

1. Maki, Economics and Interdisciplinarity

This chapter examines interdisciplinary influences in a variety of directions and guises, recognizing that economics tends to be an autonomous, expansive, and self-confident discipline. First, in what is often called economics imperialism, economic rational choice and market models are used for explaining phenomena that used to fall within the domains of political science, sociology, law, anthropology. Second, for about a century now, economics has struggled to maintain the independence of its behavioral assumptions (those constituting the 'economic man') from psychology, but the recently grown critical pressure from experimental psychology and neurosciences, pointing out discrepancies between economics and these disciplines, is giving rise to renewed debates between disciplines and within economics itself. Third, there is a host of influences on economics from mathematics, physics, statistics, and computer science that take place almost unnoticed or at least without explicit debate. Fourth, economics participates, as an influential contributor, in dealing with practical and social issues (from health care to development and climate change), and is expected to engage in balanced interdisciplinary collaborations - but is faced with difficulties, some of which are familiar from other contexts, while others are peculiar to this discipline insofar as it is inclined towards autonomy and expansion.