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Selection of a research topic, recapitulation & practice

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Topic selection - How to begin?

- Issues that are interesting or attractive for us (among other things☺) or issues we can relate to
- Critical assessment whether the topic can be turend into a thesis
- ‘To have an issue...’
- 3 key questions:

- WHAT?
- WHY?
- HOW?

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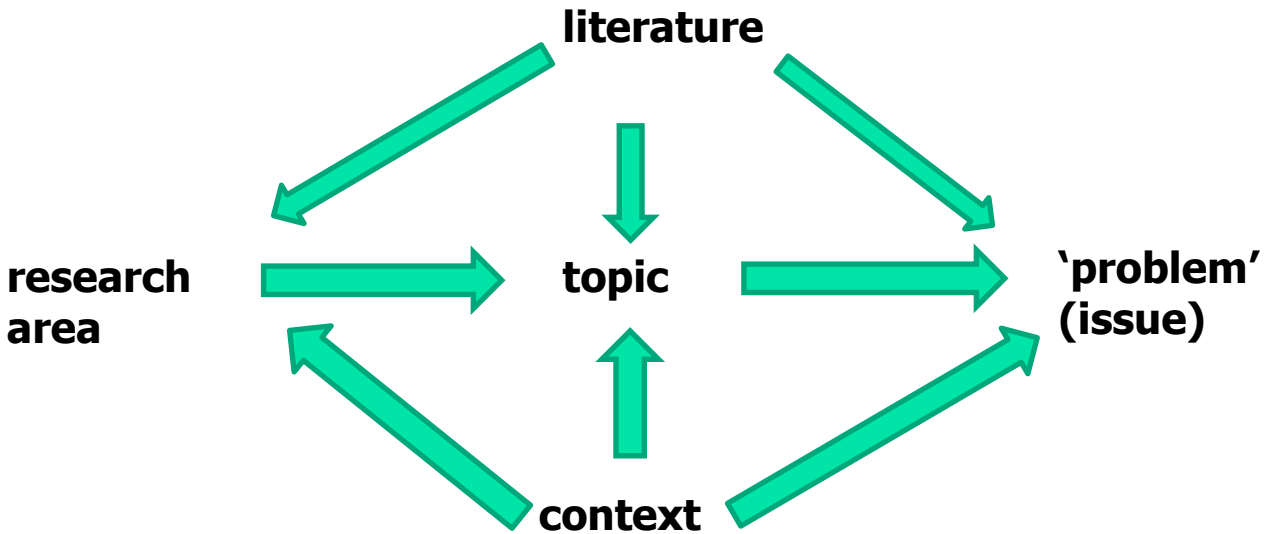
Developing a topic - may be a recurrent proces...



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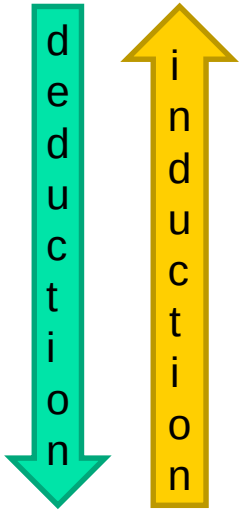
Developing a topic



- Research area
- ... (may include one or more steps further specifing the topic)
- Research topic
- Research question(s)/hypothesis
- Specific research questions
- Particular questions related to data mining/collecting... (interviews)

- **Let´s give it a try...**

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Developing a topic

- **Keep in mind:**
- availability of sources (sometimes relates to methodology)
- deadlines
- topicality
- what falls within the area/topic and what does not
- ...

Research type

- Basic
  - unique, focused on collecting and processing information and data for a particular purpose
  - academic research
  - not necesarily applicable in practice

- Applied
  - built on data/information collected before/for similar purpose
  - aimed on commercial use of (practically applicable) outcomes

Mixed remarks on topic selection

- What do we want to study?
- What methodology should we use?
  - qualitative/quantitative
- Scope of the research (large number of cases/low number)
- Level of examination (macro/micro)
- Timeframe
- Purpose, targeted audience
  - academia
  - general public
  - decision makers

Research design

- Research plan
  - most typical
- Part of the research proces
  - narrower definition
- Product of the proces
  - a method applicable somewhere else

Qualitative vs. quantitative research

- 2 anatgonistic approaches?
- Rather a part of a single continuum/axis
- No clear quali/quanti approach can be found in social sciences
  - the difference is in emphasis on one or another
- The decision which would be more suitable should follow AFTER the topic selection
  - basically all issues can be studied with both approaches
  - the difference is in focus
- **It is not about numbers vs. words**

Qualitative vs. quantitative research

- Different requirements on reduction of data

Quantitative	Qualitative
Reduced amount of information about large N	Detailed information about large N
Smaller number of variables and observed relations	Reduced amount of N
Generalization is easy	Generalization is inaccurate if not impossible

- The main difference is in the research logic
  - Quantitative research – deduction (from generalization to individual occurences
  - Qualitative research – induction (from individual cases to general population)

How can we use the tension between quali & quanti?

- Don´t get bothered by the urge to decide which one to use
- Ask yourself:
  - Will the research aim on the whole picture or its part?
  - Will I start with something smaller and try to generalize as a result or vice versa?
  - How much the data will be reduced?
  - How will I treat my data?

- **Only after ansewring these questions you might find that some methodologies fit in your plans and some do not**

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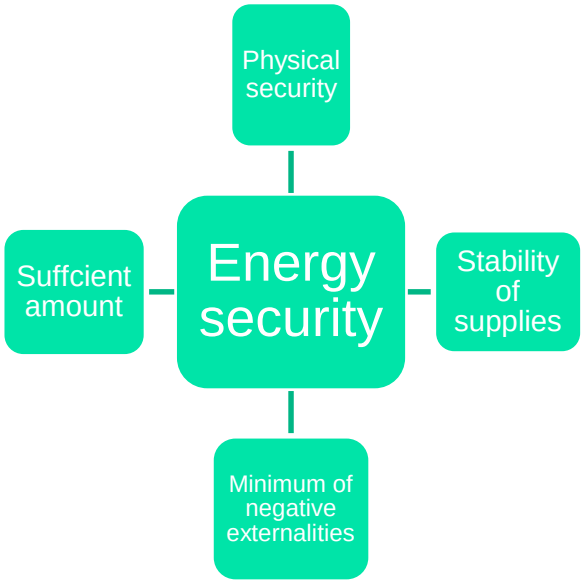
Conceptualization

- Concept – idea, notion or collection of labels describing a phenomenon
- Conceptualization – defining a certain part of reality by terms that make it unique and observable



Operationalization

- How can we recognize/identify particular concept
  - Measureable
- E.g.: Energy security is reached when all features are secured

Indicators

- Signal pointing to a certain state/condition/change
  - “litmus papers”
- E.g.: fluctuating or insufficient energy supplies polluting environment point to low energy security