

Part II

Research design

The following section will present the research design of this thesis, to explain how this thesis approaches the research questions “Who is getting integrated, in which mode, and in which stage of the service innovation process?” and “What are affecting factors for stakeholder integration and what effects does stakeholder integration have?”. First, it will introduce the constructivist research paradigm as the basis for the chosen research design, case study research, in chapter 1. Second, the case study approach and the reasons for choosing this research method will be described in detail in chapter 2. Finally, chapter 3 of this section will introduce the reader to the engaged scholarship approach. This understanding of interchange between the researcher and the research subject underlies the empirical work of the thesis. It supports the constructivist understanding of research which views the world as co-constructed in its nature.

1 Research methodology

This thesis is asking “how” and “why” questions to understand and partly interpret the studied phenomenon of stakeholder integration in service innovation. Hereby the researcher is following the constructivist paradigm¹⁰ (Guba & Lincoln, 1994) that can be shortly summarized as research to reveal, portray and understand phenomena within their complex context (Tronvoll, Brown, Gremler, & Edvardsson, 2011). According to Tronvoll et al. (2011), this dynamic view of the world reflects the character of services as “*processes, deeds, and performances created in dynamic interactions*” (Tronvoll et al., 2011, p. 576). Since this thesis works with the service-dominant logic lens that advocates the value creation as a process of co-creation by various actors and resources (Vargo et al., 2008), the constructivist paradigm fits with the nature of the applied theory and research subject.

In more detail, the constructivist paradigm is characterized by a relativist ontology, describing a view of the world as socially and experimentally constructed and co-constructed (Guba & Lincoln, 2005). This implies that there are subjective and

¹⁰ Constructivism and interpretivism are sometimes used interchangeably since they show the same roots and share the aim for understanding when studying social phenomena, taking the perspective of the people and phenomena under research. Still, interpretivism has a stronger focus on creating an interpretation that is valid for more than just the phenomenon in focus of research. (Lee & Baskerville, 2003)

local “truths” for individuals and groups (Guba & Lincoln, 1994; Wahyuni, 2012). Within constructivism, the researcher is searching for the meaning of these subjective experiences and individual meanings that are given to the studied complex situations (Creswell, 2014). It includes that the social realities, based on human perspectives and experiences, may change over time and with the experiences of people¹¹ (Guba & Lincoln, 1994; Wahyuni, 2012). In constructivism, the nature of relationships between the researcher and the objects of investigation (epistemology), is characterized by interactivity, happening in an on-going process of conducting research and gaining understanding (Guba & Lincoln, 1994). Accordingly, in constructivism, the research methodology has to be dialectical and dialogical. This is why case studies are applied as a research approach in this thesis. They reflect the importance of context and seek to create a deep understanding of the research objects’ perceived reality. In case study research, the aim is to inductively develop patterns and meaning throughout the research process (Creswell, 2012).

2 Case study research

Case studies, as a qualitative explorative method, are chosen as an appropriate research approach to investigate the rather new and contextual research topic “stakeholder integration in service innovation”. Case studies as a research method are suitable for the research questions of this thesis for a number of reasons. First, the research in focus is about discovering and exploring the new, and to develop empirically grounded theory (Yin, 2014, p. 16). In such a new and contextual research topic, openness is required; this is to avoid a priori categorisation of empirical data. Second, case study research fits well with the desire to understand complex social phenomena, as stated by Eisenhardt and Graebner (2007) and Yin (2014). Miles, Huberman and Saldaña¹² (2013) as well as Flick (2014) suggest that case studies are a

¹¹ Guba and Lincoln (1994) refer to constructivism’s relativism to include a change of realities over time, which is not in the original core of the constructivist paradigm. Relativism is criticized because of accepting such a large variety in realities that deriving patterns and conclusions might no more be possible as cases stand for themselves only.

¹² The guidelines for qualitative data analysis in Miles et al. (2013) work do not agree with the constructivist approach taken in this thesis. Accordingly only selected aspects of the authors’ guidelines for data analysis and some general aspects about case study research are referred to, as they are in line with the common understanding of qualitative research.

suitable tool to access real life experiences. They allow reflection on practices and subjects in real life interactions. Thereby, the holistic and meaningful characteristics of real-life events can and should be captured by the researcher. Third, the research subject is of a process nature. This is why, especially in research on networks and relationships (Dumbach, 2014; Halinen & Törnroos, 2005; Perks et al., 2012), case studies are the chosen approach to access data and to gain insights into processes (Symon & Cassell, 1999).

Following a constructivist comprehension of research, the case study design of this thesis follows an inductive and abductive approach to case study research rather than a deductive approach¹³. Building upon the richness of the empirical data, the aims of the applied case study approach are oriented towards theory building and the re-defining of theory. For this purpose, Eisenhardt (1989) proposes a strongly inductive view on case study research, relating to grounded theory. The closeness of Eisenhardt to grounded theory implies collecting data without any or at least little knowledge about the literature in the research field. The present work refrains from such a total distance from literature and favours the line of argumentation by Siggelkow (2007). He advises against the conduction of case studies which are too strongly oriented towards grounded theory and encourages researchers not to disregard existing literature in the field of research. To include existing theory can contribute to the research because, as he puts it, “an open mind is good, an empty mind is not” (Siggelkow, 2007, p.21).

To pursue the exploration of practice in stakeholder integration in service innovation and the enhancement of theory from empirical research, this thesis is combining the advantages of single and multiple case studies, as recommended by Yin (2014). The first case study aims to create an in-depth understanding of stakeholder integration in service innovation in the context of healthcare solutions. This is followed by a second, multiple, case study in a broader context, to confirm, to disconfirm, to refine and to extend the findings from the first case study (Eisenhardt, 1989). Part VI takes up the findings from these previous case studies and aims to understand the dynamics of stakeholder integration in service innovation in even

¹³ The most prominent authors in case study research (Spring and Santos, 2015) are Eisenhardt and Yin. Eisenhardt (1989) is relating case study research to grounded theory (proposing that theory building through case studies should happen with as little theory and no hypothesis), whereas Yin (2014) stands for a deductive understanding of case study research. Both authors offer widely accepted guidelines for case study research, fostering validity and quality that are similar on an operational level for data collection, but imply different approaches for data analysis and derivation of research findings.

more depth. The applied approach of an in-depth case study allows to take the perspective of the integrated stakeholders, for a comprehensive, service systems view of mutual stakeholder integration in service innovation (Swanborn, 2010).

Throughout all cases, data collection is primarily based on interviews, supported by documents and observations. This triangulation of data sources (Flick, 2014) helps to verify and confirm interview propositions (Creswell, 2012; Yin, 2014). The case analysis follows the guidelines given by Eisenhardt (1989) and Yin (2014), fostering validity and quality of case study research¹⁴. An overview of all cases and the respective data collections and analyses will be provided in detail in the respective chapters.

3 The engaged scholarship approach

“Instead of viewing organizations and clients as data collection sites and founding sources, an engaged scholar views them as a learning workplace (idea factory) where practitioners and scholars co-produce knowledge on important questions and issues [...]” (van de Ven, 2007; p.7)

In a constructivist approach to research, it is recognized that research is not a distant and anonymous procedure, but a process of social interchange between the researcher and the subject of interest (the interviewee). The above quote clarifies that, in engaged scholarship, researchers and research subjects are entering an interchange that can be influencing what is being studied, what knowledge can be derived from the communicative process, and which explanations for the research phenomenon will be given. Research as processes of social interchange, i.e. communication, is thereby seen as a part of the ongoing social construction of the world (Flick, 2014). The “engaged scholarship approach” as a concept of interplay and a joint learning

¹⁴ Spring and Santos (2015) criticize the strictness of the provided guidelines by Yin (2014) and Eisenhardt (1989) as they do not allow for flexibility and adaption of cases depending on the revealed observations and individual circumstances. In the context of this thesis, the level of case analysis is “service innovation project”. Thus, the cases are identified and developed in the process of data collection, allowing for a higher degree of adaptability, called “casing” by Spring and Santos (2005) and Ragin (1992) case development with the possibility to adapt in data collection and framing) rather than case definition in advance. This approach helps to avoid the risk of finding something “in which the evidence does not address the initial research question” (Yin, 2014, p.29).

process between the researcher and the subject of study has been coined by Andrew van de Ven (2007)¹⁵. The engaged scholarship approach defines the process of empirical research as

“a participative form of research for obtaining the different perspectives of key stakeholders (researchers, users, clients, sponsors, and practitioners) in studying complex problems. By involving others and leveraging their different kinds of knowledge, engaged scholarship can produce knowledge that is more penetrating and insightful than when scholars or practitioners work on problems alone.” (van de Ven, 2007; p.9)

Thereby, van de Ven (2007) differs between four alternative forms of engaged scholarship: “basic science with stakeholder advice”, “policy/design science evaluation research for professional practice”, “co-produce knowledge with collaborators” and “action/intervention research for a client” (see Figure 5).

		Research question/purpose	
		To describe/explain	To design/control
Research perspective	Extension Detached outside	Basic Science with stakeholder advice 1	Policy/Design Science evaluation research for professional practice 3
	Intention Attached inside	2 Co-produce knowledge with collaborators	4 Action/Intervention research for a client

Figure 5: Alternative forms of engaged scholarship (adapted from van de Ven, 2007; p.27)

¹⁵ Mohrmann and Lawler (2011) call this “useful research”, creating insights for both, scholars and practitioners. Möslin (2005) refers to co-production of management knowledge between “applied researchers” and practitioners.

The first form of engaged scholarship “basic science with stakeholder advice” (top left in Figure 5) is close to traditional social science, with the addition that researchers give advice and feedback in the research process. The empirical work of this thesis is conducted in line with this approach. It considers the mutual influence of the researcher and the subject of interest; however the researchers keep an outside view and stay out of organisational processes.

The interviews and case studies in Part IV and V are conducted in an active style, in relatively open conversations supported by interview-guidelines, as proposed by King (2012). This interview style can allow for interchange between the involved parties (King, 2012) and may include thought-provoking impulses on both sides¹⁶.

The in-depth case study in Part VII (the analysis of mutual integration of internal stakeholder in a co-creation workshop) has a stronger action research character and includes conscious counselling and “joint forces” between researcher and the researched organisation. Still, even here, the data collection with interview guidelines and meeting protocols remains outside the organization. Accordingly, even this study is characterised as “informed basic research” in van de Vens’ (2007) framework (this equates with “basic research with stakeholder advice” in box 1 on the top left of Figure 5).

¹⁶ According to King (2012), this is a characteristic of interviews in constructivist qualitative research, per se. He outlines that an inter-personal relationship process is part of the research process since “the interviewee is seen as a ‘participant’ in the research, actively shaping the course of the interview rather than passively responding to the interviewer’s pre-set questions” (King, 2012, p. 11).



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