

Wayfinding through boundaries of knowing: professional development of academic sport scientists and what we could learn from an ethos of amateurism

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1 *Wayfinding through boundaries of knowing: Professional development of academic sport scientists*
2 and what we could learn from an ethos of amateurism

3

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14 **Abstract**

15 What should professional development of knowledge and skills of academic sport scientists look like?

16 Here, we address this question by dwelling in what 'being a professional academic' entails.

17 Professionals work methodically, typically specialising their knowledge and skills, strategically

18 planning how to progress their careers while not rocking the boat of the academic discipline they call

19 home. To gain promotion, they expertly work within predetermined disciplinary boundaries, typically

20 adjudged on objectified metrics that demonstrate a 'track record' in meeting professional standards,

21 closely linked to university performance measures. Disciplinisation and performance evaluation

22 becomes an issue, though, when rules, regulations and conventions prevent academics from exploring

23 beyond their disciplinary walls, instead being lulled into *playing the game*. The amateur, in contrast,

24 typically studies for the love of it, enthusiastically embodying their interest as a way of life, maintaining

25 the highest standards of knowing-in-being. This passionate exploration is not limited by disciplinary

26 conventions or performance metrics, but by how far they wish to roam through the boundaries of

27 knowing. They are, in other words, a *wayfinder*, making their way through the world by corresponding

28 with what holds their interest as they go. Never neglecting the *ethos of amateurism*, we contend its

29 potential value for professional development of academic sport scientists, embracing – and perhaps

30 even rekindling – a love of continued learning with and from those we encounter.

31 **Key words:** Amateurism, professionalism, sport science, wayfinding, academia, knowledge, skill

32 Out walking in the frozen swamp one gray day,

33 I paused and said, 'I will turn back from here.

34 No, *I will go farther – and we shall see.*'

35 - Robert Frost, The Wood-Pile

36

37 **Introduction**

38 "*What is your five-year research plan?*" I (the first author) was asked following the award of my
39 doctorate in sport science. Like most recent doctoral graduates, I had grown a slight boredom with
40 what I had been studying for the last three or so years, so was eager to throw on my hiking boots and
41 begin exploring new knowledge landscapes emergent on the horizon. Perhaps this is why when asked
42 such a question, I remember feeling a sense of concern, unease, confinement and anxiety, knowing
43 full well that phrases like 'publish or perish' circulated in academic disciplines, including sport science.
44 If to avoid perishing, I had to publish, would I have time to explore – *for the love it* – the various things
45 that jagged my attention? Or perhaps worse, would I even be *allowed* to venture beyond my
46 disciplinary home in the hope of encountering, and weaving together, new knowledge, skills and
47 experiences?

48 I would later learn that this notion of 'publish or perish' is a professional, academic ideology founded
49 on a model of capitalism and marketisation within universities. It should be noted, though, that it is
50 hard to be overly critical of such a model here, as it is indeed a broader societal reflection more
51 globally. Nonetheless, it is a model that sees colleagues as potential competitors and quantitative
52 performance metrics as ways of evaluating and judging, and holding to account, 'expert work'. Oft-
53 coming at the cost of studying for the love of it, a professional academic's focus typically shifts towards
54 *gaining* things that can be added to a résumé in order to progress their career. This can be a stressful,
55 overly-anxious and hostile environment, particularly for young, professionally-developing academics.

56 But, is there another way of looking at our engagement with knowledge and skills? Can we support
57 intellectual freedoms of professional development for academic sport scientists – encouraging them
58 to explore and apply their knowledge, skills and understanding – potentially leading to genuinely
59 novel, creative, and practically useful insights for the broader sporting community?

60 The aim of our paper is to explore this idea through the notions of professionalism and amateurism in
61 the development of academic sport scientists. To do so, we first explore what professionalism
62 commonly entails within a capitalist society, and how this runs at odds to the ethos of the amateur,
63 who *studies for the love of it, as a way of life* (Said, 1996). To help us navigate these waters within the
64 university, we lean on the sociological arguments of Brint (1994), who distinguishes ‘expert
65 professionalism’ from ‘social trustee professionalism’, and Kalfa et al. (2017), who explore the
66 Bourdieusian metaphor of ‘the game’. Then, weaving in the seminal work of Alfonso Montuori, we
67 propose ‘creative inquiry’ for professional development of academic sport scientists through the
68 approach of transdisciplinarity. This approach to inquiry is situated to take academics in-between,
69 through and beyond disciplinary boundaries (Woods et al., 2021b) – transcending norms and
70 conventions as they go. It pushes back on the *disciplinary siloing* that can blight the quality of work
71 through the pressure of specialisation that accompanies professionalism in the academy. Instead, our
72 arguments encourage developing academic sport scientists to replace the silo with *the tent* (Ingold,
73 2021), and the impersonality of networking with the relationality of *corresponding* (Ingold, 2013).
74 These ideas on embracing an ethos of amateurism for professionally developing academic sport
75 scientists should not be viewed as utopic, but active and transformative in their intent to preserve the
76 love of studying and “the joy of inquiry” (Montuori, 2008). After all, if that is not worth at least
77 attempting to preserve in academic scholarship, then what is?

78 **An attitude of professionalism**

79 In a lecture titled *Professionals and Amateurs*, Edward Said (1996) argued that the greatest threat to
80 today’s intellectual was an ‘attitude of professionalism’:

81 “By professionalism I mean thinking of your work as an intellectual as something you *do* for a living,
82 between the hours of nine and five with one eye on the clock, and another cocked at what is
83 considered to be proper, *professional behavior* – not rocking the boat, not straying outside the
84 accepted paradigms or limits, making yourself *marketable* and above all presentable, hence
85 uncontroversial and unpolitical and ‘*objective*.’” (p. 74, emphasis added)

86 The added emphases throughout this excerpt highlight key components of relevance to our position.
87 First, Said (1996) notes that the professional separates or divides their work from other parts of their
88 life in a type of *disembodiment*. In other words, their work expresses a compartmented aspect of who
89 they are, as if they are not all or entire when working, but rather *what they do* to earn a living.
90 Moreover, a professional’s work is somewhat predetermined and disciplinised, fitting the convention
91 of what one should look and sound like while in their position, staying on and within a well-defined
92 path, being sure to not ‘rock the boat’. The professional seeks to *productify* their performance to make
93 themselves marketable for employment and promotion, perhaps so they can rank higher when judged
94 against peers – seen as competitors – or so they can claim for objectivity when professing their
95 expertise to those deemed ignorant.

96 For Said (1996), this characterisation is fuelled by the pressure of specialisation – in that, the more
97 academically qualified one becomes (i.e., the higher the academic ladder climbed), the narrower and
98 more limited the focus of their area of knowledge. Indeed, this specialisation of knowledge is not
99 necessarily a bad thing and can lead to important discoveries. But it can become problematic when
100 one loses sight or becomes blinkered to anything outside the narrow confines of their ‘professional
101 speciality’, regardless of its pertinence (Said, 1996). For the professionally developing academic sport
102 scientist, a narrowing specialisation on analysis, for example, may detach them from synthesis – how
103 data and insights can be (re)interpreted, articulated, applied and put to use – what it actually means
104 for those in the field.

105 This detachment risks what Brint (1994) refers to as ‘expert professionalism’, which is defined as
106 specialised knowledge that has little concern for how it can be *collaboratively* put to use in order to
107 have a positive impact in the broader community. This narrow approach is at odds to what is referred
108 to as ‘social trustee professionalism’ (ibid.), where professionals are seen as trusted sharers of public
109 knowledge, carefully weaving it into practically and communally beneficial ways. The dogma of the
110 ‘expert professional’, though, perpetuates when the opinions of those outside of the ‘specialised few’
111 are seen to mean little, lulling developing academics into following “whatever the so-called leaders in
112 the field will allow” – after all, “*to be an expert* you have to be certified by the proper authorities; they
113 *instruct* you in speaking the *right* language, citing the *right* authorities, holding down the *right*
114 territory” (Said, 1996, p. 75, our emphasis). Stated differently, the pressure to specialise for the
115 professionally developing academic is likely to drive a proliferating system that rewards conformity,
116 where exploration and search are bound by the path dependencies of the discipline within which one
117 is housed.

118 In the university, the pressure to specialise has gone hand-in-glove with the rise of managerialism,
119 performance appraisals and marketisation (Allen-Collinson, 2000; Anderson, 2008). According to
120 Allen-Collinson (2000), the rise of market-orientation within the university has resulted from cuts of
121 government funding, leading institutions toward entrepreneurial practices. It should be noted that we
122 do not intend to criticise entrepreneurship in the university, as such practices can be truly supportive
123 of academic freedoms. But when coupled with managerialism, they can perpetuate performance
124 evaluations relative to standard, university-wide, metrics (Anderson, 2008). This is a concern because
125 Kallio et al. (2016) noted that the rise of ‘objective’¹ performance appraisals in the university has led
126 to the emergence of a ‘new academia’, one where colleagues become competitors and performance

¹ While not elaborated on further, we wish to note that the myth of objective evaluation is an operationalization of an idealised way of conceiving performance. It is not neutral, nor objective. The illusion of objectivity is detrimental because it does not instigate change or improvement. Rather, it accepts a biased view of performance to be the optimal view. But optimization is always relative to a given definition and the rules that operationalise such definition.

127 evaluations the tools of comparison. In such an environment, academics are inadvertently lulled into
128 expressing their speciality by *playing the game*, or risk being ‘left on the bench’!

129 This Bourdieusian metaphor of the game has recently been explored in the university by Kalfa et al.
130 (2018), who uncovered the particular pressures that developing early career academics feel when
131 starting their journey in academia. Specifically, it was noted that many quickly focus on ‘playing the
132 game’, gaining as much capital as they can within the university, as fast as they can – manifest in
133 generating publications, high teaching evaluations (despite being widely accepted as misguided
134 assessments of teaching quality (see Onwuegbuzie et al., 2007)) and applications for grant funding.
135 This is because their academic performance is judged on such metrics, being ranked against colleagues
136 in order to progress their career. This approach comes at significant risk of intellectual autonomy –
137 with university metrics quickly becoming what developing academics focus on (Kalfa et al., 2018), not
138 the development of collegiality, the joy of inquiry, collaboration and debate, the embracement of
139 uncertainty, and the excitement of ‘finding out’; things which – to us at least – should be at the core
140 of a developing academic scholarship (also see Montuori, 2008, 2011).

141 What we have argued thus far does seem to be a rather pessimistic view of professional development
142 of academic sport scientists. Our intent, though, is the counter – to find and emphasise an optimistic
143 way forward. A way that sees developing academic sport scientists wrestle back some of the key
144 elements of Brint’s (1994) notion of social trusteeship and have a positive influence on community
145 practice at all levels of sports participation. Perhaps in searching for such an optimistic way forward,
146 we can even start to alleviate some of the pressures of having to play the game in the hope of ‘getting
147 ahead’, while preserving the joy of, and love for, inquiry. What we now go onto propose, is that this
148 optimism may sit at the core of what is a seemingly counterintuitive ethos to that of professional,
149 academic behaviour.

150 **An ethos of amateurism**

151 Said (1996) proposes that the ethos of amateurism can mitigate pressures of professionalism for the
152 academic – an ethos defined as:

153 “[...] the desire to be moved not by profit or reward but by love for an unquenchable interest in
154 the larger picture, in making connections across lines and barriers, in refusing to be tied down to
155 a speciality, in caring for ideas and values despite the restrictions of a profession.” (p. 75)

156 It is worth noting that this view of amateurism is at odds with its more contemporary interpretations.
157 Such perspectives tend to view the amateur as lower in status than the professional – labelled
158 ‘hobbyists’ or ‘dabblers’ – engaging in activity as a pastime, not like their expert counterparts who do
159 so professionally (Alberti, 2001). But as emphasised in Said’s excerpt above, the amateur (from the
160 Latin verb *amare*, which means *to love*) is far from the hobbyist they are often portrayed as being. For
161 example, the amateur is one who actively researches for the love it, focusing on the topic(s) that holds
162 their curiosity, not just on the professional metrics that objectify it. The amateur follows their interests
163 where they lead them, transiting through disciplinary boundaries, as they are not tied to paradigmatic
164 ways of being and doing that risk over-constraining the search and exploration of the professional.
165 This means they have a deep care and longingness for what holds their interest, humbly professing an
166 uncertainty about the world, but with an unceasing desire to find out more. In other words, they
167 follow what Montuori (2011, p. 834, emphasis added) refers to as an “epistemology of *not-knowing*”.

168 Because of this, what the amateur studies with all of what they are – *it embodies them* – it is not, what
169 they study *about* for fulfilling a job or pre-determined metrics (Said, 1996). For example, Masschelein
170 and Simons (2013) recount that amateurs often lose track of time while corresponding with their
171 interest. They do so because their interest forever draws them into a presence in the present
172 (Masschelein & Simons, 2013), grounding them in actively attending to what they are seeing, hearing,
173 feeling, or tasting, not what they should be looking at, sounding like or acting as. A timely example of
174 this in sport reflects the differences between a child who *plays* neighbourhood football with their
175 friends – *for the love it* – co-designing rules, mixing teams, bringing their own, customized footballs to

176 'pop up' games, having to be reminded to return home after having been out playing all day. There is
177 a contrast with a child who *goes to* formalized – *professional* – football training sessions between
178 defined hours, being instructed to wear an exclusive uniform, to comply with established conventions,
179 and to rehearse ideological ways that the game 'should' be played, perhaps established by a national
180 syllabus in order to standardise (or professionalise) practice relative to a pre-determined cultural
181 identity (for empirical examples, see Rothwell et al. (2018) and Keeler and Wright (2013)).

182 For these reasons, Said (1996) argues that the scholar of today ought to embrace an *ethos of*
183 *amateurism*. In doing so, they can “transform the merely professional routine most of us go through
184 into something much more lively and radical; instead of doing what one is supposed to do one can ask
185 *why* one does, *who* benefits from it, *how* can it reconnect with a personal project and original
186 thoughts” (p. 83, emphasis added). As we now go onto discuss, the ethos of the amateur resonates
187 with an approach to inquiry captured within *transdisciplinarity*. Thus, in searching for ways to preserve
188 and stimulate the ethos of amateurism for professional development of academic sport scientists,
189 transdisciplinary inquiry could be a good place to start.

190 **In-between, through, beyond**

191 *The creative inquirer*

192 Differing to inter- and multi-², transdisciplinarity is a creative approach to scientific inquiry that takes
193 academics *in-between, through* and *beyond* disciplinary boundaries (McGregor, 2015; Woods et al.,
194 2021b). While still a fledgling approach to inquiry within sport science (cf. Vaughan et al., 2019; Toohey
195 et al., 2018; Woods et al., 2021b), it is flourishing elsewhere, such as in environmental science and
196 sustainability, helping researchers in tackling large, complex – *wicked* – challenges (Bouma, 2015;
197 Herrero et al., 2019). Alfonso Montuori (2019), a pioneer of creative inquiry framed through
198 transdisciplinarity, suggests that it is an approach synonymous with 'weaving', where academics

² While not dwelling on these differences here, interested readers could consult the work of Songca (2007) for a more detailed differentiation between these approaches.

199 detect and then knot together pertinent sources information (i.e., lines of inquiry) from various
200 landscapes to conceptualise a topic complexly. From this perspective, ‘trans’ can be understood in a
201 transitory way, as the academic moves with their interests, carefully attending and selectively
202 responding to where it leads them, enriching and growing their knowledge *of* (note, not just *about*) a
203 topic as they go. The knowledge of the transiting academic, then, grows into an unbound and ever-
204 forming *meshwork* of ideas and inquiries (Ingold, 2007, 2011, Woods 2021), entangled by what
205 captures their interest. This means that knowledge growth is narrational and *ongoing*, extending for
206 as far as the academic seeks to roam, occurring “in the passage from place to place and the changing
207 horizons along the way” (Ingold, 2000, p. 227).

208 This transcendence is important for professional development of academic sport scientists because it
209 encourages them to broaden their paradigmatic assumptions. This stimulus pushes back on what Said
210 (1996) recounts within the attitude of professionalism, which is that developing academics can get
211 (informally and formally) coerced into following what ‘the experts’ say is ‘the’ way of doing, often at
212 the expense of attending to what others – outside of the ‘specialised few’ – may have to say. Indeed,
213 this is not to dismiss the significance of disciplinary specialists within academia, but to recognise that
214 there are other ways of being and doing that are yet to be encountered, ways that could enrich the
215 discipline within which one is housed (Montuori, 2005). In other words, for the transdisciplinary
216 academic, disciplinary specialists could be viewed as knowledgeable *guides to*, not *gatekeepers of*,
217 knowledge, skills and various experiences.

218 *Weaving together the cornerstones of transdisciplinarity and the ethos of the amateur*

219 These propositions are surmised by Montuori (2005 – 2019) within what he refers to as the
220 *cornerstones of transdisciplinarity*. While we have elaborated on these cornerstones and their
221 application in the sport sciences elsewhere (see Woods et al., 2021b), they are important to briefly
222 emphasise here given their alignment with Said’s (1996) ethos of the amateur. First, transdisciplinarity
223 is inquiry-based, not disciplinary-based. This means that questions emerge through continued

224 correspondence with a *topic*, which may not be housed to a specific disciplinary norm. In other words,
225 an inquiry-based approach pushes against what Montuori (2008) refers to as ‘reproductive education’
226 – where a developing academic simply seeks to reproduce an established body of knowledge in order
227 to compliantly ‘fit’ within a defined disciplinary boundary³. An interest in performance preparation,
228 for example, may take a professionally developing academic sport scientist through many disciplines
229 – following their inquiry, not ‘a’ disciplinary way of being or doing *per se*. This, though, does not lessen
230 the importance of learning disciplinary ways of doing (i.e., methods or concepts), but rather
231 encourages the developing academic to venture *beyond* them, which is an integral part of many
232 contemporary theories of performance preparation and athlete development (e.g., O’Sullivan et al.,
233 2021; Woods et al., 2021).

234 Second, transdisciplinarity adopts a complex systems perspective, which counters the traditional,
235 disjunctive and reductive thinking that both Montuori (2005) and Said (1996) argue is common to
236 disciplinary specialisation that accompanies professionalism (also see Morin, 2008). Appreciating this,
237 the professionally developing academic sport scientist with an interest in performance preparation
238 would likely root their inquiry within a theoretical framework that draws on a plurality of disciplines
239 and knowledge sources to theoretically model and empirically investigate the phenomenon (for an
240 example of this, see Rothwell et al., 2020). Third, transdisciplinarity studies with, not about, including
241 the academic in the inquiry, not attempting to expel them from it in the hope of maintaining
242 objectivity. In striving for embeddedness, the academic can attempt to remain ‘in touch’ with their
243 inquiry (preserving its contextuality), countering the detachment that typically characterises what
244 Brint (1994) calls an ‘expert professionalism’. Moreover, by being embedded in their inquiry, the
245 academic can learn to continually attend and selectively respond to it, getting to know it more
246 relationally. This relational knowledge of one’s inquiry aligns with Said’s (1996) characterisation of the

³ Capturing this sentiment eloquently, Michael Foucault, cited in Plumwood (2009), stated, “endeavour to know how and to what extent it might be possible to think differently, instead of legitimising what is already known”.

247 amateur's ethos – one who studies for the love it, *as a way of life*. In other words, when they study -
248 they are whole, they put all they are into it; the transdisciplinary academic is not just passively
249 describing or documenting what has occurred through a vertical integration of knowledge (see Woods
250 & Davids, 2022 for an overview), but actively transforming *with* what they directly seek, experience
251 and discover. This approach requires careful reflection by the academic, routinely considering what or
252 who is shaping the way they are approaching the inquiry (Montuori, 2013).

253 Last, given its transitory nature, transdisciplinarity is trans-paradigmatic, not intra-paradigmatic. This
254 perspective liberates academics from the (perhaps unseen) confines of their discipline, encouraging
255 them to push back on conformist ways of doing by constantly questioning why things are the way they
256 are (Montuori, 2013). Our own transdisciplinary research in sports skill acquisition, for example, has
257 taken us into a variety of complementary disciplinary paradigms – from social anthropology (Woods
258 et al., 2021a), to ecological psychology (Araújo, Davids & Hristovski, 2006), and dynamical systems
259 theory (Davids, 2012); each adding new, integrative, unique and significantly richer insights than
260 before. This approach, however, raises an important question for our current position – what is the
261 role of the discipline with regards to transdisciplinarity for professional development of academic
262 sport scientists?

263 **Wayfinding tent dwellers**

264 Indeed, transdisciplinary inquiry does call for considerable blurring and even transcendence of
265 disciplinary lines and boundaries (Mahan, 1970). It would be a mistake, though, to think that the
266 discipline does not have a role within *transdisciplinarity*. To clarify, it is a role that should not constrain
267 or limit one's search, but rather, start and stimulate it (Montuori, 2019). Ecological economist, Robert
268 Costanza (2003, p. 655), metaphorically surmised this notion rather eloquently when proposing a
269 future vision of science, rooted in transdisciplinarity:

270 “In the future, disciplinary boundaries will be as porous as many state and national boundaries are
271 today. Likewise, one’s disciplinary background will be noted much as one’s place of birth is noted
272 today – an interesting fact about one’s path through life, but not a central defining characteristic.”

273 This proposition is deeply rooted within a core profession of transdisciplinarity, which is a humble
274 appreciation of *not* knowing (Montuori, 2008), and an unceasing desire to ‘find out’ (Montuori, 2019).
275 Stated differently, the goal of transdisciplinary inquiry is not about reaching a terminus destination –
276 an end point, a definitive solution, an all-knowing vantage – but about uncovering entanglements,
277 more *related* lines of inquiry to follow on with. This process appreciates that the phenomenal world
278 is not fixed and ready-made, broken and categorised into pieces, locations, objects and *disciplines*,
279 waiting simply to be known *about*. Rather, the world and its inhabitants, are deeply entangled, related
280 and forever *becoming* (Ingold, 2015). In other words, *everything* is on its way to becoming *something*
281 else – professionally developing academics included! Henri Poincaré, emphasised this eloquently, in
282 stating that “the aim of science is not things themselves [...] but the *relations* among things” (1905, p.
283 xxiv). Extending this perspective, we weave in the words of the eminent anthropologist Tim Ingold,
284 who in discussing the relational constitution of being alive to the world, declared that “things *are* their
285 relations” (2011, p. 70, emphasis in original).

286 *The humility of not knowing... But an unceasing desire to find out*

287 The epistemology of *not* knowing, underpinning transdisciplinary inquiry, captures the humility of the
288 amateur’s ethos in a way that Ingold (2021) refers to as ‘imposter syndrome’. Its symptoms, according
289 to Ingold (2021), are detected in the feeling of being totally underqualified to speak on matters that
290 you are *supposed* to be authoritative about. Indeed, we (the authors of this paper) have all been
291 diagnosed with such a syndrome at various stages of our lives. It is, though, nothing to be ashamed
292 of, as the syndrome is associated with the rise of ‘expert professionalism’ – where the pressure to
293 specialise for the academic sees them claim for a (false) certainty about the world (Ingold, 2021). The
294 real imposter, then, is perhaps the one who professes to ‘know it all’, closed off to what the world and

295 its inhabitants – outside of their discipline – can share with them. This is because the discipline, for
296 the detached expert, is akin to a *silo* (Ingold, 2021) – housing all they need to know in order to profess
297 their certainty about the world. The walls of these silos – that is, the boundary markings between
298 disciplines – become thicker with the ever-increasing pressures placed on academics to specialise
299 (Said, 1996). The disciplinary landscape can become a hostile environment, with the pressure of
300 exclusivity and specialisation seeing academics claim and defend their turf from ‘outside attacks’,
301 rather than as welcome ‘interjections’ (Montuori, 2008) – established in sport science by academic
302 journals that clearly define the work that is ‘allowed’ to be published there (defined as ‘within the
303 scope’), along with the way such works ‘should’ be formally written and presented.

304 As we have emphasised, though, the amateur does not feel such pressures – instead, relishing the
305 freedom to roam as far as their interests take them. The role of the discipline within transdisciplinarity,
306 then, is one akin to a *tent*, not a silo (Ingold, 2021). Indeed, a professionally developing academic sport
307 scientist needs time and a shelter to gather their thoughts, record their ideas and to note their
308 observations – which the ‘tent-as-discipline’ affords. Further, given the transitory undertones of
309 transdisciplinarity, the tent can be easily packed up, and the professionally developing academic sport
310 scientist can set out again, following what has jagged their attention. An important feature of the tent,
311 in this respect, is that it is *pitched in the ground* – meaning that the academic never loses touch with
312 their inquiry, as they are (figuratively) grounded in it. This is important for professional development
313 of academic sport scientists, as it encourages them to maintain regular *correspondence* with various
314 sources of experiential and empirical knowledge – i.e., from coaches, athletes and other support staff
315 in the field, to perhaps social anthropologists and ecological psychologists in completely different
316 landscapes! More than a professional life dedicated to models or theories, data or their treatment,
317 sport scientists would benefit from a robust correspondence with reality (the phenomena of sport
318 performance and preparation). This process of correspondence would be impactful on the nature of
319 experiential and empirical knowledge. While Montuori (2008) refers to transdisciplinary scholars as
320 ‘detectives’ or ‘investigators’, to us, they are better understood as *wayfinders* (see Woods et al., 2020),

321 who although professing a humble uncertainty about the world, never stop searching to explain what
322 it is that captures their attention and directs their making. Given the tenets of transdisciplinarity, their
323 expertise, if anything, sits within their capability to seek out pertinent sources of information and then
324 *weave* them together while taking refuge within their tent. Such an itinerant is, in other words, the
325 “connoisseur of loose ends” (Ingold, 2021. p. 165).

326 *Entangled lines of correspondence*

327 Indeed, follow up advice to being asked about my (the first author) five-year research plan mentioned
328 in the introduction, was to “*expand your ‘network’*” – since, according to the proverb, “it is not what
329 you know, *but who you know!*” To us, this is a rather shallow and impersonal view of engaging with
330 people, and perhaps even another manifestation of the rising market-orientation within the university
331 (Kalfa et al., 2018). For example, similar to teaching evaluations, publications and grant funding, the
332 sentiment of ‘networking’ appears to be about gaining capital (Ingold, 2021) – social capital in this
333 instance simply playing the game just to get ahead professionally.

334 This proposition, by no means, implies that collaborative engagement with people should not be a
335 priority for professional development of academic sport scientists. After all, “inquiry always occurs
336 with others, whether they are physically present or not, with predecessors in different times and
337 spaces, with our friends and foes who have approached a subject we are interested in” (Montuori,
338 2008, p. 18). Our contention, though, is that this engagement should not be driven by a shallow agenda
339 of gaining social capital through the addition of names to joint publications/presentations on a
340 curriculum vitae or followers to various social media platforms, but about a genuine collaborative
341 relationship, deeply *woven through sharing a common interest in studying a topic for the love it*. This
342 latter description of engagement is precisely what is meant when we refer to ‘corresponding’
343 throughout this paper. Specifically, by corresponding, we mean actively participating with the ideas of
344 others we encounter – not in the sense of reaching a fixed point, but in the sense of growing
345 knowledge and understanding, of *carrying on* in a unique direction, together (Ingold, 2013, 2020,

346 Woods, 2021). Corresponding, then, is open-ended and somewhat emergent, as through its
347 dialogicality, new knowledge can continually arise. This means that to correspond, one has to attend
348 and be open to things (i.e., people, places, substances, and events) as they are, and (cor)respond to
349 what these things have to say with care, sensitivity, and humility. “To correspond with the world”,
350 says Ingold (2013, p. 108), “is not to describe it, or to represent it, but to *answer to it*” (emphasis in
351 original).

352 For professional development of academic sport scientists, relationality encourages an appreciation
353 that we have as much to learn *from* and *with* coaches, athletes, other support staff – and indeed
354 disciplinary expert specialists – as we would each have to learn *from* and *with* the professionally
355 developing academic. The reciprocity of learning emphasises the deeply relational undertones of
356 correspondence, resonating with Said’s (1996) descriptions of the amateur, who *cares for* ideas
357 regardless of the profession. Further, it aligns with Brint’s (1994) descriptions of social trusteeship,
358 where *collaboration* is central to the sharing of public knowledge for the greater good. Stated
359 differently, as the wayfinding tent dweller transits in-between, through and beyond disciplinary
360 boundaries, they accumulate not a dotted network of names and second-hand experiences, but *grow*
361 *a meshwork of entangled lines of correspondence, knotted together by a shared love of what captures*
362 *their interest.*

363 **Concluding remarks**

364 Here we sought to explore some implications of an ethos of amateurism for professional development
365 of academic sport scientists. Leaning on the work of Said (1996) and Brint (1994), we first contrasted
366 two views of professionalism – a detached expertise, and a social trusteeship. In arguing for the
367 benefits of the latter, we discussed the value of creative inquiry through the approach of
368 transdisciplinarity for professional development of academic sport scientists. Leaning on key ideas
369 from Montuori, it was contended that this approach could free academic sport scientists from the
370 disciplinary confines that can be built around them, given the pressure to specialise within

371 organisations. Our analysis led us to conceptualise the discipline of sport science not as a silo but as a
372 tent, and the academic not as a specialist but as a wayfinder – unceasing in their journey to weave
373 together loose ends that jag their attention. Thus, this paper could be seen as a manifestation of its
374 very message, in that by following various inquiries rooted in the topic of professional development
375 of academic sport scientists, it wove together key works from a humanist, sociologists, a creative
376 inquirer, and an anthropologist. What ‘discipline’, then, would this paper call home?

377 Indeed, the challenges of managerialism and the pressures of ‘playing the game’ within universities
378 are deeply rooted issues that this paper does not claim, nor seek, to resolve. They require to be
379 challenged on both philosophical and systemic fronts, both theoretically and pragmatically. We
380 appreciate, then, that there is an unfortunate inevitability in having to play the game at various levels
381 until this change occurs. But this should not make our paper seem utopian, nor contradictory. Rather,
382 it is important to acknowledge an ethos that we feel is crucial for all – from professionally developing
383 to senior academic sport scientists. What is not to admire about studying for the love of it, as a way
384 of life? Is that not the reason we stumbled into academia anyway? An ethos of amateurism, when
385 coupled with a view of professionalism framed through social trusteeship, should, thus, be seen as
386 being active in its intent to positively transform lives at both individual and societal scales. What it
387 requires is for the academic to never lose sight of the love of studying and the joy of inquiry. Of
388 searching for answers, but oft-just uncovering more questions – more loose ends – and being
389 comfortable with that *uncomfortability*. Perhaps, then, instead of asking “*what is your five-year*
390 *research plan?*”, we could consider asking developing academic sport scientists, “*what is the inquiry*
391 *that interests you now, and what loose ends are you off to explore next....?*”

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