

Reflections on combining methods. A 10-minute provocation

Jordi Molas Gallart

Paris, STI Indicators Conference, 6-8 September



INGENIO [CSIC-UPV] Ciudad
Politécnica de la
Innovación | Edif 8E 4º |
Camino de Vera s/n |
46022 Valencia

tel +34 963 877 048
fax +34 963 877 991



A provocation?

“I cannot the point of all this combining methods stuff? Where is the problem? We have always combined methods. For instance, we do macro quantitative analysis to understand general trends and we explain how these come about in specific contexts with qualitative analysis. What’s the issue with this?”

Anonymous (paraphrased)

- Where is the problem?

In evaluation practice

- What is the problem?

Although combining techniques makes analytical sense it rarely happens because:

Cost considerations

Different “epistemic communities” competing in a tight market

Different methods are associated with different evaluation functions

Quantitative with arms-length, summative evaluation for distributive or auditing purposes

Qualitative methods with formative evaluation from improvement purposes

And so...another “provocation”...

If different methods seem more appropriate for different evaluation purposes, wouldn't it be better to separate different evaluation purposes (and therefore keep quantitative and qualitative methods apart?)