Your Excellent Dissertation: Theory and Methodology

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Why Bother with THEORY?
\[ 1 + 2 + 3 + 4 + 5 + 6 + \ldots + \infty = -\frac{1}{12} \]
Mythology and Created Knowledge
What is a THEORY?

Theories as „shades“

Theories as „blinders“
What *really* is a THEORY?

- Self-contained machine
- Composed of smaller parts instrumentally placed
- Operates via power mechanism
- Needs the right „currency“ (data) to work and give results
- Gives only certain kinds of results
THEORY is a TOOL!

Learning theories = toolkit-building
„Just a THEORY“

• As in „Evolution is just a theory“ (…therefore we don’t know what the truth really is)

• Fact < Law < Scientific Theory
GOAL

To convince the reader of the *plausibility* and *soundness* of your results and conclusions

=> Use the right tools for the right job
Decisions

• Start with research question?
  – Formulate research question first and *then* seek the proper tools for the job

• Start with theory?
  – Select a theory first and *then* formulate the question
  – Consider the themes and topics the theory tackles the best and that play to its strengths
Your RESEARCH is a reflection of YOU!
Natural Science Vs. Social Science
Levels of Analysis

International system
  ↑
Nation state
  ↑
Bureaucracy
  ↑
Individual
Agency Vs. Structure

Where does social reality come from?

• Behaviour of individuals?
• Structural determinism?
• Both? (co-determinism)
False Causes

Correlation ≠ Causation !