

# **Knowledge production through cooperation: empirical grounds for a conceptual debate**

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**Background and purpose:** This contribution is based on a research project funded by the Swiss National Science Foundation. The leading research question of this still ongoing project is: What forms of cooperation between science and practice can be described in the area of social work and do these forms prove to be productive in terms of knowledge production and knowledge transfer?

**Methods:**

The sample of the study was built on the basis of a search in different research data-bases. A total of 89 projects that had been labeled as cooperative by the researchers were included. The aim is to build a Grounded Theory of cooperative knowledge production. Therefore the methodology of Grounded Theory is the main reference for the study design and the methods for data-gathering and analysis. An analysis of documents served as basis for a first process of purposeful sampling following the strategy of maximizing contrasts. 8 projects were selected and studied in depth, using problem-centered interviews with researchers and their respective partners in professional practice, complemented by an analysis of documents produced in these projects reflecting the process of co-operation as well as describing the outcome of the project. The results of this first round served for a second sampling. Another 9 projects were selected. The main criterion was intensive cooperation.

**Results:**

The outline of the grounded theory to be developed will be presented, including a typology of different forms of cooperation with different grades of intensity, different outcomes and different forms of knowledge use. This typology includes a deep understanding of the underlying factors and mechanisms that foster productive and in this sense successful cooperation and those who hinder these developments.

**Conclusions and implications:**

The conclusions, still to be worked out, will aim on the discussion of conceptual frameworks. The implications will raise questions concerning first the conditions of successful cooperation and second the support of cooperative research and development by (research) funding organizations.