

THE ARTICULATION OF INTERNATIONAL EXPERTISE IN THE PROFESSIONS:
REPRESENTATIONS AND POTENTIALS
IN THE EXTENSION OF AREA STUDIES*

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The articulation of international expertise in professional schools has been shaped powerfully by a globalization culture that minimizes the significance of political boundaries and emphasizes the value of diversifying knowledge flows about the world. Area studies was founded in a time marked by the importance of security, emphasizing the value of knowledge about temporally and spatially bounded processes. After 9/11/01 and its aftermath, the obvious value of area studies in producing knowledge about the world returns, but neither security and violence nor area studies is the typical focus of most professions. In this paper, I consider the ways in which leading schools in nine professions – architecture and urban planning, information science, public policy, public health, environmental studies, engineering, medicine, business, and law – represent their accomplishments and aspirations in the internationalization of their professional education. Relying on both official representations (with websites provided) and more ethnographic observations of the University of Michigan and other schools, I also identify some of the critical issues shaping debate within professions and across them about their international priorities. I finally consider the ways in which those issues might resonate with resources associated with area studies in order to address how the federal government, private foundations, and universities could collaborate to produce a new scholarly internationalism appropriate to our time. I summarize the argument below.

Area studies is central to a new scholarly internationalism because it is one organization dedicated to “contextual expertise”, a competence cultivated to understand the historical, cultural, and institutional conditions of any structure, process or product. This expertise is important because it not only produces appreciation for time and place but also for the challenge of difference across the world. The humanities and certain parts of the social sciences typically develop this expertise within the university, but some professional schools are also so dedicated. This is evident in the already existing collaboration between some professions and area studies.

If one were to use the presence of joint degrees as an indicator of affinity, one would find that public policy and law schools are already integrated relatively well with area studies programs. Schools of public health, business and environment have made some important linkages too. Architecture and urban planning is rarely tied to area studies, with information, medicine and engineering being even more distant. Curricular organization is only one part of the story, however.

Of all the professions under consideration, architecture and urban planning shares the most with area studies in its commitment to interdisciplinary contextual expertise. Indeed, both UNESCO and reformers within the profession argue that more needs to be understood about the needs and tastes of those for whom buildings and cities are designed. Architects and planners also need to know more about the global context in which they live, so that they can develop a better sense of professional mission. Given this interest, it is surprising to see so little collaboration between this profession and area studies across the leading schools in the country.

Organizational structure, not intellectual affinity, explains very often why area studies and the professions do or don't mix. Harvard's particular organizational setup discourages this collaboration, while Syracuse's school of public policy is particularly close to the university's area studies. But organizational structure does not predetermine either. It is important to attend to the rhetoric and values associated with different international strategies in order to anticipate the needs of each.

Most professional schools identify their international needs in association with the importance of "global awareness". This attitude can be cultivated at relatively low cost – at least in comparison to the values associated with area studies – by offering study tours and data sets organized in familiar languages and within professional school parameters. Whether studying business culture in Brazil or the development of medical standards in China, professional schools often seek the extension of their existing paradigm by adding experiences abroad. Area studies *could* signal its distance from this disposition, but it would be better for both globalizing professions and area studies if synergies could be realized in combining competencies in contextual and global expertise. This requires a shift in the strategy of many area studies programs, however.

Most obviously, professions generally seek comparative or global perspectives on particular problems, whether of transitional justice or market reform. To the extent area studies programs develop collaborative and comparative ties amongst themselves, they are better situated to address the professions.

Of course particular world regions can become prominent in a profession. Europe has been historically central for architecture, and China has become increasingly significant for most. Typically, however, when a region becomes prominent within a

profession, the professional school can organize expertise about it by relying on diasporic scholars within their profession. There is typically an important synergy to be found in the demographics of these diaspora and the foci of professions. But if universities are committed to diversity in their international affairs and not only in their obligations to state and nation, area studies becomes a vital supplement. It assures that regions overlooked by globalization's positive effects might be addressed in academic work.

This obligation also encourages professional schools and area studies both to return to the sense of the public in their academic mission. Typically, internationalism has been posed as a value for the American public. While the importance of that commitment becomes only more significant in these times, it also invites us to consider a new kind of public mission, in the form of an identification with publics across the world.

Many professional schools have explicitly signaled their commitment to publics across the world as an extension of their academic mission. Whether in public health, public policy, or in environmental studies, the public good in other nations is central to professional mission. By engaging the challenge of difference in the articulation of that public good abroad, area studies and professions organized around the well being of different publics could find great common cause.

For those professions focused more on the establishment of global standards, global products, or global processes, as medicine, engineering, business and information science tend to emphasize, the value of context also becomes evident if context itself can be redefined. It's critical, of course, to extend the meaning of area studies context to include the biophysical environment, and thereby make environmental studies a vital contributor to the new internationalism. But one should also redefine context to

emphasize the importance of studying culture, history and social relations *within institutions* – whether of the family, the firm, or the local state. By considering how globalizing forces are received, transformed, and stimulated by different world regions, these professions find a way to recognize the challenge of difference in their own terms.

Unfortunately, the tragedies of September 11, 2001 and their aftermath have made the importance of recognizing these differences more important than ever. Not only professions traditionally committed to the poor, but professions associated with the powerful across the world have been working increasingly to find ways to connect better to those who suffer globalization's worst side. Professions recognize increasingly well how they need, in the words of one Business School dean, to recognize "real-world perceptions, perceptions that we would not like to hear". By developing methods to help professionals recognize those who are not like "us", area studies can go a long way toward an appropriate internationalism for this age.

Finally, the internationalization of the professions is very much defined by the different passports held by those who teach and study in their programs. By bringing these faculty and students into university wide work addressing the value to and alternatives within globalization, beyond their discipline, one could significantly extend the input of international and area studies expertise to those whose work is focused more on technical matters. But in collaboration with these professionals, one might also find a way to articulate a path within globalization based not only on what ties us together, but on recognizing the values to be found in diversity, the foundation of America's own distinction in the world.