



Making infrastructure work: qualitative data archiving and the case of Switzerland

Brian Kleiner and Sybil Krügel

FORS, Centre of Expertise in the
Social Sciences

Lausanne

Building an infrastructure for qualitative data

- Integration
- Policy
- Workflow
- Technical

Infrastructure as first step (only)

- We invited over 8'000 researchers to deposit their qualitative data
- The unexpected experience at FORS – eerie silence
- What went wrong?

DARIS survey of qualitative data producers and users, 2012

- Online survey
- Population of 8'300
- Completed: 1'416
- Questions on practices, methods, data sharing, obstacles, and characteristics

Research culture and current practice

- Little reflection on and experience in data sharing and re-use
- Lack of encouragement from others
- Collection practices not consistent with sharing

Obstacles to sharing and re-use

- Methodological-epistemological
- Ethical
- Control over data
- Data quality
- Resources
- Legal issues

➔ Informed consent = major obstacle

Informed consent

Threefold problem:

- 1) No consent or just “tacit consent” (11%)
- 2) Non-recorded verbal consent (38%)
- 3) Archive-adverse conditions:
 - primary researcher access only (22%)
 - destruction of data (6%)

Only 5% allow for archiving and disseminating

Survey: Positive signs

- Little fundamental opposition
- Uncertainty, yet engagement
- Encouragement works!
- Culture of informal sharing

Overcoming obstacles: plans at FORS

- Guidelines and templates
- Adapt deposit and access platform to needs and concerns of researchers
- Demonstration, persuasion, and promotion
...in education, publications, and communications

General lessons

- Infrastructures are embedded in research cultures
- Infrastructures must be flexible and responsive, but must lead as well