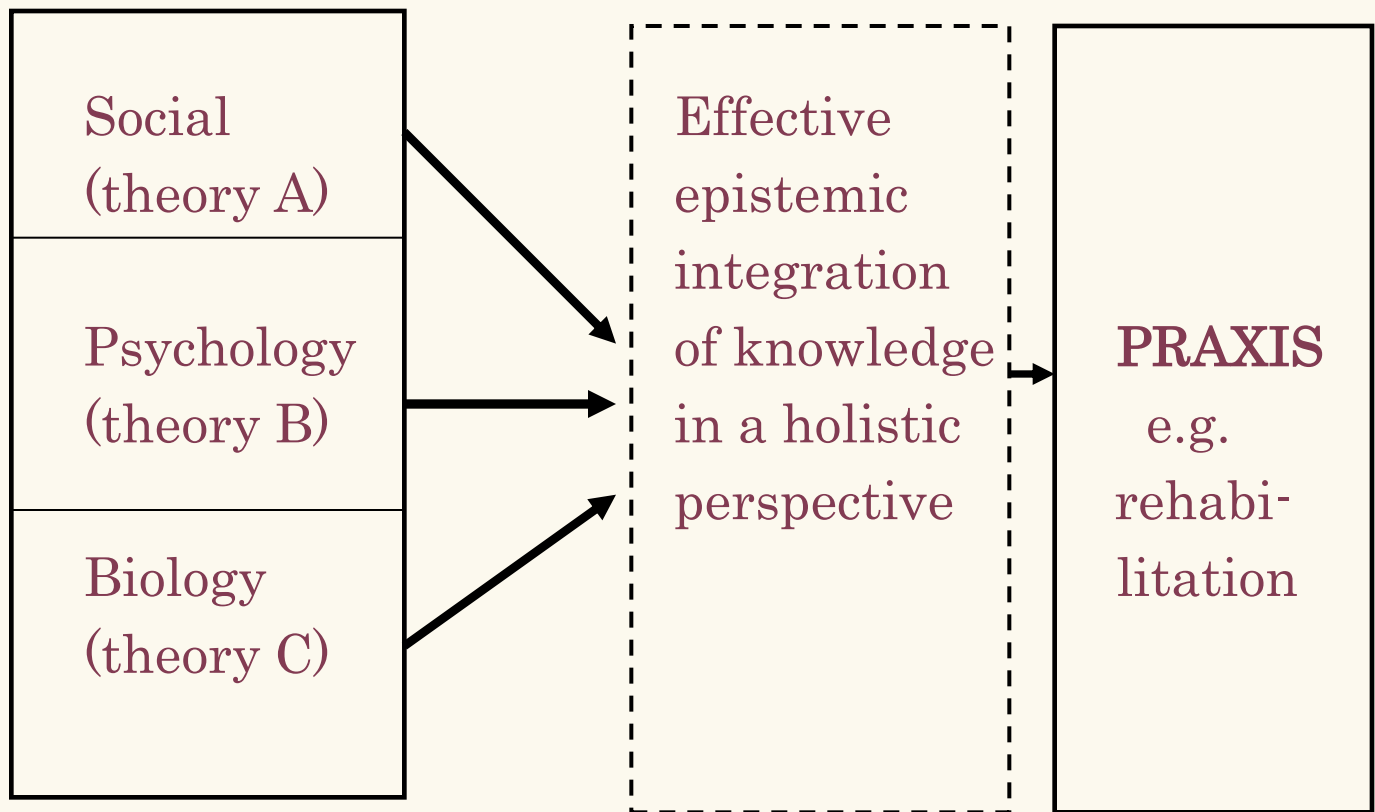
- Disambiguation (ontology and epistemology)
- Levels of reality-perspective
 - Non-reductionism
 - Laminated systems
- Specificity in methodology

The challenge: From whole to parts to whole



Levels of reality-perspective

Levels



Theorising without any reference to praxis: "the intellectualistic fallacy"
(Sayer 1992, p. 13).



Non-reductionism

- No single causal explanation
 - Do not a priori reduce the explanation to one level (e.g. cultural, social, economical or biological)

Specificity in methodology

- Use the methods that are developed for the level of reality you are investigating
- Closed and open systems
- Social/human and physical objects

Methodology

Methods for data collection

Intergrated analytical tools

(kap 14 sid 230, 308)

Avoid methodological individualism
(multi level analysis)

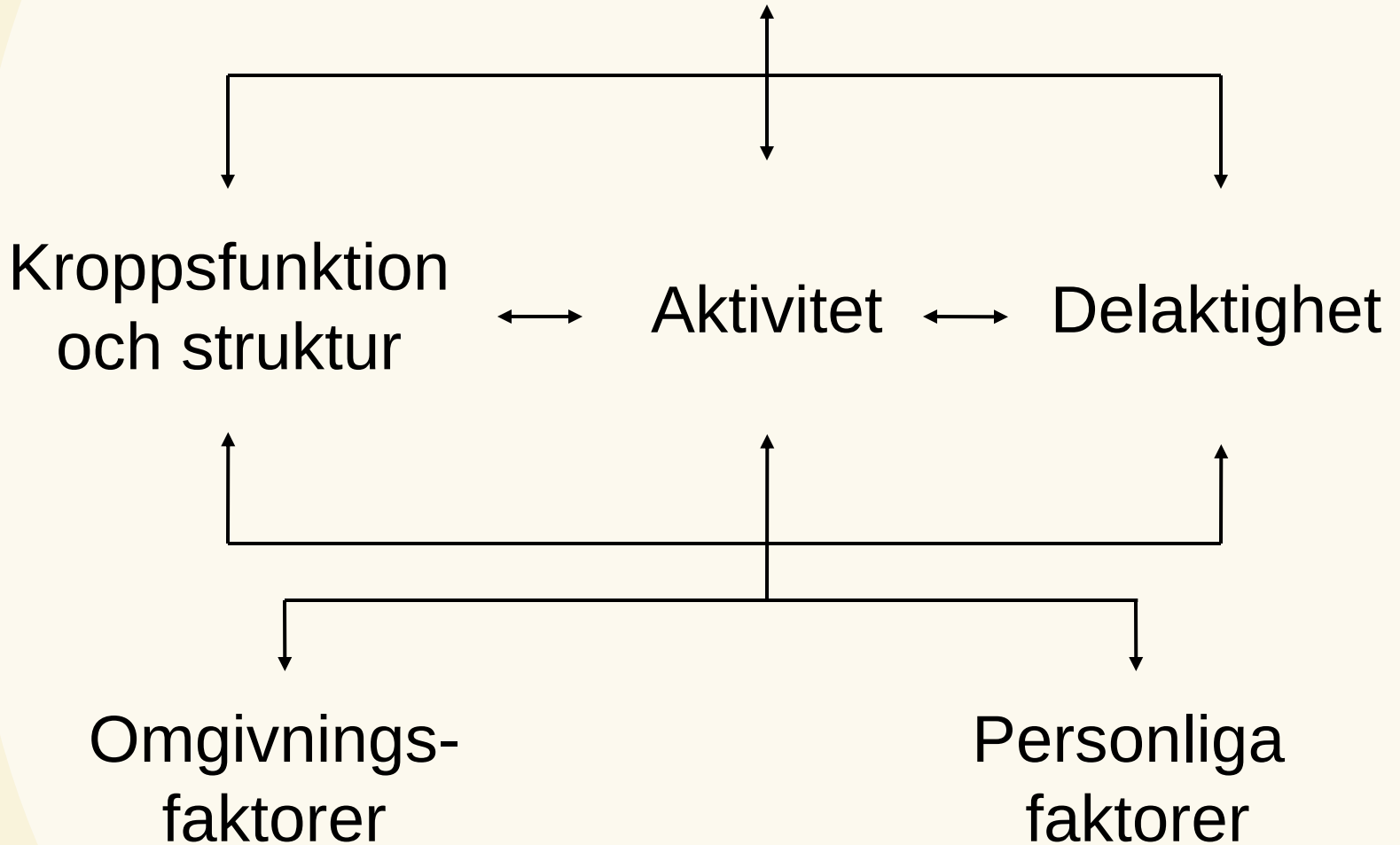


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Hälsobetingelse (Störning/sjukdom)



Conclusions

Doing IDR is a challenging task and it needs

- A common metatheoretical approach (e.g. levels, non-reductionism, specificity in methodology): team level
- Basic understanding in and respect for other researchers' approaches: individual level
- Holy Trinity of IDR: metatheoretical unity, methodological specificity, theoretical pluralism and tolerance.
- Supportive administrative and career structures: administrative level