On multiplying methods in the field of research evaluation

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ABSTRACT
This special session forms part of a larger program aimed at the multiplication and integration of methodological approaches in the research evaluation and innovation policy field. The session builds on previous initiatives by Gemma Derrick and colleagues at CWTS, INGENIO, the Rathenau Instituut and SPRU, exploring the advantages of qualitative methodological tools at the STI/ENID conference in Lugano, and an international workshop in London in October 2015. The program is highly topical: the research evaluation field is currently reconsidering its methodological foundations in light of new research questions arising from policy initiatives regarding a) the move toward open science; b) a reconceptualization of research excellence to include societal relevance; c) diversification of academic careers, and d) the search for indicators showcasing responsible research behavior and innovation. This new special session at STI2016 will advance and broaden the scope of previous initiatives by building bridges between cutting edge research involving quantitative, qualitative, and mixed methodological research designs. Bringing together leading experts and promising researchers with distinctive methodological skill-sets, the session will demonstrate the advantages of cross-fertilization between ‘core’ and ‘peripheral’ methodological approaches for the research evaluation and science indicators field.

PROGRAM FOR THE SESSION
1. Introduction (10 min):
The session starts with a brief introduction by Gemma Derrick (Lancaster University) to recap the major highlights of the special session on Qualitative and Mixed Methods (QMM) at the STI/ENID conference in Lugano (2015) and the QMM workshop at Brunel, funded by the British Academy Rising Star Engagement Award program. The 2015 session and workshop centred on discussing the value of qualitative research methods, and on showcasing current research involving qualitative or mixed methodological research designs in the field of research evaluation.

2. Provocation (10 min):
In this second part of the special session, Paul Wouters (CWTS, Leiden University) will discuss the rise of mixed methods research, and ask what it actually means to mix methods in measuring research quality. His contribution ends with a provocation to think ‘Beyond mixed method’.

3. Presentations/’Demonstrations’ (60 min; 20 min for each pair):

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The third part of the session is organised around ‘think pairs’, linking three presenters to three respondents. The presenters will be asked to prepare a contribution that showcases their methodological approach and base their presentation on on-going or recently completed work. There will be one presentation centred on a mainly quantitative approach, one presentation based on mixed-methods approaches, and one presentation that primarily utilises qualitative methods. Each presentation will be juxtaposed by a dedicated response from scholars with complementary methodological expertise. Respondents are asked to ‘think with’ the presenter about the role of the methods in the projects, in relation to the research questions, empirical material/data, and results. The composition of the think pairs will be decided closer to the date of the conference.

The primary purpose of the session is to encourage methodological cross-fertilization and develop ideas for future research. A further aim is that, through presentations and related discussion, participants will work together to experience the mutual benefits of mixed methodological studies in the field.

4. Next steps (10 min)
The session will end with a brief update on the institutional embedding and future activities for the international QMM network in STI by Gemma Derrick, Jordi Molas-Gallart (Ingenio) and Sarah de Rijcke (CWTS). The main objectives of the QMM network are to promote the multiplication of methodological approaches in the research evaluation field; encourage standards of excellence and good practice for mixed methods for evaluation research; engage a dialogue that contributes to a method-led reflection of the evaluation field; provide opportunities for the open discussion and development of the above goals through researcher and practitioner interaction. The network currently receives support from the British Academy. We are currently putting together a special issue for Research Evaluation on the topic, and the session will be used as a platform to encourage submissions to further the network and the broader initiative.

The session will be chaired by Inge van der Weijden (CWTS).

Intended audience
Researchers within the field of research evaluation who have mainly used either quantitative or qualitative approaches in their current research, and those who are interested in adopting new approaches in their future research; current and future members of the QMM network.

Length
90 minutes

Preferred number of participants
30-40

Special requests/equipment needs
Beamer/laptop
Flip-over