

The Futures We Want: Global Sociology
and the Struggles for a Better World



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Bargaining for Evidence in a Hybrid Forum?

THE CASE OF AN
INDICATOR EXPERT GROUP CHAIRED BY THE EUROPEAN COMMISSION.

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Session: Expertise and Interests: For a Sociology of Think Tanks

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INSIDE

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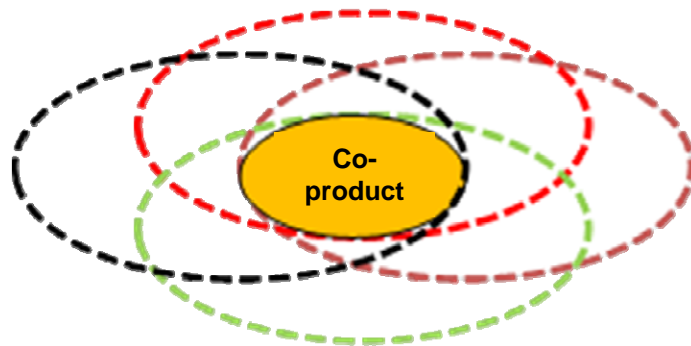
1. Study Context: Indicator Expert Group of the European Commission

- **Target:**
 - Set up an indicator set to promote evidence based policy making.
- **Group structure:**
 - Expert Group chaired by the European Commission
 - Consisting of heterogeneous actors from...
 - ...different nationalities (representatives of member states of the EU)
 - ...and disciplinary backgrounds (EU and national policy, science, practice and other stakeholders)

2. Theoretical Framework: The New Mode of Knowledge Production

„Hybrid Forum“

- New “markets” of knowledge production for reallife decision-making
(Gibbons et al. 1994)
 - Discursive exchange of knowledge of heterogenous Stakeholder and their „World of relevancies“ (Scholz et al. 2015a, b; Zinsstag et al. 2014)
 - Combining into a consensus => „co-construction“; „co-production“
(Hansson et al., 2014; Matys, 2014)



- ⇒ *Legitimation* (Krick, 2014)
- ⇒ „Cross-fertilisation“ (Choi, Yang, & Park, 2015).
- ⇒ *Contextspecific and „socially robust knowledge“*
(Nowotny et al. 2001)

3. Case study approach: Empirical reconstruction of the knowledge production in a Hybrid Forum

Sociological Knowledge Gap:

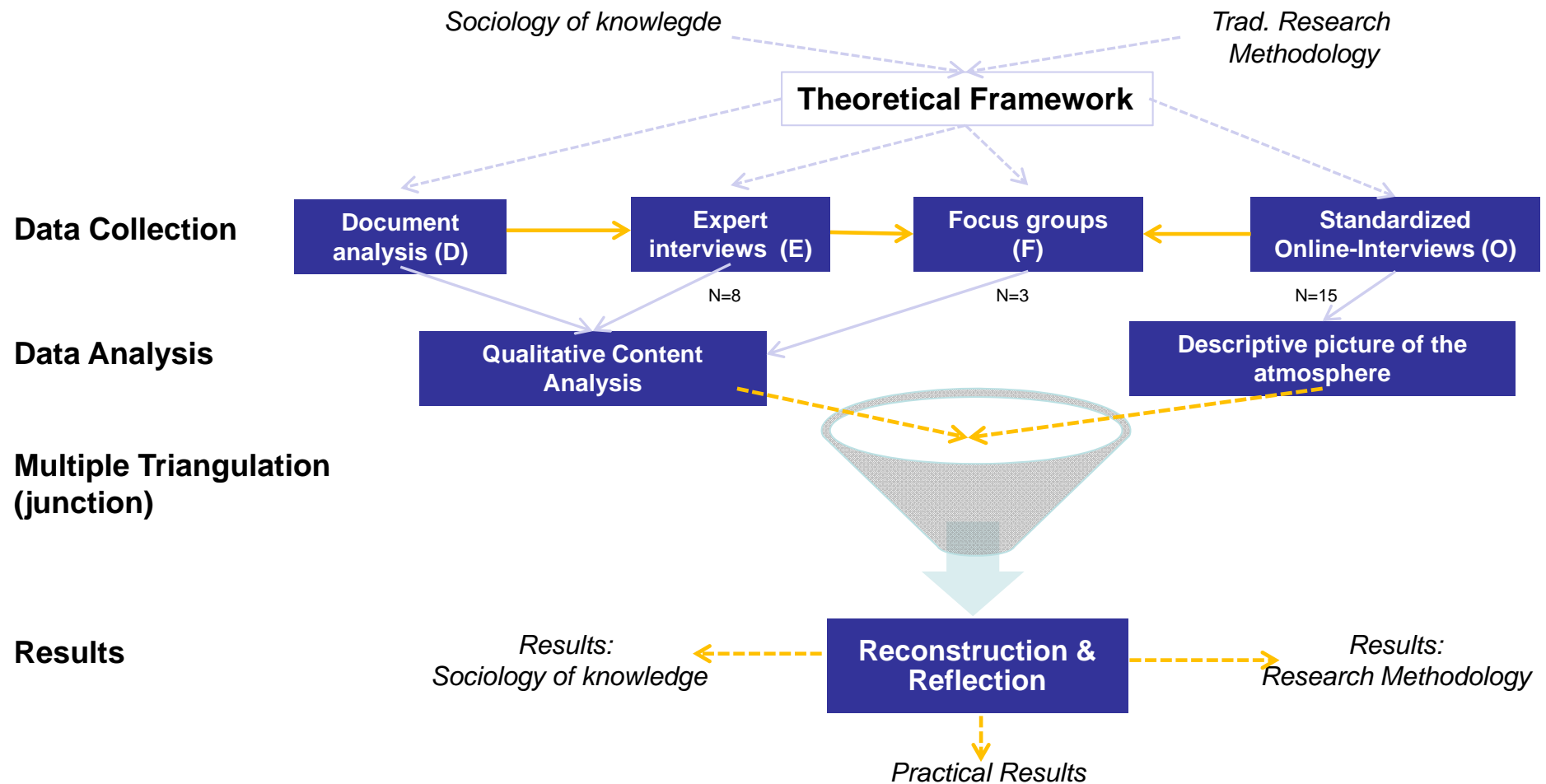
- Popular instrument of decision-making processes in today's knowledge societies
 - **But** less information on how knowledge is produced
- ⇒ **Need** of empirical knowledge analyzing factors which influence knowledge co-production in Hybrid Fora (Binder et al., 2015; Krick, 2014; Scholz & Steiner, 2015c)

Focus of this Case Study:

- **Exemplary Case:** Development of quantitative Indicators within a political Expert Group
- Theory guided empirical reconstruction of **structures** and **processes** of knowledge co-production within this expert group (Renn & Klinke, 2013).

Which factors influence knowledge production in a Hybrid Forum?

4. Case Study Design: Multiple Triangulation



=> Compensation of weaknesses, one-sidedness and biases of single method or perspective

(Flick, 2011; Ingenkamp & Lissmann, 2005 ; Kuckartz, 2012; Lamnek, 2005; Przyborski & Wohlrab-Sahr, 2010; Steinke, 2008)

See Décieux (2016)

5. Results

5.1 Structures of the group influencing the outcome

A) National actors: Perspective of acting

- *dominant national perspective (O; E)*

- Indirect procedure of invitation (E):

“I am absolute acting from a national perspective, because I was invited as representative of my home country. In other EU-programs, this differs ,[...] people are invited as [...] a researcher. This is quite a different situation, because then you are independent.” (National Expert)

- **Setting** during the Meetings (sitting behind a country flag or a badge) (E)

- Representatives **do not feel like Experts** for the group context (E)

“I am not an Expert for Indicators and especially not for European Indicators. We are not that specialized because we have to fill many positions and functions [at national level] and have to be more flexible.” (National Expert)

D: Document analysis;

F: Focus group;

E: Expert interview;

O: Stand. online interview

5.1 Structures of the group influencing the outcome

B) Important competencies for knowledge co-production

1. Traditional practical, application oriented parts of scientific knowlege

- Statistical knowledge (O;E)
- Knowledge of existing Data Souces (O;E)

2. „non-formal competencies or soft skills“

- Empathy und flexibility (O; E)
- Robustness in dicussions und negotiation skills (O; E)
- Communication skills and fluency in English (O; E)

“And of course communication and intercultural skills, to understand what other persons and disciplines bring in. [...] And when it comes to English, [...] I was very surprised that some experts did not say anything. It is problematical when discussions are dominated by experts that speak a better English than the others.” (National Expert)

=> Non-formal competencies as additdional requirement for input of expertise in the discourse of the expert group

See Décieux (2016)

5.2 The processes influencing the outcome

C) Group hierarchy allows the Commission to control knowledge production.

1. Final Decision (e.g. changes of the indicators set) is on the commission (D; O; E).

- Commission is the **only actor** within this process („monopoly position) (O; E)
- Process of decision-making is not transparent to the experts (E)

“You do not really know what they do with the results of the discussions. It is a kind of **black box** for me. [...] But in my impression, many decisions are made outside of the expert group, by the representatives of the commission. [...] I think [...] in the meetings they act like equal brainstorm partners. But the commission has the last word” (National Expert)

- Changes often do not base on the discussions of the expert group (E)

“So I am not sure what the commission does with the advices. I think they also have their own conclusions and I am not sure about the influence of expert group or the members of the expert group” (National Expert)

- Experts doubt to have a significant influence on the composition of the indicator set (E)

=> ***In practice: Knowledge co-production is framed and controlled by the EU Commission***

See Décieux (2016)

6. Conclusion: Knowledge co-production in a Hybrid Forum

- Opened the „Black Box“ of knowledge co-production in Hybrid Fora

Which factors influence knowledge production in a Hybrid Forum?

- Challenges of the theoretically constructed „idealtyp of hybrid knowledge co-production“ (e.g. Nowotny et al. 2001, Scholz et al. 2015a,b).
→ open discourse and consensus of heterogeneous actors

In this Case:

- Knowledge production is much more effected by the asymmetry of power than by the heterogeneity of stakeholder perspectives
- Role of the hybrid forum (expert group) seems to be legitimately (Renn, 2015).

Thank you for your attention

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