On 'Being Helpful to the Debate'

Design Dimensions of OECD Economic Surveys.

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Publication date:
2014

Document version
Peer reviewed version

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– Design Dimensions of OECD Economic Surveys

PHD THESIS 2014 · MARIA DUCLOS LINDSTRØM

O.C.D.E.

PhD thesis

Maria Duclos Lindstrøm

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- Design Dimensions of OECD Economic Surveys

TAK

Only now do I realize how true it is, when PhD candidates at this place acknowledge the importance of direct help, ongoing inspiration and significant encounters during their research and writing. This dissertation, its data, arguments, the texts and theories used, and the discussions, which the dissertation engages with, would have been different and the result far weaker had I not had the privilege of learning from you.

First I wish to profoundly thank the OECD and Economics Department for welcoming my stay and follow-up visits. Thank you very much to each individual who has taken the time to answer my questions and explain to me your work. To keep anonymity, I will not name individuals at this point, but thank you for your time. However, I do want to give a particular warm thanks to Jørgen Elmeskov for facilitating access, and to Jens Høj for taking time to discuss my project at length.

Special thanks also to my supervisor Margareta Bertilsson, whose brilliance has hopefully helped me grow, whose dedicated supervision has been extremely supportive and who for me really represents the best of intellectual life.

I also wish to give a profound thank you to two people who have both offered their help to raise the quality of the project in its final stage. Besides always taking good care of me, Poul Bitsch Olsen has also helped me to define what the project – and research – is really about. Hans Henrik Bruun has corrected my English and improved the written draft immensely. All readers of the dissertation should think kindly of him.

CEVES – the Centre for the Sociological Study of Science, Expertise and Society – has become a place for collegiality, co-operation, inspiration and shared research interests, and I wish to thank all members, and in particular Anders and Kristoffer, for their ongoing interest in my project (as well as my general sociological education). Thank you Heine Andersen, Anders Blok, Kristoffer Kropp, Inge Kryger Pedersen, Charlotte Baarts and Margareta Bertilsson.

The following have read and commented on dissertation chapters, or parts of these: Kristoffer Kropp, Inge Kryger Pedersen, Anders Blok, Heine Andersen, Morten Frederiksen, Lasse Liebst, Brit Ross Winthereik, Nana Wesley

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Chapter 1. Introduction

Sometimes you need to convince the governments. At other times convincing the government is not enough. It's really the people you need to convince (Interview, Desk writer, OECD)

'Productivity declines in Denmark'. 'Denmark is falling behind leading OECD-countries'; 'Advanced economies growing again'. 'OECD recommends shifting from taxes on labour to taxes on housing'. It is mainly through messages like these that we in our everyday life meet the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD), unless we happen to work in government, in the media, or in any of the private and public economic institutions which engage in debates about economic issues in Denmark or internationally. OECD Economic Surveys, policy recommendations, rankings and cross-country benchmarks receive coverage in national media upon their publication, and are discussed, analyzed and contrasted with statements by governments, opposition spokespersons, university economists, economic commentators, and economic institutions. Such benchmarks, rankings and evidence-based policy recommendations are an important part of the "epistemic infrastructure" (Bueger 2014) – not least in the current context of the deep redesigns of the western welfare states which Ove Kaj Pedersen - among others - has identified as "the Competition State" (Pedersen 2013: 281f).

This dissertation seeks to look behind the economic messages from the OECD, and to tell the story of how OECD surveys are produced and what they are designed to accomplish. We shall see that OECD surveys are not merely designed to tell governments what they should do today, but that they are also actively paving the way for future reforms by inserting policy issues into national policy debates, and by sustaining the attention given to policy ideas already proposed by the OECD. This proactive work of trying to move member states towards desired policy outcomes is central when we wish to understand how the OECD engages with economic debates in the member countries - both instrumentally, in terms of impact, but also in terms of the classical sociological topic of relations between economy and society (Weber 1978). Indeed, my informants themselves expressed the opinion that this question of the proactive role of the organization is "a deep philosophical question" (interview), emphasizing that the impact of the OECD goes beyond "hard causality" (interview). It is this proactive, interventionist dimension of OECD involvement with na-

tional policy debates and national policy making which I hope to capture by focusing the research on understanding what I in the dissertation call the design dimensions of OECD Economic Surveys.

The purpose of the dissertation is to demonstrate in ethnographic detail how the economic work of the OECD and its Economics Department is linked to action in the sense that work at the OECD is crafted from the intention of "Being Helpful to the Debate" towards the objective of promoting what the organization calls "Better Policies for Better Lives". By inquiring into the institutional links between the concrete knowledge practices at the OECD and the objectives of the organization (and to a much lesser degree its member governments), the dissertation embarks from a pragmatic view of knowledge and inquiry as inextricably linked and directed towards particular desired outcomes (see e.g. Peirce 1878; Khalil et. al. 2004; Bernstein 2010).

The analytical strategy is to focus on the drafting of one particular OECD-publication: The OECD Economic Surveys. Economic Surveys form part of the OECD peer review system, which on a regular basis reviews the economies of OECD-member countries and points to policy areas which, in the view of the organization, could be improved. The dissertation sets out to demonstrate the empirical connections between the institutional objectives of the OECD as an important transnational knowledge actor, and the knowledge organizing practices in connection with the elaboration of the Economic Surveys. By "knowledge organizing" I refer to the symbolic interactionist notion of a goal-oriented coordination of various human, technical and organizational elements in the drafting process (Smith 2005; Olsen & Heaton 2010: 81-85). In this case, what is coordinated are elements in the drafting process such as: the methodology of the organization; the style and format of the surveys; the organization of work at the Economics Department; the intergovernmental peer review system, etc.

To demonstrate this empirically, the dissertation draws on documents, interviews and ethnographic observations from the Economics Department of the OECD. Most of the material for the dissertation was collected during a three week stay at the Economics Department in April/May 2010, supplemented by interviews from an earlier visit, as well as follow-up interviews and written correspondence. Interview and observational data will be combined with documents (draft surveys) at different stages of completion.

This introduction will first discuss the potential of focusing on economic messages as an entry point to understanding what I have above called the design dimensions of the Economic Surveys. I shall then give some brief background information about the OECD. After this, I shall discuss how the dissertation relates to relevant sociological debates. Finally, there will be a presentation of the research design, research questions and theoretical framework, as well as an overview of the different chapters of the dissertation.

1.1. Economic messages

We do not seek partiality for its own sake, but for the sake of the connections and unexpected openings, situated knowledges make possible. The only way to find a larger vision is to be somewhere in particular.
(Donna Haraway 1991: 196)

The title of the dissertation is "On 'Being Helpful to the Debate': Design Dimensions of OECD Economic Surveys". This title makes explicit that this account does not try to be the final and most conclusive story of the OECD, but instead focuses on the pragmatic, action-oriented nature of the knowledge production of the OECD, which is captured in the ethnographic term "being helpful to the debate". This phrase caught my attention in the fieldwork as an apparently fully integrated part of the institutional discourse of the OECD – being used freely by both Desks, Directors and National Representatives, who apparently all agreed that "Being Helpful to the Debate" was something the OECD should be. In the dissertation, I use this piece of significant institutional discourse as an entry point to connect the concrete knowledge practices in the drafting of Economic Surveys to the institutional role of the OECD in engaging with policy debates in the member countries; I seek to develop this active, forward-looking dimension of OECD work theoretically as the design dimension of the OECD.

Methodologically, I proceed by taking *economic messages* from the OECD as the object of analysis. I was directed towards inquiring more into the instrumental role and epistemological status of economic messages in my early e-mail-correspondence with economists at the Economics Department of the OECD. When I asked them if they would allow me to study the communication of economic expert knowledge, they would reply that they were happy to discuss their economic messages.

At this point, I had already developed an interest in the OECD. My Master's thesis investigated the Danish Welfare Commission, with a particular fo-

cus on how one of the purposes of this Commission was to "prepare the grounds for a thorough public debate about future welfare reforms" (Lindstrøm 2010:109-22). Here, I was struck by the clarity and directness with which the objectives of the Commission's work were stated, and I became fascinated with the knowledge problem of how knowledge claims engage with, prepare and hence co-produce their audiences[1]. My Master's thesis looked primarily at long-term projections, but it left me with a growing interest in the impact of comparative arguments used as interventions in national policy debates. Consequently, when my informants pointed my attention towards the term 'economic message', I recognized the analytical potential of defining these messages as the object of inquiry. I shall give three analytical reasons:

First, and most importantly for my research interests, this approach gives an opportunity to direct the research into international organizations towards sociological debates about relations between science, expertise and the public. Since most people encounter and know of economic institutions like the OECD only through their messages, such messages seem to be a good starting point for an inquiry into the way in which the OECD relates to national policy debates. The sociologist Dorothy Smith has developed a theory of the social based on the insight that we all, as individuals, stand in textual relations to scientific and political/authoritative knowledge claims (Smith 2005: 13-18). In her work to develop an institutional ethnography, she began by asking why it was "that the social sciences wanted to explain people's behaviour (to whom?) rather than, say, to explain the behaviour of the economy; or the society; or the political process to people particularly as these enter into, organize and disorganize people's lives"? (Smith 1999: 32) The present attempt to understand, exemplify and elucidate how OECD messages are shaped to become relevant to national debates, is profoundly inspired by Smith's approach to demonstrating institutional orders by making visible the social organizing of knowledge and the coordinating role of active texts like, in this case, economic messages from the OECD. It seeks to explain where the OECD messages which are part of ongoing debates about the economy come from, and in particular what institutional work these messages are designed to do.

A second reason for studying the shaping of economic messages is that an emphasis on the shaping of economic messages is one way to study the OECD

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[1] For the co-production idiom, see Sheila Jasanoff (2004): Chapter 2 entitled "Ordering knowledge, ordering society".

not as a federal monolith writing only for governments, but as a multi-dimensional international organization. Marcussen (2002, 2004) opened up this approach ten years ago by pointing to the way in which the OECD plays, and over time has played, not one but multiple roles in what he called the "idea game"; and recent work by Marcussen & Trondal (2011) and Marcussen, Trondal et. al. (2010) argues for the need to approach international organizations as *compound organizations* defined as "compound systems of public administration that blend departmental, epistemic and supra-national decision-making dynamics" (Trondal et. al. 2011:3). Nevertheless, much of the literature on the OECD still tends to either place focus within the borders of the Organization, or to work from a governance focus on relations between the OECD and the policy making of national governments (notably Armingeon et. al. 2004). Here, questions concerning the communication of messages and relations to the public are still treated as, at best, secondary issues. The argument of this dissertation, which seeks to make the OECD a topic of broader sociological interest, will be that, in order to capture the institutional dynamics of the OECD, we should not just approach the federal dimensions of the OECD (what I during my research heard described as "writing for governments"). We must pay equal attention to the important dimension of international economic expertise - which I in this dissertation call the design dimension of the OECD, and which my informants call "being helpful to the debate". Below, I shall discuss how the focus on economic messages – as concrete forms of institutional knowledge – leads to a somewhat different approach from that taken by the neo-institutional literature for the purpose of emphasizing the OECD as a knowledge institution (for the rhetorics of economics, see McCloskey 1994; Holmes 2014; Lépinay 2011; also Porter 1996).

Thirdly, the analytical concept of economic messages as institutional forms of knowledge emphasizes the interactions between the epistemic/cognitive and the institutional dimensions of international organizations – a classical theme in sociology of science (e.g. Desrosières 1998; Fourcade 2009; for an introduction to the sociology of the social sciences, see Wagner 2001). Another way of talking about the connections between the epistemic and the institutional dimensions is to say that the focus on economic messages makes us analytically sensitive to the work that OECD analysts are actually doing - the comparative work of the 'international experts': the benchmarks, the best practices, the Economic Surveys, the development of methods, databases and indicators. I argue that this is relevant for describing the role of the OECD,

since the public response to the OECD is not merely a response to the OECD as an institution, but in important respects also a response to the knowledge claims of the OECD (the intervention made by the cross-country comparisons, the peer reviews and the evidence-based policy recommendations). This argument follows the symbolic interactionist tradition going back to George Herbert Mead, and continued in Dorothy Smith's approach to institutional ethnography (for an overview of this approach, see Chapter 2). As a part of the broader "practice turn" in contemporary sociology, institutional ethnography focuses concretely on the actual work of the organization. Hence, a focus on economic messages defined as a distinct institutional form of knowledge provides a very important opportunity for   linking the account of the methodological and organizational practices of OECD knowledge production to the institutional objectives of the OECD. But before I move on to discuss this at more length, some background material concerning the OECD may be useful.

1.2. OECD: Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development

Better policies for better lives – OECD motto

The mission of the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) is to promote policies that will improve the economic and social well-being of people around the world". (OECD mission statement).

In 2011, the OECD celebrated its 50th Anniversary. For half a century, the Organization has been active as an international economic organization, and many of its central features – including the peer review and the Economic Surveys - date back to its very beginning. The OECD has been a central actor in the post-war rebuilding of Europe. Its forerunner – the OEEC (Organisation for European Economic Cooperation) – was operationally responsible for administering the European recovery Program (Marshall aid), and the provision of Marshall aid was coupled with the requirement that the recipient countries would develop their fundamental economic institutions and put into place procedures for a modern professional economic governance. One example of this are the national budgets (Sullivan 1997). On December 14th 1960, the Heads of State or Government of the original OEEC member countries signed the convention establishing the OECD at a ceremony at the Château de la Muette in Paris, where the secretariat still resides today. The new, expanded organization became operational by September 1961, and the Danish economist Thorkil

Kristensen and former Minister of Finance was appointed its first Secretary General. Today, 50 years later, the OECD counts 34 member countries from most continents, and is still expanding (see display 1 below)

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The first OECD-countries (1960/61):

Austria, Belgium, Canada, Denmark, France, Germany, Greece, Iceland, Ireland, Luxembourg, Netherlands, Norway, Portugal, Spain, Sweden, Switzerland, Turkey, United Kingdom, United States

Followed by:

Italy (1962), Japan (1964), Finland (1969), Australia (1971), New Zealand (1973), Mexico (1994) Czech Republic (1995), Hungary (1996), Korea (1996), Poland (1996), Slovak Republic (2000), Slovenia (2000), Chile (2010), Estonia (2010), Israel (2010)

In total 34 countries (2014)

Currently on roadmaps for accession: Russian Federation, Columbia and Latvia

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Display 1.1: OECD-members 1963-2014

1.2.1. OECD: "A many-headed monster"

We can begin these brief entry notes[2] of the OECD with some ethnographic remarks. Today, the OECD headquarters at the Rue André Pascal in Paris is the busy site for the OECD's wide range of activities. The OECD produces and facilitates work on a large number of topics from innovation to education; from science and technology to development, trade, agriculture, fisheries and statistics, and many others. A 15-minute shuttlebusride away from the Headquarters

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[2]This dissertation cannot pretend to comprehensively cover the literature on the OECD. However, as good starting points and general introductions to the OECD, the following can be recommended: Marcussen, Trondal et. Al. 2011, Carroll & Kellow 2011, Marcussen 2002 (in Danish), Woodward 2009. For more history of OECD: Sullivan 1997, as well as the classical Coats 1986, 1993. For the peer review system Guilmette 2007; also Martins and Jakobi 2010. A highly pressing question discussed in the literature is that of the enlargement of OECD. For this see Woodward 2009 and Carroll & Kellow 2011, but also Ougaard 2011. Of special relevance for this thesis is Gayon 2009, who has written a historical analysis of the drafting of the OECD cross-departmental Jobs Study plan (OECD unemployment policies).

and Conference center we find another large OECD building hosting work on e.g. taxation, innovation and public governance. When the visitors pass through security to enter the spacious and bright corridor – the size of a railway-station – one notices not only large bright posters calling attention to the OECD's work on this wide panoply of topics, as well as "OECD-blue" mottos like "Better Policies, Better Lives", but also screens announcing the many meetings, seminars and conferences which every day bring experts, government officials and national delegates to the OECD to meet, discuss policies, and decide on standards.

Indeed, the OECD is, as I was told on my first visit, "a many-headed monster" (from field notes)*; and just as the OECD underground conference center with its flexible walls can adjust to the meetings of the day, there seems to be multiple entry points to the OECD, depending on our point of view: the inter-governmental meetings with the Council at the Chateau; the large meeting spaces of the conference halls; the website; or the offices of the Secretariat, which actually facilitates the meetings and produces the drafts, databases, publications, and policy briefs. One aspect worth noticing, I was told, is the contrast between 'writing for governments' and 'writing for publics'. Much of the work of the OECD never reaches the headlines in the member states – and indeed is not intended to, since it serves more strictly administrative purposes: Producing standardizations, indicating best practices, improving statistics, developing performance indicators, etc. Here, the OECD is exclusively writing for governments – or with governments, we should say, since much of this work is done in specialized working programs and committees (see e.g. Boll 2010:175-200 for an ethnography covering Danish participation on a committee on tax compliance). What is probably best known to the general public is the cross-country benchmarks, country reviews and policy recommendations of the publication Going for Growth and the Economic Surveys, as well as the biannual forecasts and analyses in the Economic Outlook. Most OECD messages reported in, say, Danish media would be generated by these publications (at least if we leave out the work comparing student performance across countries (PISA - Program in International Student Assessment). Since this dissertation has its main focus on the Economic Surveys (Economic Surveys), the study will at this point abandon the many different activities of the OECD, and focus on one particular department – the Economics Department (ECO).

1.2.2. Economics Department, Country Desks and Economic Surveys

The work of the Economics Department relates to issues of both a macroeconomic and a structural character, and in particular on the interaction between structural and macroeconomic policies and developments. It takes account of macroeconomic and structural policies over the medium and long term and progress in moving towards long-term objectives. International interactions between individual countries' policies and developments are of particular concern. Most of the Department's work is eventually published but its first, and primary, destination is the Member governments as represented in a range of committees and working parties. Here the Department's analysis forms the basis for a process of multilateral surveillance (from the ECO webpage at www.oecd.org[3]).

The OECD Economics Department (ECO) is the central site for macroeconomic forecasting (e.g. growth projections), for cross-country benchmarking, for country surveillance (which on a regular basis monitors the member's economies, addresses key challenges in the economies and provides policy recommendations), and for comparative policy analysis identifying evidence-based best practices. ECO also functions as the secretariat for the Economic and Development Review Committee (EDRC),[4] which is at the very core of the OECD's Peer Review process (see below)

The Economics Department is structurally divided into two branches: The Country Studies Branch (ECO/CS) and the Policy Studies Branch (ECO/PSB) (see chapter 4 for a further analysis of this aspect of the knowledge organizing). An economist employed in the Country Studies Branch will work at a so-called *country desk* (e.g. the Denmark/Sweden desk, the US/Iceland desk, the Canada/New Zealand desk). These desks produce Economic Surveys of each member state with a frequency of no more than two years. Economic Surveys are economic reports which assess the economy in the given member country and give policy recommendations for initiatives that may improve economic performance. They are produced by the secretariat of the OECD, but are issued under the responsibility and peer review of a committee of country representatives of all OECD member states (the EDRC – Economic and Development Review Committee). The Country Desks also provide macroeconomic forecasts for "their" member states to be included in the publication "Economic

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[3] http://www.oecd.org/eco/surveys/economicassessments.htm - last access 22.02.14
[4] ECO is also the secretariat of a second important Committee – the Economic Policy Committee (EPC). The coordination between the Policy Studies Branch and the Country Studies Branch will be analyzed in Chapter 4.

Outlook". Each Desk is equipped with two economists and works under the supervision of a head of section. In this way, the Country Studies Branch divides the work of monitoring the 34 member countries as well as possible future OECD-member economies into 6 sections which all refer to the Directorate of Country Studies Branch – Director and Deputy Director.

The Policy Studies Branch is organized somewhat differently: Whereas the Country Studies Branch is organized by country desks – each responsible for producing Economic Surveys and Outlook data for 'their' country, the Policy Studies Branch is divided into various thematically specialized offices: The Structural Policy Analysis Division; the Structural Surveillance Division; the Macroeconomic Analysis Division; the Macroeconomic Policy Division and the Public Economics Division – with further degrees of specialization into structural topics like for instance the housing market or fiscal consolidation. As will be discussed at more length throughout the dissertation, there is a differentiation and coordination of labour within the ECO in the sense that the Policy Studies Branch has primary responsibility for the so-called horizontal dimensions - cross-country comparisons and policy recommendations based on such horizontal comparisons - whereas the Country Studies Branch represents the vertical (single country) dimension, providing in-depth studies of the member states' economies.

1.2.3. "Look at what other countries have done"

> *It is my impression that maybe it's not very clear to people what the OECD is all about. Well, it is peer reviews that are the essence of the OECD. We try to identify best practices. We try to find out how to evaluate each other* (interview).

> *The purpose of the OECD is to work towards better performance in the member countries: and performance can here be higher GNP growth or higher productivity or a better educational sector, or whatever! And then within this framework, we analyze these individual policies to see if there is something to learn* (interview).

I would venture to say that one of the less widely known facts about the OECD is that the Economic Surveys are published as part of an ongoing intergovernmental peer-review process which goes back to the origins of the organization. The aim of the intergovernmental peer-review system – "A tool for cooperation and change" (OECD 2003) is to constitute a continuous policy learn-

ing process between member states.[5] In this regard, the role of the secretariat is to facilitate this identification and dissemination of best practices: the inspiration, motivation and even peer pressure to make member states move towards what we will hear described as the "international consensus" about best policy practices. One challenge for the OECD, I was told, is to get the message across that the highest goal of the country reviews is not ranking for the sake of ranking, or comparison for the sake of comparison, but the identification of "policies which can be improved".

When viewed from the standpoint of how OECD messages enter into public debates, one aspect of the OECD, which I consider to be of ethnographic importance, is the clash between the internal logic of the drafting of surveys based on intergovernmental and collaborative work practices, and the external expectations expressed in popular "scientist" metaphors of economic surveillance as a view purely from the outside and independent from government "influence" - as "a grade book".[6] What I found when I began my research was, in reality, quite the opposite from such norms of detachment. In fact, one informant defined the concept of a political vacuum as "a room where no-one listens to what we have to say" (interview). This is not the ideal of the OECD, and one contribution of this dissertation will be to make explicit how OECD messages do not emerge from such a vacuum, but instead come out of knowledge processes which continuously balance the validity claims of, on the one hand relevance to the member countries and, on the other hand, the purpose of pushing forward the debate. This balancing is one of the dynamics which I seek to capture in describing the design dimensions of Economic Surveys.[7]

As such, this dissertation is a pragmatist account of the OECD. I argue that a shift to a pragmatist philosophy of knowledge which emphasizes "*inquiry as action*" (Khalil 2004:2), and asks questions of *how* inquiry is action in

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[5] The peer-review model as an "open method of coordination" has since been taken up by other international organizations in somewhat different versions. For a discussion of this, see, e.g., Thygesen in OECD 2008; Hodson and Maher 2001).

[6] See Jasanoff (2005: chapter 10) for a discussion of the concept of such expectations, conceptualized as "civic epistemologies" – public norms of relations between science and policy. Perhaps one could here talk about clashes between federal epistemologies and civic epistemologies?

[7] For closely related discussions of relevance as validity criteria, see also, e.g., Nowotny et. al. 2001 for a distinction between "mode 1 knowledge" and "mode 2 knowledge", and Jasanoff 1994, for a distinction between "research science" and "regulatory science".

the case of the OECD, is a good starting point for understanding the work that the Surveys are intended to do, and how OECD knowledge practices are designed to work towards the OECD's mission of promoting "Better Policies for Better Lives". Such a shift, from a rationalistic epistemology to pragmatism for the purpose of understanding contemporary economic methodology, is also supported by Wade Hands who writes:

> *I will argue that while pragmatism was relatively ill-suited for the self-defined tasks of mid-twentieth century economic methodology, those tasks have substantially broadened during the last few decades, and the changes that have taken place allow for pragmatic ideas to play a more important role in contemporary methodological debates than in the debates of a previous generation.* (Hands in Khalil et. al. 2004: 255).

Of course, Wade Hands does not discuss the OECD specifically, and "economic methodology" is an extremely broad term. Nevertheless, it is indeed the case with the OECD that the Economic Surveys, and the topics covered, have "substantially broadened", as Wade Hands puts it. We saw this in the brief description of ECO activities, taken from the OECD homepage, which was quoted at the opening of the previous paragraph. There has been an evolution from the early Surveys, which focused on macroeconomic issues, to an increasing focus on what is called structural policy issues (education, housing, innovation, productivity, labour market, health, etc.). In this passage, we also read how work at the Economics Department has a particular focus on the links between structural reform "and progress in moving towards long-term objectives" (from the OECD webpage, cited above). It is also the case, as we saw documented in the research of Marcussen and Trondal (above), that the OECD has moved institutionally from the days where Thorkil Kristensen identified the organization with the ideal of the think tank, until today, where the organization (in response to the interests of member countries) is increasingly concerned not merely with "'where to go' but also about 'how to get there'" (OECD 2010: 3). In this situation, a turn to pragmatism may indeed be a relevant framework to capture the active coordination between knowledge practices (methodological and organizational) and the institutional objectives of the OECD.

1.2.4. The role of the OECD

As already indicated, the question of the role of the OECD is an ongoing one, and has gained renewed actuality by the recent 50th anniversary of the OECD (see, e.g., Woodward 2009; Clifton and Diaz-Fuentes 2011). The question is

often framed by juxtaposing the OECD with other – larger – international organizations like the IMF, the World Bank, or the EU – which, in contrast to the OECD, can enforce their views either by legally binding agreements (EU), or through preconditions for loans or economic support (IMF, the World Bank). In this transnational game of showing the biggest muscles, OECD might not impress at first sight with its methods of policy coordination through peer reviews, peer pressure, policy learning and the ongoing work of creating agreement on government practices at the committee level of bureaucrats (e.g. Martins & Jakobi 2010).

Coming from science studies, and emphasizing the relation between economic knowledge and broader society, this dissertation is not first and foremost concerned with formal institutional frameworks, and governance networks in themselves. Instead, it shifts the attention to the concrete, material, mundane practices of OECD staff members writing the Surveys and preparing the peer-review examinations - the everyday practices of knowledge design and broader organizing which, in the words of Dorothy E. Smith, *actualize* institutional relations (Smith 2005). To further clarify the perspective, horizon and knowledge interest of this study, I shall therefore give an account of the line of sociological research to which the dissertation is particularly related, as well as some closely related discussions.

1.3. Reference literature and related discussions

Before the specific theoretical and methodological concerns of the dissertation are addressed in more detail, this section should serve to introduce the reader to some of the related literature and to the most obvious sources of inspiration within STS (Science and Technology Studies), and within the broader "practice turn" in sociology of scientific and (economic) expert knowledge. I shall also position the study in the context of related discussions within the field of International Organizations Studies (IO). I shall argue that the dissertation's main contribution to these literatures – beyond to my knowledge being the first institutional ethnography to focus exclusively on the OECD Secretariat/Economics Department[8] – is the particular focus on inquiring into *the design dimensions* of OECD messages by bringing together three different approaches to the institutional ethnography: Dorothy E. Smith, Annelise Riles and Helen Verran.

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[8] As mentioned, Vincent Gayon (2009) has also studied the drafting of OECD-reports. His study is based on archival studies from 1970's-2000 combined with interviews with a range of central actors covering this historical process.

1.3.1. Laboratory studies and institutional ethnographies

Most directly, the dissertation belongs to what has been called the "practice turn" in science and expertise studies: Ethnographic studies of the actual work done by scientists in the laboratories as well as in related knowledge ecologies of administration and expert advice (see, e.g., Savage 2013, Camic Gross & Lamont 2011, Schatzki et. al. 2006). In its early contexts of social constructivist science and technology studies, such ethnographic descriptions of "science in the making", and of the processes and practices by which observations were translated into validated scientific facts, were developed to replace normative or analytical definitions of what characterized science and expertise epistemologically and structurally. Iconic is here the study by Bruno Latour and Steve Woolgar 'Laboratory life: the construction of scientific facts' (1986; 1st. ed. 1979); followed by 'Science in Action' (1987). What is especially interesting in the present context is that Latour, too, in these natural science contexts emphasizes the role of *inscriptions* and inscription devices in scientific practice: "No matter the size, cost, length, and width of the instruments they [scientists MDL] build, the final end product of all these inscription devices is always a written trace that makes the perceptive judgment of the others simpler" (quoted from Latour 1983: 161). Inscriptions are defined as "all the types of transformations through which an entity becomes materialized into a sign, an archive, a document, a piece of paper, a trace" (Latour 1999: 306; also Latour 1983). It is these concrete, material inscriptions which connect the work of the laboratory with its exterior, and which - if they succeed in doing so– will extend the chains of validity and influence from the laboratory to real effects in the world outside. Quite obviously, the definition in this dissertation of an economic message as a knowledge claim inscribed into particular (potential) sequences of action is based on Latour's idea of the inscription.

Moving beyond mere descriptions of daily life in the laboratories and increasingly focusing on the active interactions of humans, technologies and the objects of research ("nature"), this practice turn developed into actor-network theory which has generated a detailed theoretical understanding of science as networks between humans and non-humans (technology, nature etc.) and of scientific reasoning as chains of translations (see, e.g., Latour 1999, Callon 1998; Blok & Jensen 2011). Other researchers have taken a more classical sociological approach, treating science as a social culture or an 'epistemic community' (Knorr-Cetina 1999), and have examined the social texture and organization of science in detail – hereby contributing to an increased appreciation of

both commonalities and diversity within, across and beyond the boundaries of scientific communities (see, e.g., Camic, Gross & Lamont 2011).

Within the last decade, there has been an increased interest in expanding the laboratory approach from 'science proper' to studying expertise in the contexts of expert bureaucracies and international organizations. Particularly relevant examples of such studies of international organizations are the following: Annelise Riles' study of the document drafting at a UN-convention (Riles 2001); Richard Harper's study of the International Monetary Foundation (Harper 1998); Lauren Eastwood (2011, 2006), also on the UN, and latest Vincent Gayon's previously mentioned study of the drafting of a OECD report on unemployment policies (Gayon 2009). One distinct feature of these institutional ethnographies is that texts and documents are emphasized as particularly important ethnographic objects enabling the researcher to enter into and make sense of complex institutional/organizational settings (see also Riles 2006). As briefly mentioned, this study identifies itself as belonging to this body of institutional ethnographies, but connects this tradition of the single-institution, so-called "inside-out"-ethnography (Riles 2000, 1988) with another very rich approach to institutional ethnography developed by sociologist Dorothy E. Smith, which emphasizes not the free-standing institution in itself, but rather trans-local, textually mediated institutional relations (Smith 2005). This project is indebted to these studies, as well as to other ones not mentioned above (Robert Evans' study of macroeconomic forecasting (1999); Bruno Latour's study of the French Conseil d'État (2010); also Martha Feldman 1989; Jensen & Winthereik 2013).

My own contribution to the field has primarily been to ask how a laboratory study or an institutional ethnography could look if it were to inquire in particular into the relations between economic expertise and the public debate. My proposition in this dissertation is to move the approach from a study of the construction of the scientific facts to a study of the shaping of economic messages. By this move, I also aim to take into account the criticism levelled at laboratory studies and actor-network theory for taking only the standpoint of the scientist, manager or winning perspective, hence excluding other important perspectives. My emphasis on demonstrating how OECD messages do not merely go out to peers and governments, but also enter into people's everyday lives is a response to this debate within science and technology studies (Star 1991). The decision to focus on the design dimension of OECD messages is largely a response to

this central concern. Rather than analyzing the relationship to the member publics in addition to showing how economists develop their recommendations, I challenge the conventional role of communication as something which comes after the fact (see, e.g., Dijck 2003 for a review of related critiques of the production/dissemination view of communication). By thus basing my research on an interest in textually mediated relations between the OECD, national publics and governments, I hope to have made some progress towards doing what Susan Leigh Star has called "using multiplicity as the point of departure for *all* analysis, instead of adding perspectives to an essentially monolithic model" (Star 1991: 34).

1.3.2. The performativity and pragmatism of economics and finance

A second sociological context for the present study is the performativity of economics-studies and, more broadly, social studies of finance (Callon 1998; MacKenzie, Muniesa and Siu 2007; MacKenzie 2009; MacKenzie 2009; Pinch & Swedberg 2008; also Muniesa 2014 (in press)). This is one particularly influential discussion within STS and economic sociology, which for the past decade has specialized in examining how mathematical models and economic theory play an active role in the shaping of society and its markets. In particular, the introduction of advanced algorithms in financial trading, and the consequent transformations of the financial markets and their way of operating, have been analyzed as an example of the central *performativity of economics-thesis* which states that economic theory, its algorithms and mathematical models relate to the markets "as an engine, not as a camera", in Donald MacKenzie's memorable formulation (MacKenzie 2006).

Although this institutional ethnography of course accepts the undeniable fact that professional economics today is a highly model-based computer science (see, e.g., Mirowski 2002), the present study does not go very far into technical detail about, for instance, the construction of international benchmarks or the application of growth regression analysis. The reason for this is partly defensive, partly substantive. It is defensive in the sense that it follows from my decision to focus the account of the knowledge production on the actual writing of economics, on textual knowledge design, and on the connections between methodology/knowledge design and the institutional purposes of the OECD. But the reason is also substantive, since the decision to use the design concept and not the performativity thesis to account for the role and impact of the OECD reflects a concern that the latter approach may be more appropriate to analyses of the high tech practices of the financial markets than to

the compound realities of economics as a policy science and the institutional realities of the OECD **(**see also Riles 2000; 2011a).

Recent research within social studies of finance and economics addresses a number of these concerns. Even among many of the very same researchers who developed the performativity approach, we can now identify a *"pragmatic turn"* – an approach which abandons a strongly material approach to the analysis of human-non human relations in favour of a broader emphasis on the role of practice in science and expertise – among which relations to technology, and economic theory and models, are but one element (see, e.g., Lépinay (2011) Muniesa (forthcoming); MacKenzie 2011a; 2011b; see also the broader historical-institutional work on the profession of economics, e.g., Fourcade 2009). The present dissertation is inspired by this pragmatic turn, which will be discussed at more length later.

1.3.3. Hybrid and compound organizations, regulatory science and science for policy

A third context for this study is the literature on international knowledge organizations as boundary organizations operating at the boundaries between science and politics (e.g., Miller 1991; Gieryn 1983.); or as parts of the regulatory sciences (Jasanoff 1994, 2005; Irwin et. al 1997). Clark Miller emphasizes the need to attend not merely to processes of decision-making, but also to processes of knowledge-making in international institutions (Miller 2007: 325), and points in particular to the need to understand how boundary organizations operate "in the more complex, contingent, and contested settings of global politics" (Miller 2001: 478), an aspect which he proposes to discuss in terms of hybrid management (ibid). Sheila Jasanoff talks of regulatory science (Jasanoff 1994) to describe the role of scientists and lawyers in policy advice and, more generally, the co-constitutive role of science and politics (Jasanoff 2005).

At a more philosophical level, Bruno Latour has in his highly influential book "We Have Never Been Modern" (1994) argued that the purifying processes of maintaining clear boundaries between science and politics, nature and culture, human and non-human occur simultaneously with ongoing processes of translation where the human and non-human, science and politics, texts and technologies are folded together in the practices of science, politics, innovation, etc. "Science is politics by other means"*,* Latour argues, but continues "means that are powerful only because they remain radically other" (1994: 111). Like much of the STS literature, this dissertation is also a "we have never

been modern"-story as it emphasises and accepts economics as a knowledge practice engaging actively with the processes of ordering the social; in the expressive words of one le Monde headline during my field stay, economics is "ni science dure, ni science pure" (field notes).

As mentioned, Marcussen, Trondal et. al. (2010) propose to approach international organizations as compound organizations defined as "compound systems of public administration that blend departmental, epistemic and supranational decision-making dynamics" (Trondal et. al. 2011:3), and point to the need for methodological innovation in the study of international organizations as IO studies now enter their third generation (ibid). Here, the contribution of the present study is to show how one way of re-contextualizing research into international knowledge institutions so that it becomes more sensitive to the interactions between the epistemic/cognitive and the institutional dimensions, is to focus more strongly on the kind of knowledge (expert knowledge, bureaucratic knowledge, economic knowledge) produced by international organizations– as this is done in the so-called *institutional ethnography,* which will be presented in more depth below.

1.3.4. The role of the OECD? The design answer

> *New ideas do not fly solely on their own wings; the scientist is a communicator as well as a discoverer – sometimes even a missionary* (Herbert Simon 1991: 63).

> *Economists persuade in words, in mathematics, and in logic. A study of their rhetoric is going to require a study of all their devices of persuasion* (Deirdre McCloskey 1994: 267)

As mentioned, in terms of international governance, OECD works by soft power, but also, in the words of one commentator, "by smart power" (The Washington Diplomat May 2011). What I hope to capture by this institutional ethnography is exactly the knowledge design of such "smart power": to emphasize that we cannot fully understand the role and impact of the OECD without also seeking to understand the concrete, mundane, actual *doings* of OECD staff. In this perspective, the knowledge design and, more broadly, the knowledge organizing - including the way work is organized within the Economics Department and committees - is not of accidental interest, but vital to understanding the OECD's role in the global knowledge infrastructure. The claim of the institutional ethnography as part of the broader practice turn is that

we cannot *know* an organization if we do not know – in quite some detail – what it *does* (Smith 2005)

What I call the 'design answer' to the question of the role of the OECD, is of course closely related to the literature on the diffusion of ideas and on institutional knowledge regimes as an established research field, developed in different versions by, among many others, (John) Campbell 1998, Fliegstein 2002, Dezalay & Garth 2002; 1992; Meyer et. al. 2009; Haas 1992; Colander & Coats 1993; also, as a more Foucault-inspired policy anthropology, Shore, Wright et. al. (eds.) 2011; also Mahon & McBride 2008). In this connection, Marcussen (2002, 2004) is, as previously mentioned, particularly relevant for the present study. In his influential 2004-paper ("OECD - playing the idea game") Marcussen points out that the OECD plays and over time has played not one but multiple roles in what he calls the "idea game". According to Marcussen, the OECD in its early days under its Danish Secretary General, Thorkil Kristensen, was constituted in the role of the *ideational artist* – close to the classical think tank defined by its invention of new ideas and policy solutions, by a scientific approach, and by a high degree of autonomy. But over the years, the OECD has broadened and now plays out a number of - at times conflicting - roles in the idea game: *The ideational arbitrator* (a meeting place for national civil servants and policy maker where mutual learning and mutual socialization takes place); the *ideational broker* facilitating the spreading of ideas developed in the member states; the *ideational consultant* responding to demands by the member states which pay for the work done; and lastly, at times, the role of the *ideational authority* (Marcussen 2002: 10-12 (in Danish)[9].

Marcussen's approach of using "the idea game" as a prism for viewing the OECD as an actor, and for illustrating the inherent role ambiguities and contrasts of the OECD in terms of its multiple audiences, has been an inspiration for the work of the present dissertation. However, the more material and more concrete approach of institutional ethnography puts stronger emphasis on understanding and describing how mundane knowledge practices - the economic methodologies, the databases and forms of organization - all give shape and direction to how the OECD engages with national policy debates.

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[9] In the more integrative framework of the compound organization, these role conflicts - at the level of the OECDofficial - condense into tensions between (mainly) two role*s: The transnational epistemic role* and *the role as a rule-following bureaucrat (*Marcussen & Trondal 2011)*.

1.3.5. Summary

To sum up, the interest in "*unpacking*" institutions by focusing on "knowledge in the making" which animates this dissertation belongs to the standard repertoires of science studies and the practice turn in sociology, and many studies have also been carried out focusing on both the financial sector and other international organizations. The innovation of this study is the attempt to systematically pursue what I call the design dimensions of OECD knowledge design by analyzing not the construction of facts, the performativity of models or the dissemination of ideas, but the shaping of economic messages with the purpose of being helpful to the debate.

1.4. Research design: Design Dimensions and the practice turn

> *To know what a force does, is to know what a force is* (C.S. Peirce 1878, section III)

Methodologically, the dissertation is defined as an institutional ethnography inspired by the work of Dorothy E. Smith, Annelise Riles and Helen Verran (although the latter does not define herself as an institutional ethnographer). Institutional ethnography is characterized by a focus on the links between concrete knowledge practices and institutional order, as well as by its methodological attention to texts and documents (see Smith 2005; Riles 2000). With its practice approach, institutional ethnography connects to the much broader contemporary pragmatic turn in sociology and other disciplines, and focuses on epistemic practices and what Bueger calls the "epistemic infrastructure" of a range of different contemporary phenomena (Bueger 2014, also Knorr Cetina, Schatzki et al. 2005). This is also the approach adopted in this dissertation: To place the concrete knowledge design practices of the Secretariat at the very core of the study, and hence to emphasize the OECD not as a neo-Weberian actor in a global bureaucratic set-up, but as an actor being part of the epistemic infrastructure shaping contemporary beliefs about the economy. Institutional ethnography places the researcher in a position where the OECD's ways of actively engaging with national policy debates come to the fore. As already mentioned, this shift emphasizes knowledge, micro-relations and "cognitive content" rather than formalized institutional relations; and the close ethnographic focus on the practices of knowledge design are used to understand the

core question of the contemporary role of the OECD through the scrutiny of the work that the Surveys seem to be designed to do.

1.4.1. Theoretical framework: Insights from Smith, Riles and Verran

The institutional ethnography in the present study asks the question: What is the work that the Economic Surveys are designed to do? However, in order to answer this question in a way which moves beyond merely describing work practices, and succeeds in capturing the links between the knowledge practices and the institutional purposes, a conceptual structure is needed. In this dissertation, this conceptual structure is developed by combining insights from three different pragmatic approaches to the institutional ethnography: The sociologist Dorothy E. Smith, the anthropologist Annelise Riles and the philosopher of science Helen Verran. Beyond defining what Dorothy E. Smith calls "the social ontology" of institutional ethnography" (Smith 2005: 49f) in terms of the textually mediated sequences of action, the coordinating role of active texts, and – see Riles 2000 - the attention to the form and aesthetics of knowledge, the conceptual structure also serves the more specialized task of developing the concept of the 'economic message' from a purely empirical concept (the object of the study) into a theoretical concept able to distinguish between different institutional orders in an ethnographically sensitive way.

To do this, the dissertation operates with a distinction between knowledge claims doing the work of economic facts in an epistemological order, and knowledge claims doing the work of economic messages in an order of design. This argument is developed from Helen Verran, and her attempts to make the semiotics of American pragmatist C.S. Peirce relevant for understanding the contemporary role of the fact in different institutional contexts. Verran points to how facts, numbers and values today are not merely indexical ('classical factual', i.e., pointing to facts), but in many cases rather take the place of the Peircean sign (pointing to possible social orders; ordering) (Verran 2010b; 2012a). This distinction between epistemology and design forms makes it possible to empirically identify, describe and distinguish between cases where knowledge claims do the governance/epistemological work of *the fact* (giving singular policy advice), and cases where knowledge claims do the ongoing, pro-active, ordering design work of *the message* (what OECD-officials describe as "*being helpful to the debate*".

Annelise Riles	Dorothy E. Smith	Helen Verran
Knowledge practices as aesthetic practices; the centrality of form	Sequences of action, symbolic interactionism, textual relations, active texts. Significant symbol	Epistemology & Design (facts and messages)
Central analytic: The inside-out figure	Central analytic: The act-text-act model	Central analytic: The semiotic triad
Primacy of the form of OECD-messages	Primacy of the direction(s) of OECD-messages	Primacy of the institutional order of OECD-messages

Display 1.2. Theoretical framework from Smith, Verran, Riles

Display 1.2. summarizes the main theoretical concepts which are brought into the analysis, and their main contributions to it . These elements will be discussed and explained in the Chapter 2. Please note that, for the purpose of clarification of the theoretical framework I have assigned to each of the three theories the primary responsibility for bringing out either the form, the (institutional) purpose or the directionality of the OECD-messages. As I shall describe at more length in the next chapter, the logic of inquiry of the institutional ethnography is exactly to bring together the form, the purpose *and* the directionality of institutional knowledge processes. What this assignment represents is therefore that the theoretical framework is also a heuristic device intended to theorize and bring forward ethnographic stories from the material to clarify important dynamics of OECD knowledge production (see Swedberg 2012; Abbott 2004).

1.4.2.   Problem formulation

As already mentioned, the knowledge problem of the present study is the inquiry into how processes of knowledge design, and broader knowledge organizing, link to and work towards institutional objectives. This is framed as a problematic about how OECD processes of knowledge organizing (as a term covering both the drafting of Surveys and the organization of work) link to the objective of "*being helpful to the debate*". To unfold this problematic, the following overarching research question has been defined:

How are Economic Surveys designed to engage with economic policy debates in the member countries?

To answer this overarching research question in depth, the dissertation pursues three different pragmatic strategies of analysis inspired by the work of first Annelise Riles, then Dorothy Smith, and lastly Helen Verran.

a) The questions from Riles: *What is the aesthetic form of the knowledge organizing? How is it achieved in the knowledge organizing? And how is this form linked to the institutional role of the OECD?*

b) The questions from Smith*: How do Economic Surveys coordinate different sequences of action? What is the coordinating role of the EDRC and the peer review institution in the final redrafting of Surveys? And how is this coordination linked to the institutional role of the OECD?*

c) The questions from Verran: *What is the semiotic function of the economic message? What defines design dimensions of OECD-knowledge claims theoretically and empirically? What semiotic work are the Surveys designed to do? And how are different semiotic forms of knowledge practices linked to institutional order?*

1.4.3.   Discussion and clarification

The present research design is developed as a strategy to render processes of knowledge organizing ethnographically accessible by demonstrating the active role of documents in knowledge organizing and to demonstrate what Smith calls the institution in the situation (Smith 2005). The research design is an *inside-out strategy* which means that it does not follow messages out of the Economics Department to discuss their reception, but seeks instead to understand how the processes of knowledge organizing locally at the Economics Department *project* certain desired outcomes translocally (in member countries) and in a somewhat open future (Riles 2000; also Smith 2005, Campbell 1998). The analytical structure is such that all three chapters provide an answer

to the overarching research question by seeking to understanding what work the surveys are designed to do in terms of processes of knowledge design and organizing. But each of the three sub-questions addresses different and specialized aspects of the knowledge organizing at the OECD, theoretically as well as empirically. As such, the analytical strategy is complementary in the sense that it brings together theories "*with complementary strengths and nonoverlapping weaknesses*" (Onwuegbuzie & Johnson 2006: 48), to cover multiple dimensions of the research problem: The form of knowledge, the action it projects and the semantic effects of the knowledge claims. This is also a way of organizing the empirical material thematically; a strategy for getting as much of the most relevant of the rich empirical material into the analytical chapters as possible, and a methodological strategy for finding ways of integrating documents, observations and interviews for the purpose of demonstrating the links between the concrete and the institutional. This will be discussed in the Chapter 3.

What I hope to capture ethnographically by this strategy is an account of international economists who systematically and intentionally work by *ordering* a somewhat open space of opportunity. It is the story of OECD-economists as pragmatists, not as rationalists, and it is therefore a suitable analytical strategy for analyzing how the OECD promotes "*better policies for better lives*" from its position as an intergovernmental economic organization. Here, the analytical strategy operationalizes the theoretical assumption – to be discussed in chapter 2 - that the work of promoting best practice-policies as well as the cross-country comparative paradigm is not a practice of communication *on top of* the economic knowledge production; but rather a deeply integrated purpose which gives general direction to the work of Economics Department. In other words: "*To be helpful to the debate*" is not treated as a practice of communication placed on top of the analysis "like the frosting of a cake" (Smith 2004: 458); it is analyzed as part of the dna of the OECD and its Economics Department. Having said that, it is also important to emphasize that from survey to survey, from individual to individual, this *design dimension* of the OECD can be more or less prominent; and that these ongoing ordering dimensions work hand-in-hand with the more actual, country specific and problem-solving work of Economic Surveys (see Verran 2012a). The analytical strategy outlined above is an attempt to provide enough conceptual clarity to make it possible to explore such dynamics and, more broadly, to unfold the complex and fascinating processes of knowledge organizing which produce the messages that enter into our domestic debates.

1.5. Dissertation outline

The dissertation has seven chapters. This first chapter has served as an introduction to the focus and central themes of the study, and has provided some background information on the OECD. Chapter 2 is a theory chapter, and will provide a more comprehensive introduction to institutional ethnography, as well as introduce the independent contributions of Smith, Riles and Verran. The chapter will also discuss the analytical value and use of the design concept, as well as the strategy of combining these three, in some respects quite different, theoretical approaches into one strategy for analysis. Chapter 3 is a methods chapter, and presents in more detail the principles and practices of producing the institutional ethnography, including access, data and analysis. One important topic of institutional ethnographies is the question of how to make documents ethnographically accessible (Smith 2001, 2005; Riles 2000, 2006). As an important part of the methodological strategy, I apply a mixed-methods approach to doing institutional ethnography by combining document analysis of draft surveys at different stages of completion, with interview data and observation for the purpose of analyzing how surveys are drafted and for what purpose. Chapter 4, 5 and 6 are the three analytical chapters. Chapter 4 is entitled: *"Between the (too) country specific and the (over) general",* and relates to sub question *a* (Riles). This chapter provides an overview of the drafting process from the selection of topics to be discussed to the principles for pointing to policy recommendations. The chapter analyzes this process as a continuous coordination of horizontal (cross-country) and vertical (single-country) elements for the purpose of achieving the desired knowledge aesthetic summarized as knowledge operating "between the (too) country specific and the (over) general". Chapter 5 is entitled *"Not (merely) for national consumption",* and relates to sub question *b (Smith).* This chapter is an analysis of the post-EDRC redrafting session, where the Secretariat and the country under review work towards a final version of the survey, which accommodates the discussions from the peer review. This chapter points to some of the important transnational dynamics of the OECD knowledge organizing, such as the coordinating role of the Economic and Development Review Committee (EDRC) and the way the Surveys are designed not only to be relevant for the country under review, but also to contain messages for general OECD-consumption. Chapter 6 is entitled *"Economic Facts and Economic Messages"* and relates to *sub question c* (Verran). This chapter analyses one meeting with Directors where a draft is receiving final feedback before the EDRC. For the purpose of under-

standing what work the survey is being designed to do through these revisions, the chapter integrates observations of the feedback seminars, close textual analysis of the final text revisions of one draft survey and interviews with Desks and Directors after the meeting. On the basis of this "track change-analysis", the chapter makes the theorizing move of analyzing the "design dimensions" of the Economic Survey by asking whether the knowledge claims seems to be doing the work of the message (symbol or icon) in an order of design, or the work of the fact (index) in an order of epistemology. Finally, *chapter 7* is the conclusion, and summarizes the outcome of the institutional ethnography.

Chapter 2. Knowledge Design and Institutional Ethnography

Institutional discourse is designed, and the processes of design are essentially political; that is, they concern the forms of power that emerge in institutional regimes (Smith 2005: 120).

In the public and political place that epistemology used to occupy, we now have design (Verran 2010a: 1).

This chapter provides an introduction to the theoretical framework which supports and directs the analysis as an institutional ethnography. This framework borrows its concepts and analytical focus from the sociologist Dorothy E. Smith, the philosopher and historian of science Helen Verran, and the anthropologist Annelise Riles. The three are not often applied together in analysis, and one contribution of this dissertation is the attempt to see how ideas from Riles and Verran may prove productive for developing the institutional ethnography of Smith to cover the topic of transnational economic expertise.

In this chapter, I shall first provide a brief introduction to the work of Smith, then Verran and then Riles. I shall account for those aspects of their work that I utilize in the analysis, and indicate those that I leave unexplored or leave out altogether. I shall present the main concepts which are actively used in the analysis: From Smith I have in particular taken over the ideas of *the active text,* of textually mediated sequences of action *(the act-text-act-model)*, and of *publics as people*, based on Smith's notion of text-reader relationships. From Verran, I have borrowed her appropriation of the semiotics of American Pragmatist Charles S. Peirce, and, on that basis, her distinction between *design* and *epistemology*. From Riles, I have taken over the methodological ideas of *the inside-out-ethnography* and the *centrality of form and aesthetics*.

The last section of the chapter will discuss the integration of the theory framework. For the purpose of paying sufficient attention to the different audiences (governments and national publics) which defines the sociological approach of this dissertation, the "social ontology" of Dorothy Smith will make up the theoretical core of the dissertation. This means that the study is defined as a study into textually mediated relations between the OECD, governments and broader society (see below). For the purpose of capturing the particular

dynamics of transnational expertise and professional economic knowledge-making which characterize the OECD as the object of study, I complement this basic ontology by bringing in specialized theoretical resources and substantial insights from Helen Verran and Annelise Riles.

As such, the theoretical framework is developed to theorize and conceptualize what I call the Design dimensions of knowledge design in international organizations. Smith, Riles and Verran all make use of the design concept, but Helen Verran makes the most systematic attempt at making the design concept clear and operational for empirical studies. Hence, besides discussing the integration of the theory framework, the last section will, following Verran, include a presentation of the analytical concept of Design as *ordering.*.

2.1. Dorothy E. Smith and institutional ethnography

The sociology of Dorothy E. Smith conducts empirical investigations into textually mediated institutional relations from a standpoint outside the institution. It engages with the intersection between the activities and consciousness of people in their everyday life and work, and the objectifying relations which coordinate these activities into a particular social/institutional order. This intersection is, according to Smith, the point of access and entry where sociology should begin its central inquiry into "how the social is put together" (Smith 2005: 32; Smith 1987: 151f). Here, Smith defines the project of institutional ethnography - a "reconstruction of sociological inquiry" (Smith 1987: 151) – in the following way:

> [W]e want, I want, a political economy exploring the world in which I live, in which we live, and exploring it in ways that do not objectify it or relate us to it through the medium of ruling. I want a political economy that explicates and analyses just how our lives are caught up in political economical processes, including, of course, the ruling relations in which our own work as social scientists is embedded (Smith 1999: 43-33).

This "standpoint of people in their everyday life" (Smith 2005: 10; Smith 1987) is also the point from which Smith wants to" 'reinsert" actual people in their everyday activities into a sociology - a discipline which, according to Smith, too often operates at a level so abstract, generalizing and tied up with general concepts and categories, that particular people, particular situations, particular documents and actual forms of organization and interaction are left

out. In contrast, institutional ethnography is dedicated to explore the textually mediated forms of organization which coordinate social life and condition people's everyday lives and activities (Smith 2005: 70). This, she argues, is the relevant starting point for a sociology which should not be a sociology about people, but a sociology *for* people *(*Smith 1999:32; Hart & McKinnon 2010).

> *Remaking sociology was a matter that arose out of practical demands. Established sociology distorted, turned things upside down, turned us into objects, wasn't much use. I thought we could have a sociology responding to people's lack of knowledge of how our everyday worlds are hooked into and shaped by social relations, organizations and powers beyond the scope of direct experience.* (Smith 1992:89)

To develop a theoretical framework to support such research, Smith has over the years engaged with ideas from Marxism, feminist political theory, activism and feminist science studies, pragmatism (George Herbert Mead), symbolic interactionism and ethnomethodology, and social theories of language (Bahktin, Volosinov) and discourse (Foucault)[10].

2.1.1. Motivation for institutional ethnography

The concepts and insights from Smith which I bring into the analysis of OECD relate first and foremost to how Smith theorizes texts and documents as active in textually mediated sequences. The main reason for making use of her conceptual framework was that I wanted to adopt her model of textually mediated relations (ruling relations) and text-reader relationships in order to define theoretically the kind of relationship I had in mind in my investigation of relations between the OECD and national publics and governments, and as such - in Smith's terms – to seek to "make the archi-*text*ure of the invisible visible" (Smith 2001: 172; in discussion with Kallinikos 1995). But I was furthermore inspired by the vision of taking active steps to develop the sociology of expertise towards "a sociology for people" (Smith 2005) by insisting on describing the OECD from where the general person, the citizen, the non-expert and non-

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[10] Smith 2005 summarizes how these different inspirations are integrated into the framework of institutional ethnography. More detailed discussions can be found in the following texts: For Smith's commentary on Marx (in particular the German Ideology) see Smith 1999 and Smith 2004. For Smith's discussion of the concept of experience and actuality see Smith 1987, Smith 1992, and Walby's critical discussion (Walby 2007). For discussions of Mead, pragmatism, symbolic interactionism and social theories of language see Smith 1996, Smith 1998, Smith 2001. For discussions of language and discourse see Smith 1990a, b, 1993, Smith 1998; Satka & Skehill 2011. See also section 3.1. for more references to empirical work and methodological discussions.

government person would be confronted with the organization in her or his everyday life (see section 1.1 and 3.2.1. next chapter).

In this respect, Smith's institutional ethnography was a way of disentangling my study from a mind-set or theoretical framework where the person confronted with OECD-messages in her ongoing life was treated as an½ object which is either receptive or non-receptive to the OECD messages.[11] Instead, institutional ethnography would insist that people (voters, citizens) are not merely objects of institutional action and discourse, but subjects in their own stories, who in their daily life are confronted and engage with OECD messages as they emerge as part of the complex contexts of contemporary globalized knowledge societies.

The detailed research of OECD knowledge practices begins by placing the organization within this basic social ontology (Smith 2005), and from here explore how Economic Surveys operate within these textually mediated institutional relations, or, in the words of the problem formulation, "how Economic Surveys are designed to engage with economic policy debates in the member countries". My use of Smith is a somewhat atypical institutional ethnography, since I do not explore how a particular local practice is hooked into trans-local relations, and since I make very little active use of those parts of Smith's work where she discusses embodied/lived experience as disjuncted from institutional practices and ruling relations (Smith 1999; Campbell 1998; see however Eastwood 2006, 2011, section 2.1.6. below). In order to provide the reader with the opportunity of judging for him- or herself the way in which the inspiration from Dorothy Smith is brought into the study of the OECD, I shall provide a brief introduction the central concerns and concepts of institutional ethnography[12].

2.1.2. Sociology for people. Publics as people. Standpoints.
First and foremost, as mentioned, institutional ethnography sets out to be an alternative sociology by not making people in their active, living, particular

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[11] For instance, the work of the OECD on the public economy of reform ("Making Reforms Happen 2010") articulates such a mindset and constitutes one source of understanding the intentions of Economic Surveys. To accept a similar attitude in my research would be to work from the standpoint of the OECD. See also Irwin & Wynne 1996 for a critical discussion of such so called "deficit models" within the field of Public Understanding of Science.
[12] For general introductions to institutional ethnography, besides the already mentioned Smith 2005, see Widerberg (2008), the edited volume "Institutional Ethnography as Practice" (Smith, ed. 2006), Campbell & Gregor 2002, Devault & McCoy 2002. For a discussion of the strengths and weaknesses of a selective use of Smith, see the discussion in Widerberg 2006.

and actual lives disappear into the generalizing concepts of what Smith calls "mainstream sociology":

> *Why was it that the social sciences wanted to explain people's behaviour (to whom?) rather than, say, to explain the behaviour of the economy; or the society; or the political process to people particularly as these enter into, organize and disorganize people's lives?* (Smith 1999: 32)

According to Smith, the key to discovering complexes of such ruling relations (see below) is to enter them by defining a standpoint in actuality from which inquiry begins:

> *Institutional ethnography begins by locating a standpoint in an institutional order that provides the guiding perspective from which that order will be explored. It begins with some issues, concerns or problems that are real for people and that are situated in their relationship to an institutional order* (Smith 2005: 32; also Smith 1987).

Over the years, Smith's version of the standpoint has developed from its early articulation as "a standpoint for women in the actualities of their everyday life" (Smith 1987) into a concept which situates the point of departure of the research not *outside* the ruling relations (see below), but rather at the brink or the intersection between the work, consciousness and life situation, and the objectified practices of a particular institutional order (e.g. Smith 2005: 32; Smith 1992: 91). It is this methodological understanding of the standpoint – "a site that is open to anyone" (Smith 2005: 228) - which I employ when I define as my standpoint for entry the individual who is situated in her or his relationship to OECD messages, and from this standpoint attempt to describe the social organization of knowledge constitutive of this relationship (again see section 1.1 and 3.2.1.). (This does not exclude – but assumes – that each individual response to these OECD messages will vary; see below section 2.1.4., for this discussion; also Burawoy 2005).

To define the starting point of research as being some individual confronted with OECD messages forming part of economic policy debates, and to demonstrate, with that point of departure, the social organization of knowledge which produces and anticipates this situation, does not imply being committed to particular theories of, for instance, what constitutes "the public" (see Smith 1992: 90 about research beginning from discourse). I do not have to begin with the

theoretical problem of "when a public is a public"? Do people have to read the Surveys? Listen to the mention of the OECD? Listen to a discussion which is an offspin from OECD Surveys? Do people have to know that the OECD is the sender of the messages? Do people have to mobilize a certain change in consciousness to qualify as a "public"?[13] In accordance with Smith, I work with the notion of publics as people. Hence, when, in the following, I mention "the general public", this means no more (and no less) than individuals (people) who stand in a textually mediated relationship to the OECD, and who in the ongoing activities of their lives intersect with OECD messages directly (in active text-reader relationships), or because OECD messages may be part of the larger social organization of knowledge and policy making. To include such individuals among the audiences of the OECD without making further a priori assumptions about the nature of this relation is one achievement of the institutional ethnography of Smith.

2.1.3. I.E.: Institutions, ruling relations and translocality

A central concept for Smith is "ruling relations" - a concept which denotes "the complex of objectified social relations that organize and regulate our lives in contemporary society" (Smith 1999:73). Smith develops the concept of "ruling relations" from her reading of Marx and Engels' "The German Ideology" (Marx & Engels 1998; original written 1845, published 1932). Based on this reading, she emphasizes how the "social" is organized via the activities of actual people, who are however coordinated and held together by abstract concepts:

> The ruling relations are text-mediated and text-based systems of 'communication', 'knowledge', 'information', 'regulation', 'control' and the like. The function of 'knowledge, judgment, and will' that Marx saw as wrested from the original 'producer' and transferred to capital becomes built into a specialized complex of objectified forms of organization and relationship [...]Social consciousness exists now as a complex of externalized or objectified social relations through which people's everyday/everynight activities organize and coordinate contemporary society (Smith 1999:77).

For the empirical sociologist, it becomes a topic to study how such ruling relations (or governing relations, or social organizations) become externalized,

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[13] I would be quite hesitant to "choose" between available models of the public (Habermasian, Dewey-inspired etc.) since I do not in this project examine how people seem to respond to and in Smith's words "activate" OECD messages. This could be a topic for future research.

objectified and stabilized in the writing of texts and manuals, in legislation and definitions of standards, and in the organization of work procedures and protocols for interaction. Here, ruling relations become observable to the researcher, not as ideas, but as social forms of organization. Smith emphasizes how she is not "against abstractions" as this "would indeed be a contradiction"; she is "concerned with examining and explicating how "abstractions" are put together, with concepts, knowledge, facticity, as socially organized practices" (Smith 2002: 90).

Because of their objectified, generalized and subsuming character, ruling relations are able to operate translocally and coordinate action and interaction as they are activated at different times and in different places. Therefore, "ruling relations" is a *material* concept pointing the researcher towards the particular forms of organization in which, for instance, discourses and ideologies are embedded, and towards understanding how lived life (personal and working) is always situated within particular ruling relations. But it is also a *relational* concept emphasizing that the dynamic of ruling is people activating these concepts, texts and standards in their local settings (2005: 103-4). And most importantly, it is a contemporary form of power: "[A] complex and massive coordinating of people's work. Intentions, desires, opportunities, impediments, blockages and powerlessness arise within them" (Smith 2005:183).

 In institutional ethnography, the institution is explored in a way that illuminates the organization and coordination which actively maintain and enable various institutional orders/ruling relations:

> *I am using the terms 'institutional' and 'institution' to identify a complex of relations forming part of the ruling apparatus, organized around a distinctive function – education, health care, law and the like. In contrast to such concepts as bureaucracy, 'institution' does not identify a determinate form of social organization, but rather the intersection and coordination of more than one relational mode of the ruling apparatus* (Smith 1987: 160)

By the term "more than one relational mode of the ruling apparatus", Smith lays emphasis on the way text-based systems are, in Smith's words, "hooked into each other" (Smith 1999: 90), like production and management are linked to financial management and financial markets (ibid), or - in the case of the OECD study - how governments and economic expertise intersect and differentiate.

Textually sanctioned agency produces a power that is generated by the concerting and mobilization of people's work. It is specific. It has limits, and it would be a mistake to conceive such forms of power as mobilized simply within a single formal organization such as a business corporation. Corporations exist within the ruling relations and their interconnectedness – financial markets, banks, legal systems, mass media, government departments and agencies at all levels, and so on (Smith 2005: 183)

By pointing to the differentiation, the division of labour and also, possibly, the difference within the ruling relations, institutional ethnography attempts to demonstrate the social organization of knowledge and the conceptual practices of power (Smith 1990b, 1999) involved in contemporary forms of politics, governance, market and administration, science and education. In my appropriation of Smith for the purpose of studying international knowledge organizations and their relation to national policy processes, I do not attempt to produce a map of all discourses, relations, actors and organizations as what Smith calls the ruling relations. Instead, my strategy will be to focus on how OECD texts and documents are produced (knowledge design), in order to understand what Smith calls the *intention* of the text: "The assumption […] is that the text intends methods and schemata for interpretation and that these can be recovered through analysis" (Smith 1990a: 91). Based on this, my strategy for analyzing the actual role of the OECD will be to focus on the work that the Surveys are designed to do, i.e. the action which the organization projects and intends.

2.1.4. Documents in institutional ethnography: Language, replicability, text-mediated relations and text-reader conversations

Text, documents and interactions between texts and readers (in the most general understanding of the term) are absolutely central to the investigation of textually mediated forms of social organization. Any institutional complex relies on conceptual practices of objectification, standardization, accountability, jurisdiction and dissemination:

[T]exts (or documents) are essential to the objectification of organizations and institutions and to how they exist as such. [...] [They] make possible the appearance of the same set of words, numbers or images in multiple local sites, however differently they may be read and taken up. They provide for the standardized recognisability of people's doings as organizational or institutional as well as for their co-ordination across multiple local settings and times (Smith 2001:160)

Texts are defined by being "material in a form that enables replication (paper/print, film, electronic, and so on) on what is written, drawn or otherwise reproduced" (Smith 2005: 228). By concentrating on the text as a material object, Smith emphasizes how texts and documents participate quite physically in sequences of action, and how they make extended society possible by connecting people and actions in different places and at different times. For this effect, it is essential that the materiality of the text is the same for each and any reader:

> *The text itself is to be seen as organizing a course of concerted social action. As an operative part of a social relation it is activated of course by the reader but its structuring effects is its own* (Smith 2001: 121)

Smith emphasizes the replicability and materiality of the text, but she also theorizes and emphasizes the dynamic relationships between documents as replicable artefacts, and the individuals who activate the content and agency of these documents. Here, she brings to the somewhat heavy framework of "ruling relations" a sensitivity to the way in which language operates in a "fully social way" (see Smith 1999: 98) - something that she recognizes in George Herbert Mead, and in the Russian theorists of language Bakhtin and Volosinov (Smith 1998). In particular, she makes use of George Herbert Mead's theory of the function of the significant symbol in human interaction and communication. The meaning of an object (a text, a sign, an action, an utterance) is established in a process of aligning consciousnesses towards the object: "[A] speaker speaks, and both hearer and speaker respond to what has been said as meaning the same thing; the utterance means the same to both" (Smith 2005: 83; 2001: 177-78; Mead 1967). Since this is how humans make meaning, and act meaningfully and socially, we must understand texts, documents and their coordinating capacities as nested within such sequences of utterance and response (text-reader relationships). As such, language for Smith works more "like a zipper interlacing different subjectivities than as units of meaning travelling from one individual to another" (2001: 78).

Importantly, for Smith, the constancy and replicability of the text does not exclude the possibility that the same text can be read and interpreted differently "at different times and by different people and in different sequences of action" (2005: 107). It entails no more and no less than the proposition that by engaging in a text-reader relationship with, for instance, the economic messages of

the OECD, I submit myself to the intentions of the message and the premises of its existence, simply in order to make the interaction meaningful. It is not just in my mind, but already in the 'inter-individual'[14] terrain between us (Smith 2005: 77f, also Turner 2002). Hence, since we as readers have the role of understanding and attuning ourselves to what is already there (the symbol, the document), our mind, our consciousness, etc., will unavoidably be changed a little bit each time we engage in text-reader relationships (Turner 2002: 308-310). In order to respond (act, understand, even disagree), we need to attend to the symbol (the document), and even if our response would be to argue with the message, we would still need to coordinate our response to the utterance (in the form of an object, i.e. the text):

> *Texts control responses by framing rather than dictating them and are written or drawn with that intention (this doesn't mean that they necessarily work in the way they are intended). They co-ordinate consciousnesses at a distance. As they are activated, they organize readers' responses, though, I emphasize again, they do not determine them* (Smith 2001: 78).

As such, texts and documents are characterized by the distinctive property of being always only potential. "Jumping from the moment of writing to the moment of reading and actualized only as the reader participates in a particular text-reader conversation" (Smith 2001: 192). Texts and documents project potential action and responses and are designed and supported organizationally with particular intentions, but they do not determine their response and reception (Smith 2005: 82). This theory of language as symbolic communication enables Smith to develop her theory of the textually mediated character of the social organization of knowledge. It makes ethnographic analysis sensitive to understanding how texts enter into sequences of action, to how texts organize social organization, and to how, with what intention and with what effect, texts (documents, schema, written procedures etc.) are designed.

2.1.5. Symbolic interactionism: Coordination, active texts and active subjects

> *The object of sociological inquiry is not order, nor action as such, but the ongoing coordinating or concerting of actual people's activities* (Smith 1996: 172).

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[14] It is this concept of the inter-individual terrain that she borrows from the Russian social linguist Volosinov (Smith 2005: 77f).

I have already referred to the profound influence of George Herbert Mead and symbolic interactionism on the topic of language and objects in Smith's work. Concepts like concerting, orienting to, coordinating, text-reader conversations, organizing, projecting what comes next, and activating the text all bear witness to the strong influence of symbolic interactionism,[15] George Herbert Mead, and the theory of language and symbolic interaction as profound and foundational social practices. I shall now introduce and specify how this heritage from Mead, Bakhtin and Volosinov, and their view of knowledge and language as social, is important for Smith, and how she combines this with ideas from Marxism (ruling relations, materialism, objectification, actual people), feminist theory and phenomenology (embodied experience, situated knowledge, every-day life).

These inspirations are all put to work to pursue the same goal of a sociology where people and their doings do not disappear as subjects and agents, but remain active and visible (Smith 2005: 52-53). As the introductory quotation in this section articulates, this has profound methodological implications, since it defines the main objective as "look[ing] for the sequences of action in which [data] is embedded and which implicate other people, other experience and other work in the institutional process on which research is focused" (Smith 2005: 158). Such sequences of action are the ongoing processes of action and interaction *(social acts)* which together constitute the social as an ongoing, profoundly relational order. In this theory of the social, the individual remains active, since the foundation for this theory of meaning, action, language and interaction is the situation where individuals coordinate action and interaction by means of symbolic coordination around significant symbols (see above). According to Smith, it is the added attention to the significance of institutions, textual mediation and stabilization of meaning, and translocal organization, which develops this theory into a "fully social" account of the social act, and which enables institutional ethnography to transgress individual micro-

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[15] *"Symbolic interactionism proposes that human beings employ symbols, carve out and act toward objects rather merely respond to stimuli, and act on the basis of interpreted and not only fixed meanings"* (Hewitt: Symbols, objects and Meanings in Handbook of S.I. 2003, pp. 307f). The introduction to symbolic interactionism in this chapter is limited to the inspirations and interpretations of symbolic interactionism, which Smith brings into her work. For more general introductions see, e.g., Herbert Blumer (1969): *"Symbolic Interactionism: Perspective and Method"* or Gross 2007: *"Pragmatism, Phenomenology, and Twentieth-Century American Sociology"*. For an introduction to Mead e.g. Hans Joas (1997): "G.H. Mead: A Contemporary Re-Examination of His Thought".

situations, and to analyze the larger organization of society (see Smith 1999: 98; 2001: 177f).

Smith's innovation on the basis of George Herbert Mead is to extend the notion of "active people" to the notion of *active texts,* which is a last central concept in institutional ethnography. The active text is "to be seen as organizing a course of concerted social action. As an operative part of a social relation it is activated, of course, by the reader but its structuring effect is its own" (Smith 1990a: 121; also Turner 2002: 309). By emphasizing the active texts and the role of texts in action, Smith comments on "a deep problem in Mead's conception of symbolic communication":

> *Mead's notion of meaning as arising in the social act insists that meaning must be in life and cannot 'occur' other than in activities among people. This, however, does not account for how language already has a determinate capacity to mean before it is activated in actual situations of action, or indeed, how it is that symbolic communication can have that property so essential to Mead's theory, namely that speaker and hearer can hear and respond to speaker's word in the same way. He lacks a theorizing of language and discourse [..], or a means of making forays into social organization and relations beyond the matrix of the social act in which the self arises. [He] lacks a* fully social conception of knowledge and language *which could integrate the discoveries and analytic innovations of poststructuralism/postmodernism* (Smith 1996: 75, her emphasis).

Smith's theorizing of the active text and of text-reader relationships adds a sensitivity to the agency of the material agency of texts, as readers relate to them:

> *The text itself, as a material presence (paper, electronic and so on) is produced, read (watched, listened to) in particular local settings by particular people. People's activities in local settings are in this way connected into social relations organized by the text. When a text is read, watched or heard it brings consciousness into an active relationship with intentions originating beyond the local* (Smith 2001: 164-65)

To emphasize the attention to the textually mediated sequences of action, Smith talks about act-text-act sequences:
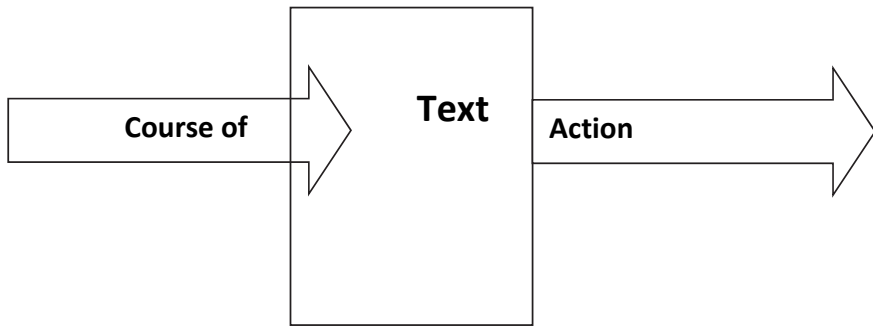
Figure 2.1. The act-text-act model (after Smith 2006: 67)

Figure 2.1. illustrates the act-text-act sequence as a conceptualization of the demand to study "texts in action" (Smith 2005: 181). As already mentioned, the model emphasizes the potentiality of the text: "[W]hat it projects as organization for what comes next" (Smith 2006: 69). The model emphasizes the sequentiality by which texts are made active: Texts are designed to be active and to coordinate action in particular ways, and they are embedded in institutional frameworks and chains of accountancy. However, in order to become "actionable" (have an impact, perform coordination), the texts must be activated by a particular user who attends to the text, and acts in response to it. As such, all the elements of what Smith calls "the social ontology" (2005) of institutional ethnography come together in the act-text-act model: The active text, the active person and the text-reader relationship; the institutional aspect, the ruling relations and the definition of the text as "replicable"; and the guiding emphasis on how texts coordinate social relations. Whereas most of the theoretical ideas described in this chapter constitute the theoretical background for the analysis, the act-text-act model will be actively applied in the analysis: I shall demonstrate empirically what sequences of action seem to be constituted in the production of the Economic Surveys, and hence try to infer what intentions are active in the Surveys (most explicitly in Chapter 5).

2.1.6. Nebulous relations and the act-text-act model

In my view, the always potential, symbolic, flexible and coordinating character of the act-text-act model is very suitable for capturing how OECD messages relate to national policy processes, by demonstrating how local action (knowledge production and text drafting at the OECD Secretariat) projects and coordinates policy debates within and between member countries. However, despite the quite obvious potential of institutional ethnography for exploring ruling relations at the transnational level, few studies have actually been carried

out so far. Here, Lauren Eastwood (2006; 2011) is a notable exception. In her 2006 text, she discusses some of the particular methodological concerns involved in doing institutional ethnography of international organizations:

> *What is different about the policymaking processes in the UN is that the majority of the work done in the meetings is not organized around activating a specific form that is part of a predetermined work process [...]. [T]he majority of the work that practitioners do [...] involves producing new documents and texts. Not only do the texts not fit in nicely with prescribed sequences of action, but it is also very challenging to see what people "do with the texts" once they are produced [...]. This is not to say that UN-texts do not have standardized, recognizable formats through which the institutional action becomes visible. The mapping analysis becomes complicated in that UN-documents do not often emerge from one site of work with definite destinations where they are to be taken up and processed as part of "what happens next". The texts take on a fairly nebulous status once they are negotiated in that they then become available to be taken up in various settings by various people who may be otherwise unconnected to each other"* (Eastwood 2006: 187).

It is this "nebulous", unformalized or somewhat underdetermined character of the relations connecting the OECD, national governments and the general public in the OECD member countries which my dissertation attempts to explore and describe. The term "nebulous" quite aptly describes how the role of the OECD, too, is on the one hand very clear, well described and highly formalized, but on the other hand quite opaque: what precisely is the role of the organization? [16] Like Eastwood, I have my hesitations about whether – and if so how! - to "map" these "nebulous relations"; and whether it will meaningful to pretend to make visible how any individual position is hooked into the large-scale processes of global political economy. Hence, my strategy in this dissertation is more limited: In order to understand this "nebulous" character of

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[16] This intuition that we both understand quite clearly the role of the OECD (providing analysis and recommendations which governments may or may not follow, working towards coordination of policies among associated economies), and on the other hand the sense that something escapes or overflows this rational, modernist account of relations between knowledge and power (the persuasion, the peer pressure, the intensity of the organization etc.), is captured in Bruno Latour's analysis in "We have Never Been Modern". He emphasizes the always ongoing relationship between the work of purification (clear separation of knowledge and power, guidelines and processes) and the work of translation, mediation or association where connections are made across these official lines (1996). This is what Latour calls "the paradox of the moderns" (1996: page xxx).

transnational relations, I try to clarify the work that Surveys are designed to do. I do not do this by following the texts, but by ethnographically exploring how design dimensions are inscribed into the Economic Surveys; and hence how these texts are part of the OECD's on-going work of seeking to coordinate particular directions for the longer-term development of economic policies in the OECD area.

2.1.7. Summary: Smith

In this section, I have provided a brief introduction to the institutional ethnography of Dorothy E. Smith, and described how my analytical focus will be the knowledge design of OECD messages, and the action in terms of sequences of action projected by the Economic Surveys. The central analytical concept formulated by Smith which I bring into the analysis will be the act-text-act model, and with it the notion of textually mediated sequences of action. What Eastwood calls the nebulous character of such relations comes close to what is in my analysis called the *design* dimension of OECD knowledge design. To theorize this design dimension further, I shall now present a second set of conceptual resources: Helen Verran's distinction between design and epistemology, and her analysis of numbers as generative devices.

2.2. Helen Verran: Design and Epistemology

While my motivation for making use of the institutional ethnography of Dorothy E. Smith was largely the wish to look for a theoretical framework of analysis which could accommodate my approach of trying to make sense of OECD-messages without forcing me to commit to any a priori theorizing of the character of the relationship, my reason for including Verran in the analysis was somewhat more specific. Firstly, just as Smith has a "feel" for texts and documents, Verran has a "feel" for numbers (Verran 2012b: 112), and adds a specialized sensitivity to how "enumerated entities" (facts, models, evidence) can engage with policy processes in many different ways. Secondly, I found Verran's definition of Design as *ordering,* and, more generally, her approach to analyzing knowledge claims as signs*,* useful for theorizing the well-coordinated, intentional but also open-ended efforts "to be helpful to the debate", which I encountered in fieldwork and – via Verran – came to articulate as design dimensions of Economic Surveys. In the following, I shall provide a brief introduction to the central concepts and concerns of Verran, and how I make use of them in my analysis.

First, I shall present Verran's idea of numbers as generative devices (i.e., that numbers act in different constellations, and can take on different roles). Secondly, I shall provide a very brief introduction to the American pragmatist Charles S. Peirce, and to Verran's innovative appropriation of Peirce's semiotics. Thirdly, I shall introduce Verran's distinction between epistemology and design, which becomes central to my analysis in Chapter 6. As mentioned earlier, one contribution that this dissertation should make is to see if this conceptual figure can be used not merely in the situations described by Verran, but also in the present case of international expert organizations. Consequently, Verran's argument will be presented in quite some detail in this chapter, and also in Chapter 6, where the argument is applied to OECD-data.

2.2.1 Numbers as 'Generative Devices'

To repeat, one important reason for engaging with Verran's work is her specialized preoccupation with numbers, figures and evidence. In her 2012 text "Number", she aims to "sensitise researchers in the social sciences to what is involved in using numbers in informed good faith" by demonstrating how numbers are not "either universal abstractions or [..] culturally relative social constructions" (2012b: 112)[17]. Instead, according to Verran, numbers are "material-semiotic devices" - "material" in their specific presence; "semiotic" as embedded in always meaningful and constitutive relations which are "inseparable from the practices in which enumerated material entities come to life, and […] semiotically agential" (ibid).

In this sense, much in the same way that Smith emphasizes the active text and the active person, Verran sets out to understand "how numbers as indices of a partial order *become lively measurements of value* that can then be put to work to produce a naturalized order" (Verran 2012a: 66, my emphasis). By perceiving numbers as generative devices, Verran emphasises how numbers (measures, figures, quantifications, evidence) are active in the material, ongoing, concrete institutional organization of knowledge for policy making. Depending on the work that numbers do and on how they are brought to work in different settings, different institutional orders will be generated around and

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[17] This analysis already begins in her book from 2001 "Science and An African Logic". Her early training was as a philosopher of mathematics, and later she trained teachers in the didactics of math teaching in the Yoruba-speaking region of Nigeria. Based on her experiences with cultural differences in how different children performed counting and arithmetic, her book "Science and An African Logic" gives a highly reflective analysis of how such differences can be analyzed in a profoundly site-specific manner without explaining these differences in terms of different socially constructed perspectives (Verran 2001).

with the numerical entities. As an example of how numbers are generative, Verran demonstrates how numbers play different roles in the institutional set-up of the expert committee and in the institutional set-up of the competitive tender-bid session (2010a, 2011, 2012a). This again is quite parallel to Smith's general analysis of textually mediated sequences of action. However, where Smith talks about different sequences of action and employs the theoretical model of symbolic interaction borrowed from George Herbert Mead (1863-1931), Verran develops her argument on the basis of another American pragmatist philosopher: Charles S. Peirce (1839-1904) and his theory of the dynamic relations between the icon, the index and the symbol in human perception, reasoning and even being in the world.

2.2.2. Icon, index and symbol

Central to Peirce's philosophy is the proposition that signs operate according to a triadic structure: As icons, as indexes or as symbols. These are again each associated with a particular mode of experience or characteristic relation between subject (consciousness) and object (phenomenon) as either firstness, secondness or thirdness. To introduce this central idea of the three dynamic positions of the sign, I shall paraphrase Margareta Bertilsson's introduction to the *semiosis* of Peirce (Bertilsson 2009: 65-68; 200-202):

When signs act or appear as icons (firstness, first experience), we relate to the sign in a quite immediate way: "something bothers us, but we do not know what it is. We may feel irritation or perhaps joy, but we do not know as of yet how to conceptualize such diffuse feelings" (Bertilsson 2009: 200; also 67-70). When the sign is an index, we relate to it as an established fact. We accept that the sign designates particular established relations, and the role of the sign as index is to indicate these relations. The sign as index is factual: "The secondness of index relates to Peirce´s insistence that thought (logic, knowledge) is about something; it is `factual´'" (Bertilsson 2009: 200; also 70-73). The third modality of the sign is that of the symbol (also called the interpretant, since it stands for a(n) (imagined) common interpretation). The sign as symbol engages with the human capacity for drawing inferences. In scientific reasoning, it allows us abductively to move beyond observation: "This is the right thing to believe". In social and political life, it may in a similar way stand for a common interpretation: "This is the right thing to do" (Bertilsson 2009: 200-201; also 73-75).

As Bertilsson emphasizes, these three basic categories of firstness, secondness and thirdness are not merely semiotic in the narrow linguistic sense of how words are attached to meanings, but capture different modalities in all spheres of human existence: There is a firstness, secondness and thirdness to the sign as it appears to its observer (or registrant). But there is also a firstness, secondness and thirdness to action (acting on feelings and intuition, acting actively as struggle, acting accordingly to habits and norms); to ways of being (potential and vague, actual and individualized, or conditioned, collective and universalized forms of action); and to reasoning (abduction, induction and deduction) (Bertilsson 2009: 65; 67-70).

For Verran, the analytical promise of this triadic thinking lies in the dynamic constitution of all three modalities – or *zones*, in Verran's words - in what she calls the "three-step epistemic dance of 'modern facts'":

> *A 'sign' might be the graphic numeral in a table of results, a spoken number name, or a set of coordinates in a line graph. The 'interpretant' is the material practices of constituting the 'reader of the sign' and the rationalities in which reading is possible and hence the meanings that might be made. The 'object', or more precisely the sets of material routines (such as the flowing of the river, or the floating away of logs) in which the object 'does itself', may be human or non-human, living or non-living. All three modes are deeply implicated in the others and something that acts as 'sign' in one situation might act as 'object' in another, or what is 'object' here can become 'interpretant' there. For those of us who wish to use Peirce's semiotics instrumentally, this triad effects a continuum and provides a basis from which to consider the participation of enumerated entities in assemblage* (Verran 2012a: 65-66).

Thus, where Smith talks about different sequences of action, Verran analyzes variations in how numbers partipate in, and help to define, relationships characterized by the emphasis on either firstness, secondness or thirdness.

> *Numbers participate as order – enumerated entities are the real. Yet numbering is also engaged in representing order in a specific way – as value. Numbers sometimes work in ordering, and at other times in valuing - it depends (*Verran 2012b: 113)

Verran emphasises (again much like Smith) how the point is not that numbers work independently, but that they stand in a co-productive relationship to the institutional orders of which they are part. Therefore, numbers stabilize and

generate particular orders and institutional action, and organization in its turn stabilizes and generalizes different conditions of being for the numbers and values.

Peirce's triadic classification system becomes no less complicated when applied to the contemporary forms of governance and policy making. Here, there is also a firstness, a secondness and a thirdness to the "action framework" (Bertilsson 2009: 65) of policy-making. *Firstness* (numbers as icons) stands for "nature" or "society", the site for problems, interventions and people's lives, actuality, materiality. *Secondness* (numbers as indexes) stands for action and policy-making and intervention, while *thirdness* (numbers as symbols) stands for theory (Verran 2012a: 66-67).

This is where Verran's analysis becomes directly relevant for the analysis of OECD knowledge production. Verran makes use of Peirce to analyze how contemporary forms of evidence-based policy making operate (which, as mentioned, is also the OECD's knowledge base). Her argument is that "in an evidence-based policy era where both natural and social sciences are regarded as a service industry, the roles of measure and value in sciences involved with policy is radically altered" (Verran 2010a:6). More technically, she argues that evidence-based policy thinking represents a repositioning away from the classical (epistemological) strong relations between firstness (problem) and secondness (action) – of course mediated by thirdness (theory), to a configuration with stronger relations between secondness (action) and thirdness (theory, models, the general) – of course balanced by and in relation to firstness (the particular, local conditions etc.).

This semiotic vocabulary, where knowledge claims are analyzed as signs in various policy orders, allows for very close description of the level of OECD-recommendations. As such, Verran makes use of Peirce to describe different versions of the "three-step epistemic dance of 'modern facts'" (Verran 2012a: opp. cited). As such, the vocabulary of icon, index and symbol becomes another version of institutional ethnography's preoccupation with the intersection and tensions between concrete practice and the abstract, general and universalized. It is also a way of making visible coordinating relations "between knowledge practices and policy practices" which are at stake in governance and policy-making (Verran 2012a: 64), and consequently does the work of linking concrete knowledge practice to institutional order.

2.2.3. Design and Epistemology

Verran makes one more move on the basis of Peirce's semiotics. She develops the sophisticated, but also very complicated, semiotics of Peirce into a contrast between epistemology and design, and she uses this contrast to diagnose and investigate contemporary relations between expertise and policy making. In my view, this move makes Verran's thinking both highly precise and sophisticated, and at the same time very useful for empirical work. Verran proposes that purely epistemological and rational models of relations between expertise and policy making *(indexing, epistemology)* fall short of capturing important, co-productionist aspects of how expertise relates to policy processes *(ordering, design),* and she uses the contrast between design and epistemology as an entry into critical discussions about the role of knowledge in contemporary, neo-liberal market societies (Verran 2010a; 2010b; 2011; 2012a).

Here, her guiding proposition is that the way knowledge operates in decision making seems to have been repositioned from a foundation in epistemology (validity, evidence, knowledge base) to a foundation in design thinking (Verran: 2010b: 14-15). She makes a contrast between the broader relational complexes of "knowledge, epistemology and governance" and "knowledge, design, governance". These are different forms of social configurations; "different sorts of power flows through the institutions of governance"; different ways of "doing knowledge" in Verran's words (ibid).

The empirical cases investigated by Verran concern environmental rehabilitation in rural Australia. They focus on how decision making processes about the kind of interventions that should be carried out are being transformed as an implication of neo-liberal guidelines about competition and accountability. In this context, Verran seeks to "develop insights about the modern fact in a governmentality that has cut loose from epistemic practices by instituting market mechanisms at the core of governance" *(*Verran 2012a: 66). Here, she proposes that one possible way of describing these contemporary relations between expertise, policy making and larger society is by pointing out the way in which the role of facts and measures has been *repositioned.* They have not been replaced; but they have been re-positioned into a new relation with policy making: "In the public and political place that epistemology used to occupy", Verran proposes, "we now have design" (2010a:1).

Verran establishes a conceptual distinction between epistemology and design as different ways in which numbers (enumerated entities) may contribute

to policy (Verran 2010a; 2010b). Numbers may either contribute to policy in a classical, epistemological way. Here, numbers manage strong *indexical* relations to "the real" (firstness, the problem). They produce measures, values and calculations, and policy action is decided on the basis of these measures and values. Alternatively, numbers may contribute to policy in a more loosely coupled way. Here, numbers still do analytical work, but policy processes are different and hence the numbers do different work in coordinating knowledge processes and policy processes. In the design mode, numbers do not make indexes and they do not first and foremost do the work of "naturalizing" and justifying particular policy action. Rather, in this – productive - mode "[W]e see measures and values working, not to create certainty about entities, but to produce entities whose intensive characteristics are the subject of design"(Verran 2010:) In *design,* the processes of valuing (analysis, evidence) and ordering (the making of social order) are more loosely coupled. Numbers do not do play centre stage in picking out and justifying what should be done in particular cases, but operate – as icons - in the background as evidence to promote a particular institutional order.

This, also according to Verran, constitutes a break with "the elaborate fiction that the knowledge embedded in policy is neutral – an impartial representation of reality" (2012a: 71). It demonstrates that knowledge embedded in policy can be active in different ways. In the analysis, I make use of this to demonstrate how knowledge claims can either be active as *economic facts* in an epistemological knowledge/governance order, where they provide facts and analysis to support political decision making directly, or active as *economic messages* in an order of design where evidence is used for the broader purposes of shaping social order. Verran's analytical vocabulary will also be used in the analysis to exemplify concretely the (types of) work that Economic Surveys are designed to do. As such, I found Verran's definition of design as *ordering,* and more generally her approach to analysing knowledge claims as *signs,* useful for theorizing the well-coordinated, intentional but also open-ended efforts "to be helpful to the debate", which I encountered in fieldwork and – via Verran – came to articulate as the design dimensions of Economic Surveys.

2.2.4. Summary: Verran
This section has introduced the central conceptual resources from Verran on which I draw in my analysis: The semiotic language (index, icon, symbol) from Peirce, and the epistemology/design-figure which I develop into a distinction

between economic facts and economic messages. The section has also presented how Verran's articulation of these concepts retains strong ties to the particular settings that they were developed to make sense of: New forms of policy-making in Australia in the policy area of land management. It therefore remains a topic for empirical investigation in this dissertation to see whether and how this analysis has also relevant insights to offer in the case of the production of economic policy recommendation in the intergovernmental organization OECD.

2.3. Annelise Riles: Inside-Out Ethnography[18]

A third approach to institutional ethnography is formulated by the anthropologist Annelise Riles. Riles' work is based on very comprehensive anthropological fieldwork, first in the UN (Riles 1998, 2000), later in the financial sector and the global derivatives market (Riles 2010, 2011). Riles' substantial work offers rich insights into topics of transnational expertise, bureaucracy, professional economics and the interconnectivity of professions, but her contribution to the analysis is first and foremost two methodological concepts. First, the concept of the *inside-out ethnography* as the ethnographer's response to the problem of establishing insightful analysis in expert contexts, and secondly, Riles' concept of *aesthetics* to denote institutional forms of knowledge and organization.

2.3.1 "Aesthetics" and the centrality of form

Aesthetics is a central concept in Riles' distinct approach to institutional ethnography. She defines aesthetics as "the persuasiveness of form, the elicitation of a sense of appropriateness" (Riles 1999: 28 fn.2) and argues that knowledge practices can be understood as aesthetic practices of achieving, conforming to, and connecting by particular *forms* of text, practice and organization. In the language of Smith's 2001-text on "Texts and the ontology of organizations and institutions", we can describe Riles' emphasis on the centrality of form as her ontology of organizations, and her point of departure for identifying the institution in the situation (Riles 1998, 1999, 2000).

This argument about the *centrality of form* (Riles 1999: 29) emphasizes how networks – and by implication (in later works by Riles) other institutional

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[18] My analytical use is based primarily on Riles 1998, Riles 1999 and Riles 2000. Furthermore and supplementary to the following texts (chronologically): Riles 2013, Riles 2011a: Riles 2011b; Riles 2010; Riles 2006; Riles 2004

groups – are "not just groups of institutions, people, computers or collectivities that share a set of norms, but entities that conform to a particular set of forms" (Riles 1999: 31). Such forms of knowledge and organization can be subjected to ethnographic analysis as a way of accessing and understanding institutional practice, as I shall demonstrate in Chapter 4, where I elucidate how knowledge organizing at the Economics Department conforms to a form which I describe as "the zone between the (over)general and the (too) country specific)".

Riles explains how she "owes the accessibility of [legal form] as an ethnographic subject […] to Strathern's analysis of gender as 'aesthetic' that brings particular relations and persons into view" (Riles 1999: 42 quoting Strathern 1988: 180[19]). Within such a profoundly relational ontology, the research interest in understanding how form is achieved and how particular aesthetic forms coordinate action and connectivity does not represent stiff formalism, but involves an attention to the dynamics and relations of form - that is to say: to what Riles calls the *patterned qualities* of the meaning of organization (Riles 2000: 185f, fn.4). She emphasizes how aesthetics understood in this "social" sense of a "pattern that connects" (from Bateson 1980) "stresses identification with both the heterogeneity of actants and their systemic integration" (Riles 2000, opp.cit.)

2.3.2. Documents and "infinity within the brackets"
One particularly salient example of how Riles' attention to form and aesthetic practices generates relevant and profound ethnographic descriptions is the analysis entitled "infinity within the brackets" (Riles 1998). To demonstrate how practices of text production by UN delegates are aesthetic practices, the analysis shifts elegantly between an ethnographic account of how Fiji women make, assemble and tear apart ceremonial patterns with woven mats, and the process of the final drafting and decision process involved in the negotiating of the final text of the UN document (Charter) entitled "Pacific Platform for Action" (UN 1995) – a UN Charter on how to secure sustainable development for Pacific women (Riles 1998, also Riles 2000: 70f; Riles 2006). One insight

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[19] The social anthropologist Marilyn Strathern is a profound influence in Riles' work (Riles 1998, 1999, 2000). Another concept that comes from Strathern is that of the *fractal;* a "repetition, [a] not-quite replication" across different levels or scales (Strathern 2004: xx). This repetitive pattern across scales is also found in the empirical analysis in Chapter 4, where I identify how horizontalizing and verticalizing practices at all levels of organization shape Economic Surveys into its zone of expertise.

about UN text production (and Fiji women's artisanship) regards the mundane and repetitive qualities of the weaving of maps and drafting of UN documents:

> *Most women who make mats know only a few patterns and concentrate not on innovation in pattern but on perfecting the treatment and splitting of the pandanus leaf and the plaiting to achieve an even shape and a soft feel. At most, new designs constitute small variations on given patterns, variations that might go unnoticed to the unfamiliarized eye. Creating a map is a work of repetition – of the careful repetition of simple shapes to form the patterns and of the even repetition of hand gestures in plaiting* (Riles 2000: 75).

By way of this analogy, Riles invites us to see UN delegates, and in particular the Chairman, almost as artisans; and indeed more as craftsmen than as inventors, emphasizing how text production in this UN genre is not a practice of inventing new ideas or problem solving.[20] In my research, this analysis has sharpened my attention to situations where texts are not written and custommade, but rather circulated (see for instance section 6.5.3. for one example of how writing the Surveys involves circulating messages from other OECD work).

By way of this analogy, Riles also manages to draw attention to the patterned quality of both the ceremonial laying of mats and the aesthetic and drafting process of UN-documents:

> *Like mats, intergovernmental agreements such as the Pacific Platform for Action partake in a simple nonrepresentational patterning that is replicated again and again within the document, from one document to the next, and in the mechanics of the conference at which documents are negotiated* (Riles 2000: 78pp).

Riles describes how the UN officials first merge and assemble all the regional drafts (mats) into one draft text which is then finally negotiated and cleansed by means of a "lengthy process of inter-governmental negotiations" (Riles 2000:79). Here, as with mats, required skills were not "in the invention of new design" but in "the familiarity with the aesthetic conventions" which allowed the UN secretariat to facilitate the merging, organizing and pasting work involved in achieving a draft text (ibid 79). From here, the work of negotiating

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[20] When Bruno Latour emphasizes how design is always re-design - not "creation" but translation - he is to a certain extent making the same point (Latour 2008: 5).

the text is done fully on the premise of satisfying this particular (patterned) aesthetic of logic and language, even to the point where the text, judged by other aesthetic standards (forcefulness, transparency) would seem wanting. The aesthetic here was characterized by a "high degree of repetition" where "[c]ertain words fit with other. Language had a shape, a rhythm, a feel, not simply a meaning" (ibid 80*).* And this work of producing what Riles calls "properly patterned language" went on until the Assembly could present a so-called "*clear text*": a text where all potential disagreement in the object (draft text) has been resolved into the pattern of the final Charter.

We do not need to follow the analysis any longer to understand how Riles, by concentrating her attention on the form of knowledge, and on knowledge practices as aesthetic practices, captures important institutional dynamics concerning the practice (and power) of knowing how to properly pattern a text so that it can meet the test of being approved by the Convention and cleared of its brackets. For Riles, this basic aesthetic relation between the bracketed text and the text without brackets represents how the loss of one view (the hidden mats, the infinity within the brackets, the endless possible issues which could have been taken up in the final text) brings the other (the agreed draft; the charter to be presented) into view (Riles 1998: Crook 2007:256-57).[21] Riles' description of how the approved text slowly and meticulously occupies the space of the infinite, controversial potential formulations bracketed in the text is unforgettable as an ethnographic description of the negotiations involved in producing an institutional text; and the reader of this dissertation will also see how certain words and phrases are immediately recognized as being the right and appropriate ones (again most prominently in Chapter 5 on the redrafting process, where one national delegation member, upon hearing an OECD staff member propose a particularly felicitous text spontaneously exclaims: "You're the best" and fully accepts the text as a solution to a problem of disagreement (see Chapter 5; from fieldnotes).

However, what I use analytically in the chapter of this dissertation dealing with Riles (Chapter 4) is not this substantial finding, but rather the underlying methodological principle of getting the institution and its dynamics into view through looking at institutional action as aesthetic practice. What is particularly

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[21] The title "Infinity within the brackets" refers to this relation between the unresolved issues – infinite, potential, controversial – which are marked with brackets in the text and the finite, agreed formulations cleared off their brackets.

relevant for the purposes of my dissertation is how document analysis consists not in reading the content as the consistent, synthesized, agreed meaning of the text, but to realize how the patterned, surface qualities of the reports (and its drafting process, if knowledge of this process is available) make visible the institutional relations of which they take part. In Riles' case this demonstrates the relations between UN delegates and the Secretariat (Convention); in the case of the OECD, it shows how aesthetic practices form and reveal relations between the OECD, national governments and national publics.

2.3.3. Inside-Out ethnography and analytical collapse

The methodological concept formulated by Riles which I introduce most directly into my analysis is the concept of the *inside-out ethnography* (Riles 2000; 2006; see also Ratner 2012: 73f). What inside-out ethnography entails in practice has already been demonstrated in the previous section, in the description of how the institutional comes into view through intense, serious engagement with textual forms and aesthetic practices. As Riles puts it:

> [T]*he focus of the engagement must lie in how to render the familiar accessible ethnographically [..]... This will require finding a point of access from within the ethnographic material – it will require turning the network inside out"* (Riles 2000: 6).

The inside-*out* ethnography is a distinct articulation of the methodological principle of institutional ethnography: to find ways to get the institution in view (see next chapter, section 3.1.). Like Smith and Verran, the institutional ethnography of Riles aims to not merely describe the locally observable knowledge practices, but to link these practices to institutional order. Or, in of Riles' words, to find ways to re-describe appropriately the outside (that is to say, the institution in its institutional order/relations) beginning from a point of access from within the institutional practice:

> *My response to the politics of the document has been to render accessible an alternative"outside" to the document from the standpoint of the "inside"* (Riles 2006: 89).

In a similar way, my response to the politics of Economic Surveys, to use this parlance, has also been to describe the engagements of the OECD with national policy debates (its "outside") from the insider standpoint of what OECD staff mean by "being helpful to the debate", and how forms of knowledge-organizing support this desired institutional outcome.

At the methodological level, Riles defines inside-out ethnography as a way out for ethnographic analysis of contemporary expert bureaucracies faced with the problem of "analytical collapse", which she defines as the problem where the analytical distance between theoretical analysis and empirical description, on the one hand, and the subjects' understanding of their own practice, on the other hand, collapses because the ethnographic subjects which we "study" are not "different enough" to preserve analytical distance (see Riles 2006:3; Ratner 2012; also below, 2.4.2.).

To illustrate how the repetition of analytical forms and concepts across expert domains shortcuts the ethnographic analysis, Riles includes a striking illustration from a newsletter depicting five women of different cultures (dresses, hairstyles) in a rallying pose: marching together, babies carried on the back; one woman has her fist raised and a second one is carrying a poster with the word N E T W O R K! In this situation, bringing in the concept of "network" to explain the organization of the women and what is going on would be so redundant that it "would not feel like analysis at all", Riles says (2000:6). The analysis would not deliver a sense of critical depth and distance; the reader would not experience any "innovation to what was known before" (Riles 2000:5). At best, to bring in our stylized analytical concepts would merely be to add "one more layer, one further replication, one convention upon a series of other conventions" (same: 91). Here, the challenge becomes to "represent that which resists representation" (same: 91) not because it is opaque, foreign and mysterious, but because it has in itself already claimed what the analyst would say.

Here, the inside-out analysis is a suggestion for what to do when the problem is not the complexity and strangeness of the phenomenon, but instead its familiarity to the reader and the analyst. Here, the way to produce analytical distance and depth is, according to Riles, to abandon the outsider's perspective with its contextualizing, objectifying, modernist analytical strategies, and instead create analytical distance from a point within the ethnographic material (Riles 2000: 6; cited above).

This move – to turn the studied knowledge practices inside out – implies that the analysis finds a particular point of access - a distinct knowledge practice - within the material; and to perform the operation of turning it inside-out implies treating this selected knowledge practice "as the subject as well as the organizing stylistic device of the account" (Riles 2000: 18; inspired by

Strathern (2004)). It is this analytical exercise which I make use of in Chapter 4, where I demonstrate how a particular aesthetic between the general and the country specific is achieved through a number of horizontalizing and verticalizing practices at all levels of the Economics Department.

2.3.4. Collateral Knowledge - finance, expertise and techniques

As mentioned above, Riles' more recent work has focused on capital markets, legal reasoning in the global financial sector, and the tools and techniques of experts. In response to the financial crisis, and later to the Fukushima disaster, she has written on issues like regulation, planning, risk, the relations between expertise, regulation and the public, and globalization and diffusion of ideas. In her book *Collateral Knowledge* (2011) which is also based on very extensive fieldwork (in a Japanese bank operating at the global financial markets), she continues to demonstrate how a concrete, knowledge sensitive approach to understanding institutional action provides knowledge about "the concrete moments of neo-liberal reform":

> *In recent years, social theorists have advanced important critiques of the global spread of the neoliberal political and antiregulatory agenda and its relationship to late modern forms of global capitalism epitomized by the financial markets (Comaroff and Comaroff 2001). What is often overlooked in these debates is that the global spread of neoliberalism is, at its most concrete, usually a set of legal practices: the global diffusion of particular legal models that embody free-market ideals* (Riles 2011: 2; see also Smith 2001: 168 about studying how institutional relations are "accomplished locally").

The point about calling the book *Collateral Knowledge* is that it implies treating selected knowledge practices "as the subject as well as the organizing stylistic device of the account" (Riles 2000: 18, quoted in previous section). In this case, the knowledge practice, which is also used as an analytical prism, is a particular, very common and quite unsophisticated legal-technical practice in financial trading, i.e., the use of *collaterals*. Collaterals constitute a special obligation serving as security for the swaps, and working as a regulatory device in global financial trading. But besides this concrete, technical meaning, "collateral" also means "something on the margins, tangential" (Riles: 2011: 1) and points to the everyday, technical, repetitive modus operandi which on a daily basis coordinates, enables and keeps financial markets running (Riles 2011: 2; 29f).

As described in the introduction (section 1.3.4.), this institutional ethnographic approach has strong links to the literature on the performativity of economics (see section 1.3.2), since Riles demonstrates how technical operations (the use of models and algorithms) are not merely neutral tools for implementing the grand designs of policy-makers: such operations are in themselves active actors in the making of markets (see 1.3.2.). But Riles' approach focuses less on the agentiality of economic technologies and models. Instead, her inside-out ethnography shows the relations between, for instance, economics and law as these become intertwined in bankers' practices, by demonstrating the legal thinking (private law) embedded in the collateral; and it focuses "explicitly" on the reflections, reflexivity and work knowledge (to use Smith's terminology (2005: 145f)) of the "market participants", and their intense preoccupation with the techniques of their trade, but also with its institutional relations, conditions and implications:

> *What absorbs their energies is the intricacies, financial and legal, of transactions, and transactions, and the quantity and quality of the property transacted. What is the value of the swap? What is the value of the collateral? Is it legally valid? What law will regulate the collateral and the transaction? What kinds of documents? What kinds of theories? What kind of professionals, what kind of laws are necessary to sustain these transactions?* (Riles 2011: 32).

By this explicit focus on the expert staff, their work knowledge, concrete practices, and the reflexivity and intensity of professional traders, Riles does not merely describe the work that international traders do; she also provides knowledge about what she calls "the concrete moments of neo-liberal reform" with the hope that this focus can "help us understand private market governance in more subtle ways, beyond either dogmatic devotion or dogmatic denunciation" (Riles 2011: 2). This statement comes very close to articulating my normative position in this dissertation, since the work on OECD Surveys explores other concrete moments of the infrastructure of contemporary political economy, and the "nebulous" institutional relations connecting (among many others) the OECD, governments and the public at large (Eastwood 2006; see section 2.1.6.).

And as Casper Bruun Jensen has commented, by this focus on the concrete moments of these "entanglements in the global financial markets" (Riles 2011:

210), Riles demonstrates that the politics of global financial law – like the intention of the OECD to have an impact on policy debates in the member countries – "is not at all obscured, but rather 'hidden in plain view'" (Riles 2011: 146)" (paraphrased in Jensen 2013: 223); the "urge to be connected and relevant to the world" of these technical legal experts is not concealed or illegitimate, but "proudly on display" (Jensen 2013). As such, Riles' inside-out ethnography offers a distinct approach for the institutional ethnographic attempt to unfold the links between knowledge practices and institutional order, while at the same time raising relevant and profound debates about global financial governance and, more generally, the contemporary role of experts and expertise.

2.3.5. Summary: Riles

This section has presented Annelise Riles' inside-out ethnography as the third inspiration for the institutional ethnography which I brought into the analysis of knowledge organizing at the Economics Department. I have emphasized how Riles - like Smith and Verran - works from a concrete focus on knowledge practices. Riles' strategy is to get the institution and its connections to the entanglements of the broader institutional complex into view. Her distinct contribution to this institutional ethnography is the focus on aesthetics and forms of knowledge as an entry point from which institutional reality, and "the work that the informants are doing", can be ethnographically captured.

I have described the inside-out ethnography in its most precise definition as an analytical strategy where the analyst identifies a potential analytical frame in the ongoing practice which is the object of analysis, and treats this selected knowledge practice "as the subject as well as the organizing stylistic device of the account" (Riles 2000: 18). It may seem contradictory to work both with the inside-out ethnography of Riles, and with the institutional ethnography of Smith, who encourages the reader to begin at a standpoint outside the institution. Nevertheless, I will argue that these two positions are – or at least can be - complementary ways of unfolding the institutional perspective in empirical research - alternative ways of doing situated institutional ethnography, alternative ways of "using multiplicity as the point of departure for all analysis, instead of adding perspectives to an essentially monolithic model" (Star 1991: 34; section 1.3.1; 3.2.1.) In other words, I argue that it is possible – as I do in this analysis – to conduct inside-out ethnography from a standpoint outside of the institution. In this case, we begin our inquiry by asking questions from a

standpoint outside the institution, and we look for answers from an inside-out standpoint (Riles 2006: 89, quoted above). This does not conflict with Riles' approach, since this analytical process of identifying a "local" practice which can be enlarged to analytically create "an alternative outside" (Riles 2006: 89) is, in my reading of Riles' work, not a process of objectively identifying the true point of access from within the material, but an ethnographically sensitive way of pursuing particular research interests which the ethnographer brings to the inquiry.

Besides presenting Riles' methodological approach, this section has also indicated the way in which Riles' inside-out ethnography can contribute to understanding how Economic Surveys co-ordinate relations between its different audiences (governments, publics, other OECD members) by being attentive to the *aesthetic* of OECD knowledge organizing and to the *form* of OECD-messages. As I shall describe at much greater length in Chapter 4, I seek to elucidate the aesthetic in OECD knowledge practices and the methodology by asking Riles-inspired questions like: "What counts as good OECD recommendations? What is the form of the proper OECD message? What stable and recurrent organizational forms do individual Surveys conform to? (see Riles 1999: 31*)* And how does OECD staff not merely "conform" to these forms as external constraints, but incorporate them into their professional practice in flexible, reflexive and intentional ways? As such, Riles' analysis of institutional practice as aesthetic practice shares many traits and concerns with a symbolic interactionist interpretation of the situation – which also emphasizes the actors' flexible interpretation of shared symbolic entities as part of ongoing practice (see above; also Chapter 5).

There are, however, also significant differences not least at the level of research design and research techniques. Here, Riles represents the pure anthropological method, not the qualitative, mixed-methods approach recommended by Smith (see also Chapter 3). Riles' work is emblematic of what one can achieve by extensive anthropological work, combining observational and relational skills in fieldwork with the ability of a visionary and masterly ethnographer to see and demonstrate the connections. But as I shall discuss at greater length in Chapter 3, this dissertation follows a mixed methods, multi-string approach to developing an understanding of the work that Economic Surveys are designed to do. Here, Riles' contribution to understanding the aesthetic of

OECD knowledge organizing is a partial, but significant, part of this exploration.

2.4. *Design* dimensions of knowledge design

This section will discuss the main theoretical proposition of this dissertation, which is that the pro-active, ongoing work of influencing policy debates (and policy action) in the member states in the direction of OECD views on best policy can aptly be defined in terms of *design as ordering*. The unique strength of Verran's design concept is that the concept links the actual work of OECD staff "to be helpful to the debate" to the institutional purpose of ordering, and that it as such articulates the concrete links between epistemological practices and the role of the international knowledge organization (see Introduction, 1.3.4.). This section will not repeat Verran's argument, but comment on three complications of using "design" as an analytical concept. The first complication concerns the lack of a broad, generally shared meaning of the concept of "design", and points to a strong need for clarifying that concept. The second – related – complication concerns the multiple meanings of "design" that we find in the dissertation, and the third aspect summarizes how the concept of "design" is made operational in the analysis. The third issue is how to make the design concept operational for empirical analysis.

2.4.1. What do we mean by "design"?

Brilliant as it is, Helen Verran's coup of pitching design and epistemology together is but one example of a larger trend of social researchers "playing" with the concept of design. In the words of design theorist Robert Buchanan:

> *There is a surprising agreement on the name 'design' as the proper term for a vast body of work in the contemporary world. Indeed, the term continues to expand in its legitimate usage, extending beyond graphics and industrial objects to embrace the conception and planning of activities and services as well as environments and systems. Design is the term commonly used today to describe the invention, planning, and realization of both tangible and intangible products (*Buchanan 2001: 188)

The quotation from Buchanan expresses how the design concept has become a term commonly used "to describe the invention, planning, and realization of both tangible and intangible products" (above)*; and consequently, how design research has become a highly differentiated, interdisciplinary field. By implication, there is not one commonly accepted definition of 'design' which is appli-

cable in all contexts where the design concept is used (see also Simonsen et.al. 2010, Love 2002; also Latour 2008). Hence, the design concept is often used without a completely clear theoretical definition or a completely explicit pragmatic meaning. It therefore comes close to Merton's definition of the proto-concept as "an early, rudimentary, particularized, and largely unexplicated idea" (quoted in Swedberg & Hedström 1998:5).

However, if the design concept is to do the work of linking concrete knowledge practices to a broader institutional order, it is in need of some kind of clarification. Simonsen et. al. (2010: 7) express a position similar to the one in this dissertation when they write that:

> *We doubt that a unified theory of design is possible, feasible, or necessary. However [...] theories of design should be developed and related to theoretical debates elsewhere* (Simonsen et.al. 2010: 7)

What is needed is not a uniform definition of the design concept, but a clarification of how "design" may be understood and defined in the present sociological context of transnational experts and national publics. Here, one significant theoretical contribution of the study will be to test the value of Helen Verran's definition of "design as ordering' for the purpose of theorizing the quite intangible, and also controversial, aspects of the OECD in promoting "better policies for better lives" (OECD-slogan).

2.4.2. Design as a "native" concept

A second complication with respect to using design as an analytical concept is that the design concept is not merely used frequently and differently by other social researchers, but also by OECD economists, who speak of the "design dimensions" of the Surveys (see section 5.4). For the reader (and analyst), this necessitates constant comparison between the multiple versions of the design concept: There is Verran's analytical concept of design as ordering; there are the empirical meanings reported by OECD economists when they talk about the "design aspect" of the Surveys as "being helpful to the debate"; and lastly - to complicate things further – "design" also denotes the object of inquiry itself, since I study processes of knowledge design and knowledge organizing.

This comes dangerously close to being a case of what Riles calls the problem of analytical collapse, which, as we saw, would mean that merely analyz-

ing the knowledge practices of OECD using the term design "adds nothing to analysis": it simply says nothing new or more than what informants have already expressed (Riles 2001: 6-7) However, I would argue that, unlike Riles' case of the network concept - which really would not add anything new to the analysis - the design concept is sufficiently open for definition in this context to make the simultaneous exploration of its empirical meaning for OECD economists ("design as being helpful for the debate") and the value of the analytical concept of "design as ordering" a meaningful analytical practice, which teaches us things that we do not yet know about the work that the Surveys are designed to do, and about the analytical value of the design concept. This of course requires that the analytical figure of epistemology/design is not used as an a priori framework to explain the empirical findings, but rather in the way in which Kathryn Addelson describes the operation of the sensitizing concept in symbolic interactionism, where "the concept must be developed and tested within the present study just as if it were new and derived from the coding of present material" (Addelson 1991: 129; also Blumer 1986: 147f; also in Clarke 2005: 29; Ratner 2012: 73f for a discussion of possible analytical collapse in her material).

2.4.3. Making the design concept operational

To sum up from the previous and this chapter (section 1.4.1.), one theoretical contribution from this dissertation will be to test the value of the analytical figure of epistemology/design, and of the concept of "design as ordering" for defining and clarifying the concrete links between epistemological practice and institutional order, between inquiry and action. Hence, in the analysis, I shall not merely explore the work that Economic Surveys are designed to do, and what it means to "be helpful to the debate". I shall also take up the conceptual figure of epistemology/design, and develop it into a set of practical distinctions between economic facts and economic messages. This set of practical distinctions[22], between knowledge claims doing the work of *facts* in an order of epis-

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[22] This goes somewhat beyond Blumer's definition of sensitizing concepts as "*merely suggest[ing] directions along which to look*" (Blumer 1986: 147f). In "How to make our ideas clear" (Peirce 1878), Peirce makes a distinction between clearness in the sense of familiarity ("*Every child uses it with perfect confidence, never dreaming that he does not understand it*"), and clearness in the sense of providing an abstract definition of the real *("the problem being that it might not be true"*). Peirce makes the point that to be clear, distinctions have to be "true" in the sense of indicating how two ideas are different not merely in terms of their abstract definitions, but also in terms of their different consequences, i.e., their extensions into different relations. "*Only practical distinctions have a meaning*" (Peirce 1878: 6) – see Chapter 6.6,1,

temology/governance and knowledge claims doing the work of *messages* in an order of design, has been developed on the basis of the close textual revisions of the draft Surveys (Chapter 6).

2.5. Integration of the theory framework

The purpose of this chapter has been to introduce the reader to the broader theoretical ideas which inform the analysis and to define, and provide some background for, the central analytical figures: The act-text-act model (Smith), the design/epistemology model (Verran), and the inside-out ethnography and centrality of form (Riles). In the analysis, these three are integrated with reference to a core concern with the link between knowledge organizing and institutional order, and made operational as an empirical question of the work that the Economic Surveys are designed to do. The three theoretical resources are also selected and combined to bring out different aspects of design dimensions in the analysis: The central analytical figure of the inside-out approach (Riles), which gives primacy to – and hence exposes – the aesthetic of OECD knowledge organizing and the form of OECD-messages; the semiotic triad (Verran) which gives primacy to the institutional order, as well as to the role which OECD knowledge claims take up in these orders; and the central analytic of the act-text-act- model of textually mediated sequences of action (Smith), which gives primacy to the direction(s) and audience(s) of OECD messages. These three are all ways of answering the question of the work that the Surveys are designed to do; and together, they unfold multiple aspects of how design dimensions are embedded in OECD messages.

This chapter has demonstrated the many commonalities between the work and directions provided by Smith, Verran and Riles, but also their distinct and different theoretical vocabularies and concerns. To take the commonalities first: all three are – in quite different ways - deeply committed to the project of writing ethnographic accounts in order to analyze the complex relations between textual, scientific and technological artefacts and social life. Verran specializes in how to render numbers ethnographically accessible, while Smith and Riles focus on how to make documents (texts) ethnographically accessible. Both Smith and Verran creatively employ and develop ideas from American pragmatism in order to get their analysis going: Verran uses the semiotics of Charles S. Peirce, and Smith the idea of the significant symbol developed by George Herbert Mead. Riles' relationship with the pragmatists and the contemporary pragmatic turn is less clear-cut (see Jensen 2013). Jensen emphasizes

how Riles' "fascination with [the] gaps, breakdowns, and glitches" in the entanglements in the global financial markets (above) sounds like an echo of the American pragmatist John Dewey in his attention to "interruptions to experience" (Jensen 2013: 523). However, Jensen also emphasizes how Riles approach to bring the (legal) institution into view by identifying global, legal forms, in practice dissociates her analysis from at least certain contemporary forms of pragmatic thinking focusing on open-endedness and heterogeneity (ibid). But although Riles in her theorizing engages more strongly with ethnographic and anthropological theory of Strathern a. o., her work also echoes pragmatic concerns because of its concrete focus on how institutional orders are enacted at the level of daily, ongoing, habitual practices and engagement with legal techniques. Furthermore, Riles shares this focus on repetition, and stabilized forms as institutional markers, with Smith, who raises this argument in a distinctly pragmatic sense which is reminiscent of Mead and symbolic interactionism.

Despite these close core commitments, Smith, Verran and Riles are quite different scholars both in their theoretical arguments and methodologies and in their normative-political commitments. In this chapter, I have tried to indicate the scholarly contexts within which the concepts are developed, and also to show more clearly what work they do on their own. I have not attempted to explain the differences between these three scholars away, and merge them into some sort of synthesis. Rather, my attempt has been to build on their strong common engagements, and to make use of their different approaches to open up the analytical potential of my ethnographic material (see section 3.5.).

For the purpose of integrating the three resources for institutional ethnography into one theoretical framework, I have used the social ontology of Smith as the main framework for my study, and consequently also defined the relations between the OECD and the national governments and publics as textually mediated relations. This allows the study to address multiple audiences of the OECD, and to discuss the OECD in terms of the organization's appearance in the media. This decision to give ontological priority to Smith, and to bring in Riles and Verran as supplementary resources, is also a way of contextualizing the dissertation more strongly in sociological debates and sociological theory by giving priority to the symbolic interactionist approach to institutional ethnography. I again want to emphasize that the basis for this "joining of forces"

is a quite selective appropriation, in particular of Smith (see for instance Widerberg 2006).

I have emphasized the symbolic interactionist aspect in Smith's work: The coordination, the projecting, the textual intention, and the significant symbol. For example, discussions of issues of gender and experience, which could no doubt cause quite a dispute between Verran and Smith, are not of any importance for the analysis, and I do not see how possible differences between them on that score could be an impediment for combining them in the way in which this has been done here (see also Addelson 1991: 122f). More significantly, I have not adopted Smith's central contrast between the actual, on the one hand, and the objectified and generalized, on the other hand, in my analysis of OECD knowledge practices (which are of course objectifying and generalizing). Smith's approach on this point would make for an analysis and engagement with the comparative work from the OECD which would be radically different from the one that I have used. Here, I am more inclined towards the approach of Riles and Verran, and to discuss this central question in terms of the practice and paradoxes of the aesthetic of generalisation (see for instance 4.5 for Riles; 6.6.2 and 6.6.3 for Verran).

2.6. Conclusion

This chapter has introduced the three different approaches to institutional ethnography which I bring together in the analysis of knowledge organizing in the OECD Economics Department. I have given an introduction to the main concepts to be employed, and further discussed, in the individual chapters. Furthermore, I have presented these concepts in their individual scholarly contexts. This again emphasizes a pragmatic view of knowledge and of theory as sensitizing and particularizing in action contexts, where concepts acquire their concrete meaning (see also Addelson 1991: 129). The chapter has also indicated – although by no means exhaustively – how this theoretical framework directs attention to particular aspects of the material, and is generative of some, rather than other, kinds of analysis.. However, in the situated logic of inquiry where this institutional ethnography belongs, it is exactly this partial and situated engagement with selected dimensions of the multidimensional organization OECD, which makes it possible to capture interesting and relevant aspects of the OECD (see section 3.6.). Hence, this chapter reflects the decisions that I have taken on how to make the conceptual resources of Smith, Verran and Riles relevant for understanding the design dimensions of Economic Surveys.

In the next chapter, after having described the methodological strategies developed from the ideas in this chapter, I shall discuss the strengths and weaknesses of this framework when combined with the methodological strategies generated by the ideas set forth in this chapter.

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Chapter 3. Method

This chapter will give a presentation of the methodological steps and reflections involved in the research project. In order to address the methodological concerns of institutional ethnography described in the previous chapter, the research design combines interviews and ethnographic observations of practices of *knowledge organizing* with close analyses of documents (draft Surveys) and their processes of revision.

As such, methodologically speaking, the ethnography is not written as a grand narrative, but as a combination of qualitative research techniques seeking to render visible how texts form part of institutional relations. This practice will be described in the present chapter, which is structured in the following way: First, a section summarizing the main analytical principles of institutional ethnography, followed by a section stating the research design of this project in terms of the main research decisions shaping the project, i.e., the decision to pursue an inside-out strategy, and to focus on the OECD Secretariat and economic messages, as a methodology for capturing the institutional intentions through the practices of knowledge organizing. The section will also – again – emphasize how the research is based on an interest in understanding how these processes of knowledge organizing shape relations between OECD, governments and what I have in the previous chapter called "publics as people" (from Smith 2005).

The following section describes the data under the headline of three data missions. This section will account for access to and focus of data generation, and will also summarize the final data material (size and composition). Following this account of data generation, three sections will account for how I came from field notes and transcripts to the final text of this dissertation. One section called "organizing and analyzing data" will describe how I have worked with the data, using the mapping research techniques of sociologist Adele Clarke's situational analysis (Clarke 2005), who in her work is also inspired by pragmatism, symbolic interactionism and a mixed-methods approach to ethnographic data in sociology. A subsequent section describes the work of theorizing and conceptualizing the research in terms of design dimensions of Economic Surveys, and a section called "writing the ethnographic text" presents the practices of combining interviews, documents and observations in the three analytical chapters. After these sections about the concrete research practices of the dis-

sertation, the final sections discuss this research design in terms of its strengths and limits, but also by demonstrating how the research design is an ethnographic response to the problem of how to capture the "ethnographic reality" as I have come to understand this in my engagement with the material, as well as with reference to discussions of validity questions of philosophy of science.

3.1. Institutional Ethnography: Methodology

> *[T]he aim of the institutional ethnographer is to explore particular corners or strands within a specific institutional complex, in ways that make visible the points of connection with other sites and courses of action* (Devault and McCoy 2002: 17).

> *The object of sociological inquiry is not order, nor action as such, but the ongoing coordinating or concerting of actual people's activities* (Smith 1996: 172).

Before I go into some more detail about the concrete analytical strategies which I have pursued in the research on OECD, I shall briefly summarize the main methodological principles on which I have based myself by defining my research as an institutional ethnography.[23] The previous chapter has described the theoretical approach of institutional ethnography, with particular reference to the focus on active texts and their coordinating role in textually mediated institutional orders. Following this, institutional ethnography can in methodological terms be characterized by 1) its focus on text and documents and how these coordinate institutional action trans-locally, and 2) the central question of how to demonstrate ethnographically how documents are active parts of social organization and coordination.

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[23] I wish to stress once again that the present research design integrates ideas from Smith, Verran and Riles, and makes use of only a limited part of the institutional ethnographic repertoire. In particular, it does not take up aspects of Smith's work, which analyzes, for instance, individual experience and contrasts between the general and the actual. For methodological introductions to and inspirations from institutional ethnographies, the following resources can be noted: Campbell and Gregor (2004), Smith, ed. (2006), DeVault 1999; Campbell (1998); Campbell and Manicom, eds. (1995). For specialized resources on interviews Rebecca Lund 2012; Widerberg 2010: 221-22; DeVault & McCoy 2002; on textual analysis (Turner 2002; Smith 1990; 2006); For a critical discussion of institutional ethnography and e. qualitative methodology see Walby (2007).

Institutional ethnography works by investigating the structuring effects of texts, as these form part of institutional sequences of action (Smith 2001: 121). Methodologically, this is what makes institutional ethnography institutional, as it transcends and connects the observed local sites (e.g., the Economics Department of the OECD) with the broader institutional complexes which the texts and organizing practices form part of. In each case, the institutional ethnographer must find strategies to "make visible the points of connection with other sites and courses of action" (Devault and McCoy 2001: 17, see above). The task is to maintain the institutional focus, "to keep the institution in view" (McCoy 2006: 109-110; also Widerberg 2010: 221-22).

Institutional ethnography transcends the local by focusing, as a key methodological principle, on the coordinating work of texts and documents. To do this, institutional ethnography must be attentive to the materiality of the text, i.e., texts as institutional objects doing institutional work (se Chapter 2, section 2.1.3.). As discussed in Chapter 2, much institutional ethnography inspired by Smith will demonstrate how texts form part of ruling relations/institutional relations ordering people's lives and activities, and will as such focus on how institutional relations are actualized by people who follow, or at least respond to, the textual imperatives. However, institutional ethnographies can also focus on sites of text production to understand how institutional order is designed as potential action, projecting, directing and structuring institutional order (Smith 1990a: 80-119; 1990b:65-70, see also DeVault & McCoy 2002: 754f for "possible shapes of IE projects"; Eastwood 2006; 2011). It is this line of inquiry, focusing on the knowledge design of the document, which will be pursued in the present research design.

3.2. Research design and research decisions

In this section, I shall describe the research design and the decisions underlying the manner in which I have tackled the problem formulation (which, in the introductory chapter, was defined as follows: *How are Economic Surveys designed to engage with economic policy debates in the member countries?*

3.2.1. Situating the research: Creating a view from somewhere

I want to begin this account of the actualities of research by going back to the introductory remarks for choosing economic messages as the analytical focus. As Chapter 2 has hopefully made clear, this decision to define what Smith calls "a methodological standpoint" in the actual person who is confronted with

the OECD-messages as these are reported in national media, is an important step of the research design (Smith 2005: 8-10). The methodological implications of this standpoint will become clearer in the section on the three data missions, since my empirical questions were determined by this. As a commitment to designing my research as a *view from somewhere* (Haraway 1991), I have wanted to take active measures to ensure that the OECD perspective (later to be identified in the discourses concerning the political economy of reform) does not appear as the single perspective of an essentially monolithic model (Star 1991). By adopting a standpoint different from that of the OECD, I insist methodologically on not sharing the OECD commitment "*to convincing people and publics*" as the standpoint of research (see Chapter 4, section 4.5.4). By doing so, I insert what Star calls a "high tension zone" (1991) into the research; that is to say: the perspective of the people receiving the messages is placed into the research design together with the perspective of the people/institution designing the messages. This moment is methodological, but also normative in the sense that it makes the "managerial" standpoint (the work knowledge of the work that OECD messages are designed to do) stand out more clearly as one particular standpoint among others in a less technocratic/managerial network of multiple standpoints and multiple selves.

Therefore, as previously discussed, to take the standpoint of the person being confronted with OECD messages has been my way of using "multiplicity as the point of departure for all analysis, instead of adding perspectives to an essentially monolithic model" (Star 1991: 34). Rather than adding the relationship with the public after having shown how economists shape the messages and then try to "communicate" them, I challenge the understanding of communication as something which comes after the fact (Dijck 2003), and try to examine how a study of transnational economic expert knowledge can be designed and carried out - not from "the ruler's perspective" (an interest in government and policy making), nor purely from the point of interest of the OECD economists themselves, but rather with an emphasis on those aspects of OECD knowledge which relate to the ways in which most people would "be confronted with" or "experience" OECD economic messages (for further inspiration, see Irwin & Wynne 1996; Jasanoff 2004). This has been one first formative research decision.

3.2.2 Deciding for an inside-out ethnography

A second formative research decision has been to frame the research as a single institution study instead of, for example, a multi-sited study covering both the work at the Secretariat and the possible reception at country level; or, more theoretically, to study the shaping of messages and not their reception. Since I have already described the theoretical possibilities and implications of this decision for focusing on the potentialities of the work that the Surveys are designed to do, I shall here only add that the decision to focus on work at the Secretariat also reflects the data opportunity provided by the OECD, since the organization allowed me both to make observations, to conduct interviews and to access documents at the Secretariat.

3.2.3 Adapting a mixed-methods approach to ethnographic analysis

> *Ethnography does not here mean, as it sometimes does in sociology, restriction to methods of observation and interviewing. It is rather a commitment to an investigation and explication of how "it actually works", of actual practices and relations. [...] It's methods, whether observation, interviewing, recollection of work experience, use of archives, textual analysis, or other, are constrained by the practicalities of investigation of social relations as actual practices* (Smith 1987: 160).

The third formative research decision has been to work with a qualitative, mixed-methods approach to ethnography, as recommended by Smith opp.cit. (also Widerberg 2007). This approach has been a response to the problem of how to work with documents in ethnographic analysis. Some general remarks about ethnographic research designs may be useful in order to understand this problem. In John Brewer and Michael Hunters "Foundations of multimethod research" (2006), the ethnographic research style (fieldwork) is identified as research which studies the phenomena in its complex social context(s), that is to say: research which aims to capture and in particular to represent or analytically depict the examined phenomena within the 'naturally occurring' sequences of action in which it occurs (Brewer and Hunter 2006:30f, 72; see also Hammersley & Atkinson 2007, Atkinson et. al. 2010).

The classical research methods of ethnography have been observations and interviews. However, researchers and methodologists from the fields of both institutional ethnography and STS ethnography propose that much ethnographic work could with good reason be considered as "born" mixed methods designs, since a) they include both observations, interviews, analyses of sur-

roundings, objects and documents which call for specialized research techniques (see for instance Smith 1987, 1990a; Hess 2001; Clarke 2005; Widerberg 2007; Hine 2007), and b) since much ethnographic research today takes the form of shorter, more thematically focused and often global/multi-sited studies and as such no longer carry the classical traits of "intensive participation observation, total social immersion, long-term duration and information intimacy" (Moeran 2006:117; also Marcus 1998; Nadai & Mader: 2009: 234). The argument is that this transforms ethnographic research practices away from being a representational practice (Clifford & Marcus 1986) and towards more specialized approaches and research designs – often in terms of *mixed methods research* combining different data and research techniques. It is such a qualitative mixed methods approach to ethnography that I have pursued in the research design, as I integrate interviews, observation and document data to unfold, explore, understand and make visible the institutional order which Economic Surveys form part of and coordinate.[24][25]

3.3. Three data missions

> *I hope to return with a body of data which will enable me to analyze how the Economic Surveys are produced with a particular focus on their comparative character, their hybrid character (policy knowledge), their transnational character and their directionality towards the public (aka communication strategies). With this focus, I hope to explore the questions which may arise for the person who encounters the OECD messages as they are reported in national media.*

> (Mission statement in my field journal, pre-mission 2010, translated from Danish).

Above is an excerpt from my pre-mission statement, where I stated the aims for the fieldwork, as a practical aid to focus my observations and questions on understanding how OECD messages were shaped to engage with national policy

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[24] In Lindstrøm 2014 this discussion about institutional ethnography as a mixed method strategy is discussed at more length (in Danish) in Frederiksen, Gundelach and Skovgaard Nielsen 2014.

[25] For related approaches to mixed methods research see Jennifer Greene (2007), Lynne Giddings (2006) and Hesse-Biber (2010a, 2010b). For different approaches to mixed methods designs within institutional ethnography Also Taber. See also Eastwood for an i.e. ethnography design of international Quinlan, Elizabeth & Andrea Quinlan. 2010. "Representations of Mixed Methods Research." Journal of Mixed Methods Research, 4(2):127-143. For a general introduction to the mixed methods literature Tashakkor & Teddlie, eds. (2010)

debates. I wanted to know the details of the drafting process and how OECD messages were shaped to engage with national debates. I wanted to understand how best to describe OECD economic messages as knowledge objects. And as a last question I had written for myself: Why so provocative? This last question, of course, was later transformed first to the empirically sensitive "what does it mean to be helpful to the debate"; and even later to the conceptual question: "what are the design dimensions of OECD economic messages?"

3.3.1. Access and relation

Needless to say, a prerequisite for the inside-out ethnography is access to the institution. The very useful book "Gaining Access" (Feldman et.al., eds. (2004); discusses how to prepare for, and gives examples of the crucial moments in getting access (see also Taber 2010 for second strategies,). In my case, I was fortunate enough to have previously been in contact with one Director of the Economics Department whom I had interviewed in relation to my Master's thesis (this was also where my interest in the OECD was awakened). He was extremely helpful in making the necessary connections to the body of Directors. As Feldman et al. point out: "We never quite know what makes people give access" (2004: 9-10; see also Garsten & Nyqvist, eds. 2013). However, I have interpreted the fact that I was given access and the general forthcoming attitude that I encountered as a sign that the topic of the communication of OECD messages is a relevant topic for OECD, as well as a sign of the OECD wanting to be an open organization and accommodating for other scholars.

3.3.2. Interviews and observations

For this research, I have been on three data missions to the OECD: The first one was an early visit where I conducting interviews and got a guided tour of the premises. The main fieldwork was a research stay of three weeks in which I interviewed all the country Desks at least once, and also interviewed Directors, some supervisors, statistical support officials and experts on particular topics in the other (policy) branch of Economics Department. Some persons were interviewed more than once, some at greater length (from 30 minutes to 1,5/2 hours). By interviewing members of all Desks rather than choosing a strategy where I followed, say, the drafting of one particular Survey through all its stages ("live" or by reconstruction, as in Gayon 2009), I was able to focus on understanding Economic Surveys as a *particular genre* which was known by all Desks and was being reproduced at the different Desks, and which was of course changed and developed at the organizational level (see Chapter 4 for an

elaboration). Many, but not all interviews have been transcribed in full, and the subsequent analysis has been based upon transcripts, sound files, documents, field notes; as well as on messy and ordered maps (see below). (See data display, section 3.3.5)

Furthermore, I was allowed to sit in on and observe feedback seminars between Desks and Directors, one EDRC-meeting (peer review session with OECD and country representations), and a number of other meetings and hearings which took place during my stay. I was very well received and granted much freedom. I was installed in vacant office spaces at the Economics Department, and was allowed to make interview arrangements with whomever I wanted to contact (and who wanted to talk to me), and was granted access to all the sites that I had hoped to be able to observe. Besides such focused observations of meetings and seminars, the field notes of course also contain more general observations and ad hoc conversations. Observations and field notes were written immediately after the event, or within one or two days, as recommended by the literature.

At a third mission to the OECD later in the research process, I presented my ideas for analysis to the Directors and made a few follow-up interviews on topics to which I wanted to give more attention. I only had an oral agreement about what I could write and what I could not write. (At times, sensitive issues were pointed out to me during interviews; see Boll 2011: 185-187 for the risks of such open agreements). One respondent has commented on a draft chapter because I wanted to be sure that the analysis (of redrafting) that it contained would not have any unintended consequences. Moreover, I have sent the final draft analytical for commentary to the OECD, but the Organization offered no comments on these drafts.

3.3.3. Documents
How texts and documents should be selected for the institutional ethnography will in each study be a major methodological issue. We have heard how the documents which one includes among one's data should be "naturally occurring" (see above) in the observed situation; these are so-called horizontal documents which directly organize the social, and which the researcher can observe directly or be informed about in interviews. Ideally, however, the institutional ethnography should also be able to establish connections to the broader networks of documents, laws, rules, standards, discourses and knowledge practices which the observed texts and practices refer to (so-called intertextual ver-

tical texts, also called boss texts). (Smith 2001, Smith 2006; see also Lund 2012 for systematic use of these categories).

In the OECD project, however, I have not worked systematically with this distinction between texts in action and higher-order texts. Instead, as mentioned above, my strategy has been to "illuminate the connections between the local and the extra-local" (Widerberg 2008: 319) in order to understand the work that one particular, potential boss-text (OECD Survey) is designed to do. Documents used as data are here primarily the Economic Surveys themselves (at different stages of drafting), and also other OECD documents and reports which I during my research found to be significant (e.g. Going for Growth; Making Reforms Happen), as well as relevant background material, which proved useful for exploring knowledge organizing at the Economics Department. In retrospect, the possibility of integrating a higher-order discourse dimension into the ethnography in combination with, and not as an alternative to, a practice approach is something that I should have liked to pursue more (see also Prior 2008).

3.3.4. Focus on 'the institutional how' and the "institutional why"

My approach to the fieldwork largely followed standard recommendations in STS ethnography[26]: To focus on work practices and work knowledge (Smith 2005: 150-155), and therefore to try to get concrete, concise descriptions of the practices and work involved in the drafting of Surveys – including, as an important element, the authors' own reflections on the work that they are doing (Latour 1996: 10, 168; Latour 2005: 49fn; Lamont[27]). The aim of the interviews and observations was to learn how the Surveys are crafted, in sufficient detail to be able to account for the process in quite some depth, and furthermore to obtain answers to my "standpoint questions" of how chapters/problems are selected and what characterizes good recommendations.

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[26] I worked largely with recommendations from STS ethnography, but Smith's concept of work knowledge systematically emphasizes the need to address both the practices of people (their *doings*) and to find ways to listen out for and inquire into how this locally observed practice (actual level) connects to the broader institutional complex (inter-textual level). "There are at least two aspects of what I am calling work knowledge. One is a person's experience of and in their own work, what they do it, including what they think and feel; a second is the implicit or explicit coordination of her or his work with others" (Smith 2005: 151)

[27] As such the interviews were prepared as ethnographic practice interviews and not, for instance, as "elite interviews" (Odendahl & Shaw 2001; Mikecz 2012; Hertz & Imber 1995; Kezar 2003).

As previously discussed, my initial situating moves prompted me to focus not merely on the closest possible description of economic analysis at the Economics Department, but also to orient interviews and observations towards some concerns which I thought could be helpful to the debate about transnational expertise - simple questions like: "How do you come up with these particular recommendations"? "How are the relations between you and national policy makers? What makes you take up one topic for examinations and not another?" At this, still quite early, stage of the inquiry, the fieldwork was guided by the decision not merely to focus on describing the production and construction of economic facts, but also to seek to understand the shaping of economic messages (see Introduction, section 1.3.2.) Inspired by Deirdre McCloskey, I was also attentive to understanding "writing economics": What style OECD-economists apply in drafting; for what purpose; how they try to make a convincing argument; what an effective comparison is, etc. (McCloskey 1994).

Close practice descriptions are completely necessary in order to be able to write up the ethnographic texts coherently, to get beyond abstractions and to capture the organization and coordination of work and the relations within the networks. But there are limits to how capable informants can be in accounting for their knowledge practices, many of which are tacit, routinized, interconnected to other people, non-humans and other institutional sites (Collins 1974, Polanyi 1966, Star 1995; Beaulieu 2010). Hence, practice descriptions or observations will in themselves not deliver the answer to the question of how local institutional practices connect to broader institutional relations, and in preparation for fieldwork, one must decide on strategies for how to "get data" - not merely about what I have called "the institutional how" (practice descriptions), but also on what I have called "the institutional why" (here: "what is the work that the Surveys are designed to do?" "What does it mean to be helpful to the debate"? "Do they write for governments or for publics". (For inspiration with relation to strategies, see also Smith 2005; Horst & Glerup 2014; Beaulieu 2010).

3.3.5. Data display –primary data

Interviews

Interviews with Desks about drafting process   *(In total 19*; transcribed 10)*

Interviews with Directors, Heads of Division, senior economists, statistical assistants ECO

(In total 13, transcribed 6)

Interviews with resource individuals at the OECD, incl. press officers and others

(In total 4, transcribed 0)

Interviews with Danish government officials and delegation, plus 5 Danish journalists

(In total 10; partly transcribed)

Ethnographic data. General and focused observations (meetings); from field notes

Field notes from three weeks of general observation and in situ conversations

Meeting observations in preparation for Economic Outlook

Meeting observation: EDRC

Meeting observation: Redrafting

Meeting observation: Pre-mission meeting

Meeting observation: Meeting with Directors

Meeting observation: STEP

Documents (data)

Two draft Surveys electronically, with "track changes" function

Background material (e.g. Mission reports, referred work, materials for the EDRC)

Registered with journalist' access to receive information and newsfeeds from the OECD.

Figure 3.1. Primary data.

3.4. Analysis

3.4.1. Organizing and analyzing data. Situational maps

During data missions, upon my return, and in the early phases of writing each chapter, I have worked with Adele Clarke's mapping techniques: Ordered and messy situational maps as ordering devices for analysis (Clarke 2005: see Suchman for ordering devices). Situational maps are constructed as analytical devices for qualitative- and mixed methods work, and constitute "… an ongo-

ing research workout of sorts – well into the research trajectory. Their most important outcome is provoking the researcher to analyze more deeply" Clarke: 2005: 83).

Experiences opposed to textbook (experiences)	Common patterns	Controversy: How general/how substantial?	REFORM DESIGNS		Country Studies Branch	International organizations + national institutiona
Important lessons	Diverse contexts, heterogeneity	SOFT POWER	GOAL, INTENTION	Who's side are they on?	Alliances [power]	(REFORM ADVOCACY)
		Econometrics				Case-stories
Design and expertise	The subtle	To be helpful to the debate	Their style/the style of the survey	Temporality of reform	Transnational experts	Constraints in agency/power/ influence
The whole and the part called being helpful to the debate	Concrete	"HOW BIG IS BIG"	Status in the Organization/ *Highly profiled work – horizontal ranks higher than vertical?*	VISION: OECD som et integreret projekt	Going for Growth	Documents: rapport MRH
						The conferencen: MRH
SOLID RESEARCH	Qualifying and quantifying the debate					Theorists of shaping messages

Illustration 3.2. Excerpt of a messy map 2nd. version. Full maps will be 10-14 pages. From Clarke 2005: 87-102

The illustration shows such mapping from my research. Like Dorothy Smith – and through the work of grounded theory and Anselm Strauss – situational analysis is also inspired by George Herbert Mead's social theory of knowledge and interaction and takes as its "locus of analysis" *the situation* (Clarke 2005: 86-87). It proceeds by describing all the most important elements in the situation of concern: organizational/institutional elements, major contested issues, local to global elements, socio-cultural and symbolic elements, popular and other discourses, other empirical elements, human elements (individual and collective) as well as non-human elements, political economy and discursive constructions of actions (Clarke 2005: 73). First, these are registered as messy maps; later they can be ordered in relevant categories to further support analysis (Clarke 2005: 87-102).

3.4.2. Three analytical chapters

The analysis is divided into three analytical chapters. Together, these three empirical analyses represent three important moments in the drafting of Surveys: The main drafting process (Chapter 4), the redrafting process (Chapter 5) and horizontalizing and feedback at the Meeting with Directors (Chapter 6). Hence the three chapters not only represent different analytical approaches, as discussed in Chapter 2. They also represent three quite different ways of combining documents, interviews and observations.

Chapter 4 is a description of the general process of drafting the Surveys, based primarily on interviews with all Desks, backed up by general observations (field notes) and background documents (Riles). Chapter 5 is more micro-sociological in its approach and focuses empirically on how the OECD and national representatives co-produce the final version of a draft Survey. Here, observations are important in demonstrating the flexible interpretation by means of which the final drafting proceeds; again, the observations are backed by interviews after the observed meeting, and the interviews (and to a lesser degree the drafted document) are used to qualify my interpretation of the work that the Surveys are designed to do. Chapter 6 operates at an even closer level of detail; it focuses on document revisions and analyzes documents in different stages of completion for the purpose of developing an empirically grounded conceptual distinction between economic facts and economic messages (see figure 3.3.).
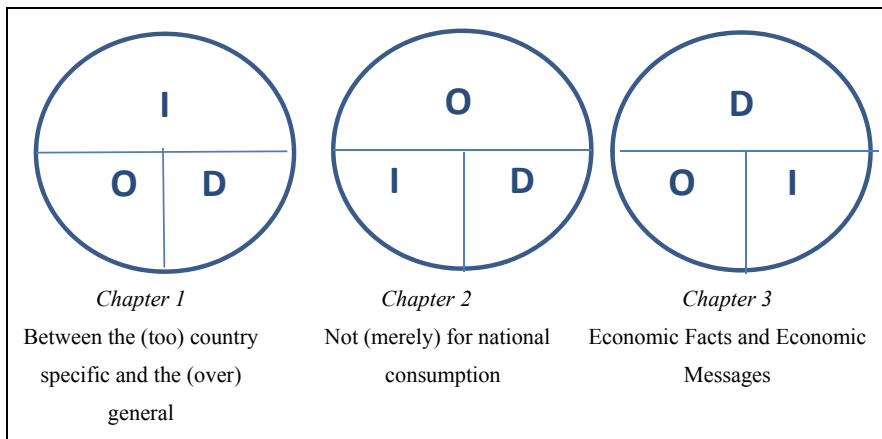
Figure 3.3. Interviews (I), documents (D) and observation (O) in the three analyses

Figure 3.3 illustrates the relative weight between documents, interviews and observation data varies in the three analyses, but the combination of data sources in all chapters is a strategy to secure that documents are not analyzed in isolation, as will be elaborated below in sections 3.6 and 3.7.

3.4.3. Writing the ethnographic text

The single most important rule in institutional ethnography is to not analyze texts in isolation, but as *active texts* (Smith 1990a: 90f). Elaborating on Brewer & Hunter (above), we may say that to write ethnographic texts in the institutional ethnography genre is to find ways to represent or analytically depict the examined phenomena *within the naturally occurring act-text-act sequences of action* in which they occur.

> *[…] Specialized methods of research are needed. Textual methods must be a primary but not, of course, exclusive method of investigation. The notion of a social relation or extended social relations as sequential and replicable courses of action involving more than one individual should not be conceived as subject to examination as such. […] [T]he investigation of the text-reader must preserve the movement and sequence of the social relation* (Smith 1990a: 164)

In summary, the ethnographic text in this dissertation has been produced following a research logic of discovery where the integration of documents, interviews and observation has allowed me, first, to understand the work that the Surveys are designed to do, and what it means to be helpful to the debate; and, secondly, to document how the observed processes of knowledge organizing prepare OECD messages to do this work. I will in each analytical chapter go more in depth with the analytical steps taken for the purpose of that chapter.

3.5. Integration: Answering the problem formulation[28]

I have described in some detail how the analysis moves from data to final analytical chapters, but it remains to be discussed how these different analyses, taken together, "answer" the problem formulation. This question is an important topic in the discussion of the validity of mixed methods research (see Moran-Ellis et al. 2006:50; Frederiksen 2014 in Danish). Beyond their relative independence and difference with respect to core concepts and methodological approach, the three analytical chapters are integrated at three levels to form a common, progressive inquiry into the research problem and a coherent answer

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[28] This chapter is a condensed version of the discussion in Lindstrøm 2014

to the problem formulation. The account for the interrelations of how the different elements of the analysis relate to each other brings out and makes visible the infrastructure of the research design.

We may talk about integration at six different levels of the research design The six levels are integration at the level of research design, theory, method, data, analysis and/or interpretation (see Moran-Ellis et al. 2006:50; Frederiksen 2014 in Danish). I have already described data integration in the ethnographic analysis, as well as at the level of research design, where each analysis is assigned the task of accounting for important moments in the drafting situation. The three chapters are also integrated by way of answering the same analytical question of *the work that the Surveys are designed to do* - a question which is itself modelled upon Smith's act-text-act model. The ethnographer George Marcus has described such a conceptual integration as "an explicit, posited logic of association or connection among sites that in fact defines the argument of the ethnography" (Marcus 1998: 80).

A fourth level is the concrete level of qualitative analysis of the material, where the main understanding of what constitutes Design dimensions and what work the surveys are designed to, progressively develop as the individual analyses bring out different aspects of the knowledge organizing at the OECD. This continuous development and empirical grounding of the main theoretical arguments and the ethnographic narrative across the different chapters and part of the empirical material supports an understanding of mixed method methodology which does not mix methods for triangulating purposes, but for the purpose of unfolding multiple aspects of Design dimensions (as endorsed by Jennifer Greene (2007), Lynne Giddings (2006) og Hesse-Biber (2010a, 2010b), also Clarke 2005; for a realist contrast to mixed methods in ethnography see Hammersley 2008).

3.6. Research ethos and research philosophy

After this presentation of how the research has proceeded, the present section will discuss how these research decisions relate to what one might call the *research ethos* of institutional ethnography, and, more generally, to a pragmatically inspired research philosophy of situated knowledge (see Bernstein 2003: 385f for a discussion of the pragmatist research ethos; Haraway 1991: 589-90) for a definition of situated knowledge as partial, locatable, critical knowledge). In this institutional ethnography, the research ethos of the project involves the

question of how the research has been shaped to be helpful to debates about economic expertise and broader society. As previously discussed this question of the research ethos – what sociological research is designed to do, and for whom – has defined the project of institutional ethnography as 'a sociology for people'. To articulate what work institutional ethnography should be doing according to this research ethos, Smith uses two different metaphors: The metaphor of the map, and the metaphor of the competent reader. Both metaphors illustrate Smith's particular version of situated objectivity; an argument relying again profoundly on her reading and redeveloping of George Herbert Mead's thought as a "fully social" theory of knowledge based on "forms of knowledge and their indexical operation in a dialogue relationship with the knowing subjects" (Smith 1996: 91).

The first metaphor is the metaphor of research as a map extending people's understanding of how they are located in some institutional space. A map which makes

> *[v]isible to us the social relations that organize our lives, that are present in our everyday worlds, but aren't fully apparent in them. Sociologists might be producing for people something like a map that would let us see how what we do is hooked into social process beyond our view* (Smith 1993: 188).

The metaphor of the map emphasizes how the institutional ethnography is written with the intention (ethos) of producing work which a reader could use to better understand how her particular and actual experience of some aspect of her life world is *"hooked into social process beyond our view" (*Smith 1993: 188, cited above) to make visible "how things are put together" (Smith 2005: 32). And "unlike maps of lands, seas and seacosts", institutional ethnography

> *[h]ave to be maps of relations in motion, the dynamics of which generates changes in how we are related, what we experience, and what we do and can do* (Smith 1996: 194).

The ideal is that, although sociological knowledge and analysis may use technical language, what this language refers to (the institutions, interactions, objects, individuals, patterns of practice, relations, experiences, etc.) should be concrete and identifiable as actuality just as when the (competent) reader of a map shifts attention from the indexical cartography of the map to look out of the car window. However, Smith also uses the metaphor of the competent reader somewhat differently in the context of textual analysis where she writes:

If we are to analyze textual materials for their properties as or-
ganizers of social relations, methods of textual analysis are re-
quired which explicate the active power of the text as it is real-
ized or activated by the competent reader (1990: 164).

This notion of the competent reader of Economic Surveys can - with some ad-
justments – express the research ethos of this institutional ethnography. Like
the metaphor of the map poses the institutional ethnography question of "how
things are put together", so the metaphor of the competent reader asks what the
non-professional reader of Economic Surveys should know about the economic
messages which enter the national debates in order to understand what work
these messages are doing in the highly complex institutional settings which
shape economic debates.

As such, both metaphors define how knowledge relates to inquiry as a re-
search practice (se section 1.2.3.), and add focus to the practical decisions of
what questions to ask, what observations to make, what to include in the de-
scriptions and what to leave out of them. Moreover, they both define the re-
search as accountable to its methodological standpoint. As such, the metaphors
of the map and the competent reader define Smith's particular version of how
situated knowledge can be said to be "true" without taking an objectifying,
disinterested stance with regard to its objects of knowledge. As Smith says in
the text "Telling the Truth after Postmodernism" (1996), the ethnographic text
is "potentially" true in the sense that it makes claims to be directly confirmed
by the actualities they describe.

3.7. Discussion of the research approach

Finally, before moving on to the research itself, I wish to end this chapter by
discussing some strengths and weaknesses of the research approach. I shall do
this both from a general perspective and by pointing to where somewhat differ-
ent decisions on my behalf could have made the research stronger. I shall re-
turn to this topic of the research approach in the conclusion.

The first general point concerning the strengths and weaknesses of the in-
stitutional ethnography approach is the quite narrow focus on knowledge prac-
tices which is to some extent chosen at the expense of a strong contextualiza-
tion concerning not only the particular organization OECD, but also broader
contextualizing factors (historical, institutional political economical, etc.). My
reason for choosing this approach was, as mentioned, a wish to escape a par-

ticular macro-contextualization and make room to account for the particulari-ties of what I come to call the Design dimension in the knowledge practices, as well as for the importance of the transnational dimension for knowledge pro-duction. Nevertheless, having established these connections, it could be inter-esting to integrate them more strongly with this broader contextualization: What role does the (ongoing) history of the OECD, the peer-review institution, the balance between governments and Secretariat, the evolving role of the eco-nomics profession, etc., play in the shaping of OECD messages to be helpful to the debate (not to mention their success in doing so?). In particular, I should have liked to have time to research the question of whether and how communi-cation has become more important, using historical sources and going to the archives (see also Gayon 2009).

On the very practical level of research, I have a few regrets. One regret concerns the question of the concept of the public. For many good reasons, I have decided not to spend my limited time with informants discussing the soci-ological category of "the public" and trying to get informants to define the con-tent of the term. Instead, I have chosen the very *emic* strategy ("from within the culture"[29]) of trying to be clear on what OECD staff mean by "being helpful to the debate", how they orient the messages towards the topic of communication, and to what degree they are writing for governments and/or publics. Although I believe that this strategy has in many ways produced important insights, it would also have been interesting to have systematic data on the way in which the economists perceive the "public".

Furthermore, as already mentioned, I should have liked to include to a greater extent the (possibly) different perspectives of national delegations and governments (with their individual differences). My research is accordingly somewhat one-sided, since I refer only to OECD economists in the analyses, and since I have only to a very small degree (and as background for the study) interviewed national representatives. (I do take into account observations and documentary material from the delegations). Also, with hindsight, the decision to focus more strongly on the shaping of documents than on the impact of theo-ries, models and algorithms has served the purpose of bringing these, often overlooked, aspects to the fore, but regrettably with the effect that my account

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[29] This difference between an emic approach (insider; from within a culture) and an etic ap-proach (outsider, theory) was originally developed by American anthropologist and linguist Kenneth Lee Pike. This reference: The Danish Sociology Encyclopedia (Michael Hviid Jacob-sen in Larsen & Pedersen,eds. 2011: 139)

tends to underemphasize how important the socio-material point of view remains in professional economics. I hope that the reader will fill out these blanks in her or his reading (possibly guided by some of the references mentioned in section 1.3.1.).

All of these aspects and dimensions could have been more strongly integrated in the present research design. But from from its partial perspective and with the above-mentioned limits, the described research approach will allow the three analyses to unfold the contemporary role of the OECD by means of concrete practice descriptions of how Surveys are drafted and knowledge production organized at the OECD, close attention to the institutional relations and multiple audiences of this important international knowledge organization, and conceptual clarification of how to understand these Design dimensions of the OECD.

3.8. Conclusion

The purpose of this chapter has been to present the empirical basis, methodological principles and analytical strategies for the analysis of knowledge organizing and text production at the Economics Department. The chapter has focused on describing the research design as one solution to the methodological problems of institutional ethnography, i.e., how to keep the institution in view (section 3.1.) and how to depict OECD messages as part of their "naturally occurring " *act-tect-act sequences of action* (Smith 2006: 67). The proposed solution to these methodological challenges has been a research design which combines interviews, observations and document data for the purpose of avoiding analysing texts in isolation, in three analyses which all contribute to unfold and empirically demonstrate how Economic Surveys are designed to engage with economic policy debates in the member countries. Finally, the chapter places this research approach in relation to relevant methodological discussions within both the mixed methods literature, institutional ethnography and the broader philosophy of science. Individual chapters will provide more details about how this was implemented in each of the three analyses.

Chapter 4. Between the (too) country specific and the (over) general

This chapter serves two purposes. Firstly, to provide an overview of how the OECD messages that we encounter as a part of national policy debates, are produced. This is the "sociology for people" commitment. Secondly, and of course closely related to this, the chapter engages with analytical questions related to the aesthetics of knowledge, and hence with the form of OECD-messages. Following Annelise Riles, the chapter will view the organization of the work of drafting the surveys through the lens of the specific aesthetic of OECD knowledge claims. The chapter argues that an attention to the form of knowledge takes us beyond merely understanding epistemic practices inside the OECD, and that it demonstrates how the form of these transnational knowledge claims – between the general and the country-specific – coordinates OECD's engagement with national policy debates.

The chapter takes the reader through the drafting process of the Economic Survey, from the beginning until the final draft is ready for the Economic Development and Review Committee**.** To describe the characteristic patterns of OECD-knowledge design, two distinct threads are identified as they are woven together: The *vertical* thread, pursuing relevant policy recommendations for the reviewed country in the diverse, institutional contexts of that country, and the *horizontal* thread connecting this analysis to the ongoing project of producing evidence-based policy recommendations from a cross-country, comparative perspective.

4.1. Theory and Method: Inside-Out Ethnography

> *[T]he focus of the engagement must lie in how to render the familiar accessible ethnographically [..]… This will require finding a point of access from within the ethnographic material – it will re-quire turning the network inside out (*Riles 2000: 6).

This chapter takes its inspiration from the inside-out ethnography of Annelise Riles which was introduced at more length in chapter 2. The inside-out ethnography is, as already mentioned, a response to what Riles calls "the problem of analytical collapse". "Analytical collapse" is the situation where ethnographic description supported by contextualizing, higher-order concepts like "net-

works" - or, in my case, "design" or soft governance -*"doesn't feel like analysis at all"* since these concepts will often already be part of the institutional discourse of the informants (Riles 2001: 6, 19). To find a point of access from within the ethnographic material, and to see and describe the phenomenon through this point of access, is, according to Riles, a way out for institutional ethnographers.

4.1.1. A zone of OECD expertise

> *One consequence of borrowing one's method from the ethnographic material at hand is that method becomes far more contingent. In other words, contrary to an ethnographic imagination of methods as universal and data as particular, I understand the "method" to be no more general or particular than the "data" to which it is applied* (Riles 2000: 18, fn. 26)

Of course, not just any point of access will do. Since we are seeking to understand epistemic practices as aesthetic practices, I shall in this chapter follow Riles and take one recurring empirical observation from the field work as my point of access to describing the drafting process. This observation is that OECD messages are apparently designed to work at the level between the (too) country specific and the (over)general (memo from fieldwork). This, I argue, is the zone of OECD-expertise: outside this zone, OECD knowledge claims risk being either over general (and hence irrelevant) or too country specific (losing the comparative advantage). Following Riles, I reclassify this observation so that it can function as an analytical prism enabling us to see and describe the drafting process for the pragmatic purpose of understanding the work that the Surveys are designed to do.

To borrow the analytical prism from the informants is one way of focusing the institutional ethnography on the enactment of knowledge practices by adding what Riles calls a 'Figure-Ground'-perspective of analytical depth. It enables us to continuously contrast the figures (the individual draftings, the texts, the meetings etc.) with the ground of what the documents are trying to achieve, defined by the aesthetic form. From the institutional ethnographic point of view, this allows us– to use Smith's words – "to show the institution in the situation", i.e., to move beyond merely describing people doing knowledge work and to include into this description "what it is that the OECD is trying to achieve" as one informant said:

> *Your analysis should make it easier for people to understand why we are here. What is it that the OECD is trying to achieve? You*

can describe at length that the OECD's processes are fabulous and wonderful. Fine, but that would mean nothing if it doesn't bring us any further towards our goals and ambitions (interview).

This analytical form – between the (too) country specific and the (over)general - is intended to understand the on-going process of levelling or *proportioning* (Jiménez 2010; see below) at all levels of the organization which I observed during the fieldwork. To operationalize this analytical form and make it useful for detailed empirical analysis of how this particular "document aesthetic" (Riles 1998) is achieved or approximated during drafting, I have made use of a distinction proposed again and again by my informants, who referred to *the horizontal* and *the vertical* as points of reference when navigating the OECD. References to this institutional discourse can take a casual form (*"we are more horizontal in the policy studies branch"* (from field notes)); but the term can also be used more formally to indicate a cross-departmental level within the OECD (see also Gayon 2009 for the drafting of a horizontal document). The horizontal represents a more generalized stance than the vertical, or, in OECD institutional discourse: The horizontal represents the cross-country perspective, and the vertical represents the country specific and particular.

For the purpose of making the forms operational and to demonstrate the active knowledge practices in achieving this desired form for Economic Surveys, I have chosen to make use of the active term of *proportioning* to point to the institutional practices by which Economic Surveys are shaped to operate within this zone of expertise (see Abbott 2004: 146ff for the use of active verbs in inquiry). The term "proportioning" is adapted from a paper by Alberto Corsín Jimenez (2010) where it is used to capture how politics "is always an expression of some sort of proportional equivalence or balance between knowledge and the public" (Jiménez 2010: 69*)*. Such levelling – or proportioning – practices can be either horizontalizing or verticalizing. It must be stressed that by "level", I do not refer to some kind of abstract schemata (like micro/macro or local/global) but to a concrete, textual-material form achieved in each case by textual-analytical practices of balancing references to country-specific details and analyses against references to cross-country knowledge, as will be seen below. This is one example of how the Riles-inspired analysis "is no more general or particular than the "data" to which it is applied" (Riles 2000: 18, fn. 26)*.*

By using the site-specific (ethnographic) distinction "single country/cross

country" instead of the related – but more general - terms "local/global" (polit-ical-geographical) or "macro/micro" (epistemological/methodological), we are able to understand the distinct generalizing stance which characterizes OECD knowledge claims and their relations to national policy debates. As a rhetorical device to demonstrate such *proportioning* practices, I shall use the metaphors of two threads – the horizontal and the vertical one - which together weave the pattern which I summarize as the zone between the (too) country specific and the (over) general.

4.1.2. Data
Empirically, this first chapter is largely based on interview data. Documents (printed and online) and observations (recorded in field notes) play only a sec-ondary and supporting role. In this sense, it is the least ethnographic – or at least idiographic – of the three analytical chapters, since I do not try to evoke a singular situation in its rich detail, but instead construct the "typical" (even ideal-typical) process of drafting Economic Surveys on the basis of interviews with all Country Desks. Since the text has still been constructed as an ethno-graphic story, where I try to describe the practices and recapture the temporal trajectory of the drafting, I wish to indicate briefly the methodological basis for the present account. As mentioned in Chapter 3, interviews were conducted with one member of each Country Desk; the standard interview took 30 minutes; some were longer, and some Desks accepted me more than once. In-terviews were recorded, and most of them were transcribed in full.

The alternative to this synthesizing approach would have been to follow one drafting process in detail (see e.g. Gayon 2009 for this approach, using interviews and archival sources). However, in my view the methodological decision to construct one almost ideal type of a drafting process on the basis of multiple accounts has the benefit of bringing to the fore the institutional fea-tures repeated over and over again in the accounts - although at the expense of foregoing very detailed examinations of one or a few particular cases. In this sense, the method that I have chosen is of course also a levelling exercise with implications for the knowledge produced. In particular, it means that some readers of this chapter might miss detailed examples of some of the topics de-scribed. I hope that the next two chapters will to some degree make up for this tendency to "tell it, don't show it".

Instead of coding the interviews and developing them into recurring themes, I have worked with messy and ordered maps to capture, identify and

remember central sites of the material which I considered significant to the faithful and relevant account of the drafting process (Clarke 2005: 83f). As such, my decision about which events and what data to bring into the chapter, and which to leave out, are based on mapping exercises; but these maps of course only index the richer descriptions in the data (sound files, transcripts, field notes, photos, documents).

After having roughly selected the topics for the chapter, the data sources were again consulted for the ethnographic description of, say, what constitutes "good economic analysis", or whether "one size fits all".

The mapping exercises asking the question "What is in the situation" came before the decision to frame these events analytically in terms of the pro-portioning of messages. The validity criteria for this Riles-inspired analysis were how well it mapped onto and added to the maps, to allow me to include what I considered to be the most important empirical observations, but fur-thermore to insert these observations into an institutional account of how this particular zone of expertise is established via the clear methodology of the OECD (combining *"country surveillance, cross-country benchmarking and evidence derived from empirical research"[30]*), the peer review system and the work organizing at the OECD, - all of them factors that contribute to this par-ticular aesthetic which I have called "between the (over)general and the (too) country specific". To show the institution in the (drafting) situation involves describing ethnographically these quite distinctive features of OECD knowledge production.

4.2. The Drafting Process begins

4.2.1. Countdown to the EDRC[31]

> *The draft Economic Survey is prepared by the OECD Secretariat starting about one year before the final Survey is published. The work is carried out by a team consisting of two economists, some-times in co-operation with additional specialists, and supervised by a head of division. The desk is also responsible for preparing the semi-annual Economic Outlook for the country and interacts with the cross-country analysis undertaken by the Economics De-*

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[30] To indicate the institutional discourse from the self-description of the organization, I here quote from the job advertisement for a new director at at Economics Departement; http://unjobs.org/vacancies/1374086437512, last accessed 23.2.14
[31] Again, EDRC abbreviates the Economic and Development Review Committee

partment and other parts of the OECD. This ensures that the Economic Surveys present state-of-the-art policy analysis on a wide range of topics (OECD webpage)[32].

First some brief background information is needed. As we have heard, each team (Desk) covers two countries, and is composed by two economists. Most frequently, the Head of Desk is a senior economist (A4) and will be working with a lower-ranking (younger) economist (A2, A3). There are six such sections at Country Studies Branch. In the hierarchical organization of the Economics Department, each Desk will refer to a Head of Division (A5) who functions as supervisor for 4-5 country desks (see the organizational chart above).

This timeline illustrates the main events in the drafting process, lasting about a full year in total (although, as mentioned above, the Desk must, concurrently with the work on the Survey, also prepare country contributions for the Economic Outlook (macroeconomic outlook, forecasting) as well as Going for Growth.

Start · Mission 1 · drafting · Policy Mission · Directors · final draft · EDRC· redrafting · Launch

The main phases of the drafting process are the following: Early phase or takeover from previous desks; going on "Mission" to the country under review to collect information and discuss possible topics; a longer drafting phase; and a second mission (Policy Mission), where preliminary results and recommendations are discussed with the country concerned. For the first long process of drafting, desks have "quite a lot of autonomy" to develop the analysis and recommendations (interview, director). About 5 weeks before deadline, a so called Meeting with Directors is planned (see Chapter 6), where the draft Survey is being reviewed by the directors. The final draft is made available first to other departments, then to other countries to read and prepare for the EDRC. (See also photo of survey planning).

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[32] http://www.oecd.org/eco/surveys/abouteconomicsurveysandtheedrc.htm. Last access 23.2.14

CS4 Survey planning

	Circulation		Weeks to EDRC	Finland	Luxembourg	Australia	Euro Area	GBR
				2010	2010	2010	2010	2011
Pre-mission documentation distributed	ECO DC, ECO A432, ECO HODS		before Director rdv					
Pre-mission meeting with Directors			approx. 1-2 week(s) before mission					
Missions				17-20 Aug	(policy mission)	30 Nov-5 Dec		31/08-3/09
				23-24 Nov	9-10 Feb 2010	28-jun-2 Jul		29-30/11
In-depth chapter	Dean, Ford, 1 copy for (double-spaced, PSB Directors (G7 only: Counsellor) con-sided), and specialised distributing author		-11	3/17 Nov	25-Jan	21 June		14-12-2010
Survey to Directors (including revised in-depth chapter)	Dean, Ford, (G7 only: ctorates Chief Econ.) ided)		-6	18-Dec	4-Mar	15-Jul		22-12-2010
Exec. Summary & A&R	Chief Economist, Counselor, Elmeskov, Schneider (hard copy)							22-12-2010
Structural chapters	"STRUCTURAL COORDINATION"							22-12-2010
Meeting with Directors			-5	05-Jan	10-Mar	21 July		06-Jan-11
Revised Exec summary & A&R to Directors	Dean, Ford, Chief Economist		-4.5	07-Jan	112/15-03-2010	23 jul		09-Jan-11
SG package = ToC (no tab/fig list), Exec Sum, A&R, Progress in structural reform tab, recommendation boxes)	Secretary-General via Borinan/Gascard		-4	12-Jan	18-Mar	28 jul		11-Jan-11
Text, tables and figures final to Didi			3 days before OLIS	14-Jan	17-Mar	02-Aug		14-Jan-11
English text to OLIS/TRA	+ "PAC CSU"		-3	19-Jan	22-Mar	4 Aug		18-Jan-11
Questions for discussion	Dean, Ford		-2.5	22-Jan	25-Mar	19-Aug		20-Jan-11
Revised Questions for discussion	Chairman & Examiners		-2	27-Jan	29-Mar	23-Aug		25-Jan-11
French text & "Questions" to OLIS			-1	02-Feb	01-Apr	30-Aug		01-Feb-11
EDRC			0	09-Feb	12-Apr	06-Sep	October	08-Feb-11
Redrafting session			day after EDR	10-Feb	13-Apr	07-Sep		09-Feb-11
Revised A&R to EDG and OLIS			+1		21-Apr	14-Sep		16-Feb-11
				2010	2010	2010	2010	2011

* To be confirmed
** To be confirmed in September, depends if there is a clash with a Commission meeting.

Confirmed room reservation (EMS reservation #)
Re-drafting room

CS4sched.xls

02-03-2010

Photo: Survey Planning (photo by author)

The photo illustrates not merely the timeline of preparing a survey, but also the degree to which the "peer review"-machine runs smoothly as it has done pretty much since the first Surveys were published in the early 1960 (OECD 2003; OECD 2008) As we notice, the chart is written as a countdown to the EDRC – the examination at the Economic Development and Review Committee, where the draft survey serves as the basis for a peer review discussion of the relevant country's economic state, and of recommended policy actions to improve the economy. (See Chapter 5, plus OECD 2003, with the telling title: Peer Review: A Tool for Co-operation and Change).

4.2.2. "A policy that could be improved" - deciding on issue chapters/structural priorities

One of the main questions which I brought to the OECD was the question of how the topics for the issue chapters were selected. On what grounds is one topic identified as a problem area for the country – or in ethnographic OECD terms: "What defines a topic as a structural priority for the country? " This question has both vertical (country specific) and horizontal dimensions. The

vertical dimension concerns the relevance of the issue for the country under review, while the horizontal dimension is, as we shall see, connected with formal means of identifying policy areas which could be improved, and with topics which the OECD generally raise with countries. The following excerpt from an interview is one account of how such a selection process may take place:

> *We begin by setting up a list of 5-6-7-8 possible chapters. One idea was, for instance, environmental economics. In the end, we decided not to do that because we are not really experts on this topic. But it was definitely a policy which could be improved.. We are looking for policies that could be improved. Are there areas where we see that the country has been performing poorly relative to other countries for a number of years? We are trying to recommend ...countries to pursue policies that increase growth, lower inequality and enhance green growth, so this topic was one candidate. But it's typically difficult to find recommendations that improve on all aspects of these"* (interview).

As we hear, the selection process begins by 'identifying "[a] policy which could be improved". The OECD has developed formal indicators to identify areas where the country seems to be underperforming relative to other countries (so-called growth regression analysis), as well as econometric methods to assess the so-called output gap (the gap between actual and potential growth) (interview). Importantly, we hear, there needs to be a problem (defined as under-performance) for an issue to be called a structural priority for the country. Different practices and priorities, and institutional variations, are not in themselves a problem – only if the country A) underperforms, and B) is not using best practices. Of course, such indicators can at times be quite small and statistical.

Another interesting aspect of the passage quoted is the last part, where the Desk refers to what we can call the triple base line of the OECD: "We are trying to recommend countries to pursue policies that *increase growth, lower inequality and enhance green growth*"[3334]. The casual comment that "it's

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[33] Another quotation emphasizes the relative flexibility or manoeuvering room when weighting the policy objectives of this triple baseline: *"The purpose of the OECD is to work towards better performance in the member countries: and performance can here be higher GNP growth or higher productivity or a better educational sector, or whatever! And then, within this framework, we analyze these individual policies to see if there is something to learn".* (Interview*)*

typically difficult to find recommendations that improve in all aspects of these"
is a telling truism, reminding us that there are few economic policies without
trade-offs, and no economic formula which, can objectively point to the best
policy solution, independently of policy objectives (see below "The OECD
line" section 4.5.2.).

No Desk reported having selected an issue chapter merely on the basis of
such "automatic" criteria, but Desks have used econometric analyses to support
and justify why they think that a particular issue should be examined in spite of
possible resistance by the country concerned. These approaches belong to what
I have called a horizontal thread: They refer to cross-country comparisons; they
take on what one informant here calls the "OECD-perspective" to identify pri-
orities for the country:

> *[It should be] something that we can see that the country clearly
> underperforms in. An area where you can see that there is room
> for improvement. It's much more difficult for us to go to, for
> example, Finland and say: "Hey, you need to change your
> educational system", given that they have one of the best. That is
> what I mean by "in an OECD perspective". It means that in a
> cross-country comparative sense, they are underperforming in
> this area". But this doesn't necessarily mean that there is the
> scope or need or interest domestically for doing reforms in this
> area!* (Interview).

Another horizontal argument for picking particular structural topics could be
related to strategic decisions by the OECD (and the EDRC) to highlight certain
topics as structural priorities (for instance, one informant told me that most
Desks would be expected to do a chapter on green growth at some time (inter-
view). Some Desks even referred to a certain OECD list which apparently rec-
ommended that certain topics be repeated on a regular basis. No-one, however,
reported to have seen this "mythical" list themselves, but Desks recall how "it
has been asked by the EDRC, the committee, that there's something on climate
change or Green Growth in each Survey" (interview). We may interpret this as

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[34] This triple baseline (a term from the literature on Corporate Social Responsibility-literature)
echoes the previous motto of the OECD "For a stronger, cleaner, fairer World Economy". For
the 50th anniversary, the OECD launched its new motto: Better Policies for Better Lives". One
informant commented: *"I actually prefer stronger-fairer-cleaner which at least had some
content to it. I'm not sure what better-policies-for better lives means [.....]. "Stronger" was
always associated with us, with - you know- liberal economist pushing growth-rate policies
and so on; but actually, there is a lot of work that goes on here that is very much concerned
with equity, the environment, and other things than simply generating GDP growth. We have
been working with this stuff for decades".*

a horizontal tendency relevant to the design dimension of Economic Surveys. It is a mechanism for bringing new, relevant policy issues into the reviews, as well as a mechanism for phasing out recommendations that no longer apply. One last criterion for selecting issues chapters is the following: Although no Desk would want to cover a topic which was analyzed in a very recent Survey, there is still a tendency to follow up on issues which repeatedly have been pointed out as problematic without any action taken by the country concerned (interview, also documented in correspondence with countries).

As we have seen, the selection of a topic to be appointed a structural priority for the country, whether identified by growth regression analysis or by more "standard" econometric methods and research, begins by pinpointing an area where the country is "underperforming" relative to other countries (relevant peers/benchmarks), and/or relative to its own estimated growth. However, as I shall discuss at more length later, the Desk also has considerations about the *relevance* of the topics they propose as structural priorities. Relevance was regularly pointed out as a consideration, in the sense that a topic which was indeed an important issue for the country, in terms of being a problem area, should at the same time not be a "complete non-starter" (interview) from the beginning.

> *We are the OECD, we're an intergovernmental organization. We're not a think tank. The think tank can just make a study say-ing: "Look, this is what the country should do. Full stop. Good-bye". But in our case, we're supposed to have a concrete impact of the welfare of people. So if we make recommendations that are* never *followed, and that have* no *impact, then I think at some point, we have a problem. Then our usefulness can be questioned* (interview).

Relevance to the member countries is identified as an important criterion of validity – often supplemented by the matter-of-fact comment: "After all, they pay our wages" (interviews). Relevance is an important term for OECD, which does not see itself as a disconnected think tank which can be completely uninterested in whether or not the countries decide to pick up the recommendations. As a consequence of this claim to relevance, I was told that the Desk would often choose not to pick a complete "non-starter" as a topic for an issue chapter, but concentrate on topics more likely to have an impact (interviews). As such, this criterion is also a verticalizing practice in the sense

that the selection of topics to some degree is a response to what one informant called "the center of gravity of the debate" (interview).

4.2.3. "We interact a lot with the country"

To make the point once more: The OECD is an intergovernmental organization, not an autonomous think tank – and that makes a difference. The Economics Department is the secretariat for the intergovernmental peer-review processes in the EDRC, which have been carried out since 1962. Denmark, like all other countries, has an Ambassador and a Financial Counsellor in Paris, who constitute a permanent delegation to the OECD. And issues and policy recommendations are discussed formally with the country under review during two missions to the country: The fact-finding mission and the policy mission:

> *At an early stage, the team from the OECD Secretariat visits the country and meets with a wide range of government officials, academics, social partners and other experts to collect information. Later on, the same team but now headed by a director goes on the policy mission to discuss the secretariat's tentative conclusions with top policy makers, such as the Minister of Finance, top government officials, the central bank and also labour unions and business confederations* (From OECD webpage).

Again, this co-operative approach highlights the peer-review aspect: The survey text is not in itself the examination of the country; the final "examiner" is the Economic and Development Review Committee (EDRC).[35] By implication,

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[35] In this aspect, the analysis echoes Ulrich Beck's concept of cosmopolitanism, in that there is a reflexive situation where a country's national closure is disturbed by a cosmopolitan perspective (see also Beck & Sznaider 2006). In Beck's World Risk Society, such *cosmopolitan moments* would of course be insights of, say, global inter-dependence or common threats, which could even lead to moments of "enforced enlightenment" (Beck 2009: 48f). I am not drawing a parallel between OECD interventions and the critical visions of Beck and others about a fundamentally different world, including their fundamental critiques of neo-institutional economics and the constitutive respect of difference (see Beck 2008). Philosophically, the cosmopolitanism of the OECD is arguably much more akin to Schumpeterian visions of creative destruction or Hayekian critiques of the state than to Beck's critical philosophical ancestors. Nevertheless, design dimensions of Economic Surveys do share the ambition of "enforced enlightenment" by creating situations where the country's performance is assessed and compared to other countries' performance and policy frameworks; and some of the OECD mechanisms (the "killer fact"; the policy story) are intended to work as *"design moments"* to move the country from methodological nationalism to a higher degree of professional economic reason (international consensus). Hence, the design logic goes beyond a simple evaluation of different policy proposals; it implies that the country is detached from certain institutionalized beliefs ("sacred cows") and reconfigured into a different mindset (for this analysis, see chapter 6). Hence, the difference between design thinking and governance/epistemology thinking also evokes dynamics of methodological nationalism vs. methodological "cosmopolitanism"; see also Thévenot's discussion of paradoxes of generalization below section 4.5

OECD country monitoring is strictly speaking not monitoring simply from the outside (by an authoritative organization), but rather an assessment on the basis of the generalizing, collective position of OECD members, looking at country performance from a common frame of reference: The cross-country comparative paradigm. Ongoing and close contact between the Desk and the country under review is an integrated feature of the OECD peer-review model, as described by the former Chairman of the EDRC, Niels Thygesen:

> *Eschewing both the more arms-length relation to governments of the IMF [..] and the tight embrace of EU governments in designing and discussing their national programs as part of the Lisbon Strategy, the OECD fosters an intensive exchange with the authorities of its member countries both during missions and in the finalisation of its Economic Surveys. At that latter stage it engages in a full day of intensive debate between the visiting national authorities and the EDRC Economic and Financial Counsellors, sometimes reinforced by officials from capitals, bringing to bear the policy experience of their countries* (Thygesen in OECD 2008).

As a part of the review process, there are, as mentioned above, two official visits (missions) to the country under review: First, a "structural mission" or "fact-finding mission" which tries to ensure that all the necessary information has been gathered and that there is some common ground concerning the analysis of the economic problems facing the country under review. Later, when the issue chapter is drafted, and central issues and policy recommendations have been decided, comes the policy mission, where "the Secretariat's initial assesment is discussed with the authorities" (for more, see OECD 2003[36]; see Harper 1998 for an account of an IMF mission).

Alongside these formal and extensive missions to the country under review, involving many stakeholders, there is also frequent contact between the Desk and the administration of the country concerned. "We interact a lot with the country", I was told (Interview). Close contact between the Desk and the country under review is a fully integrated feature, with the purpose of securing the validity of the Survey in terms of the vertical virtues of relevance, accuracy and in-depth understanding of the country. However, the reliance on the coun-

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[36] I have had access to background material from one Country Mission (summary report; issues for discussion). However, due to their confidential character this material is used solely for background purposes.

tries also expresses more practical concerns like questions of manpower, and the geographical distance between Paris and the country concerned. Indeed,

> *The quality of the Secretariat's draft Survey is heavily dependent on the co-operation of the authorities in submitting all the relevant information in a timely manner"* (www.oecd.org)[37]

Arguably, one of the lesser known facts about the OECD is these cooperative relations between the OECD and the examined country. To understand the collaborative nature of peer-review knowledge production (as opposed to bi-polar models of student/examiner or subject/object), one must understand the degree of collaboration and interdependence between the OECD secretariat and the country under review (which is described by OECD economists as "our counterparts" or "our interlocutors". (In Chapter 5, this will be discussed at more length, as will the significance of the fact that the EDRC is part of the relation between the Secretariat and the country under review - sometimes as a buffer, at other times as a symbolic coordinator).

4.2.4. The in-depth chapters: Structural policy analysis "from a strictly economic point of view"

> *Each Economic Survey starts with a one-page executive summary followed by the assessment and recommendations which contain the conclusions of the Survey. Thereafter each Economic Survey comprises a number of more detailed chapters. For Surveys published since autumn 2003, chapter 1 sets the scene by identifying the main economic challenges faced by the country. The subsequent chapters analyse each of these challenges in depth as a basis for the Survey's assessment and recommendations for policy initiatives to improve economic performance* (from OECD webpage).

When the Desk returns from the fact-finding mission, the analytical work of locating the problem and drafting the in-depth chapter begins. This is work which requires that the Desk dig into the country-specific institutional analysis:

> *What we do in the surveys is work where you cannot merely apply econometric analysis. You cannot just make a regression and that will be the answer. You have to have a broader and more intuition based discourse, which then with professional judgment becomes the conclusion.* (Interview).

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[37] http://www.oecd.org/site/peerreview/peerreviewsineconomicsurveys.htm. Latest access 23.2.14

Thus, in the words of my informant, the drafting of Economic Surveys requires "a broader and more intuition based discourse, which then with professional judgment becomes the conclusion". The intuition referred to here is not a kind of subjective intuition, but the intuition of the professional economist at the country-specific end of the continuum. Another word used by OECD economists to describe this economic intuition is "holistic". As one OECD economist described the expertise of his colleagues in the Country Studies branch:

> They think holistically. They are very good at thinking in terms of wholes, and they are strong in assessing what is large and significant, and what is small and minor. You can point them to almost any topic (interview).

What is here called the holistic approach was in other interviews described as analysis "from a strictly economic point of view".[38] This shows that we should be careful not to jump to simplified and dualistic conclusions about the work of the Policy Studies Branch as being general and technological, and the work of Country Studies as being particular and authentic.[39] As recorded above, the Desk also takes the evidence-based, cross-country comparative paradigm as the starting point for its analysis. Nevertheless, from here we see how the "holistic" way of building the policy story ("identifying structural priorities, locating the problem, proposing policy recommendations") connects to the vertical dimension, as it "[b]egins at the most aggregate level and goes down to see where the problem is" (interview, quoted above). This move towards the country specific requires quite a lot of detailed knowledge of local institutions, regulations etc. (see Chapter 6 for more details). Nevertheless, there are limits

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[38] More generally, the term "strictly economic point of view" also refers to the pure, mono-disciplinary economic analysis, as for instance in the following quotation: *"I see myself as a travelling salesman in economic incentives. I do not have any money to give, and I am not to decide if money is better spent on one project or another. That is for the countries to decide. But given that the decision has been made to build a wind farm or whatever, I can tell the country how to do this in the cheapest, or smartest or most cost-effective way". (OECD*)* This again emphasizes one aspect of international policy advice: When the analyst here says that "*we never recommend anything which costs money*" (interview), this is not solely an ideological commitment to the market, but also an effect of the fact that "we don't have any money to give" (a basic fact of the social organization of knowledge – soft governance (see also the discussion later in this chapter about international consensus).

[39] See Karin Knorr-Cetina 2009 for a similar critique of subjectivist actor explanations in the sociology of finance; also Marcus 2008 for a similar discussion of the case of Alan Greenspan's judgment/decision making; The analysis in this chapter emphasizes that, instead of such dichotomies (between the human and the technological, the micro and the macro), the model is proposed as a tool to analyze a gliding scale between the country level and the cross-country level.

to how many details and how much context specificity the Desk includes in the analysis. Not only because there are limits to the level of institutional detail to be achieved by the individual OECD economist based in Paris and working with a limited amount of resources. But also because such extremely detailed operational analysis falls outside of the zone of OECD expertise. It is too country specific:

> *One could say that it is a problem that I am unable to tell the Irish anything about Ireland which they don't already know. But what I can do, and what very few in the world can do, is to compare the Irish system with other systems. So I'm an international expert, you can say that. But in general, in the Economics Department– due to our size – we do try to cover quite broadly. If you go to the [OECD departments of Agriculture or Fishing, for example, they will know all the literature within their field. We can't do that, because we change topics so often. So we know the literature extremely well, but we are not experts* (Interview)[40]

This ability to know "when you know enough" (interview); to know "when I don't need more details to do the evaluation" was pointed out by several informants as an important asset when doing analyses. Without the capability of knowing when a particular level of detail suffices for the purposes of OECD-recommendations, one would simply "be crushed by the pressure" and "never get pen to paper" (interview). This capability seems to stem from knowing the zone of international expertise of OECD Surveys: Between the (over)general and general, and the (too) country specific.

The format of any Survey is the following: First page (front page), basic statistics of the country, Assessment & Recommendation Section, Executive Summary. Then follows a "fiscal chapter" also called a "macro chapter", providing the basic assessment of the country: Is the country "going well or badly" (see also 6.5.3.)

This so-called "situation of the country" is largely assessed on the basis of standard indicators: Labour market statistics, public debt, GDP, actual as well as potential productivity (summed up as the so-called output gap, indicating the distance between the country's real output and an estimated figure of what this output –ideally – could be if the country was able to produce at the height of its potential (interview). After this assessment (against the OECD benchmark (av-

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[40] For reasons of confidentiality, the name of the country has been changed.

erage, rankings) or relevant peer groups) follows an appendix entitled 'progress in structural reform' and then one – or more – in-depth chapters focusing on topics which, from the point of view of the OECD, ought to be a priority for the government in order to improve growth. This format represents a narrative in itself: a policy story. As one Country Desk official describes it:

> *Well it's a story. So you should read… in theory, when reading the first chapter, you should understand the situation of the country now, what are the problems and why. And then, after the first chapter, you have the chapters that explain, and give some indications on the policy to solve this problem. (Interview)*

This assessment of the situation of the country, as well as the analysis of the situation, is one area which distinguishes the daily work practices of the OECD economists from their colleagues in other organizations - an area where the particular comparative leverage of the OECD is produced by the economic routine practices. For instance, each time a table of performance indicators is produced, the Desk official – or the statistical assistant! – must perform the meticulous work of selecting relevant peer groups for comparison , integrating the data from these countries from the OECD databases and, on this basis, composing comparative tables and figures.

The Desk will have maybe two or three months to do this work before a first draft will be presented to the country during the policy mission. These months are spent analyzing the problem/area and trying to come up with policy recommendations to solve the problem or improve the condition. Since the issues covered in the special chapter can be anything from housing and pension systems, to education, productivity or green growth, the Desk needs the ability to provide a coherent analysis of the often very complicated institutional arrangements of the country: How pension funds, housing benefits, taxing, educational systems or the health system work in the country under review. A reader who believes that professional economists and international organizations mainly work with long- and short-term growth projections or other advanced modeling would probably be surprised – as I was – by the actual level of institutional (vertical, country specific) detail which actually goes into this analytical work in the issue chapters, be it on pension reform systems, rent and eligibility, unemployment benefit systems or numbers of students in secondary grade, to take a few examples). Not a small task – especially not if you are new

on a desk![41] Here follows one example of a country analyzing the problem of productivity:

> *I guess the starting point of this Survey was to see that [the country under review] had quite low productivity growth in the recent period, so then we said: Well, there may be a problem of productivity. That is why there is a chapter on productivity. And then we ask ourselves: Why? What can be the origin of productivity going down? And one possibility was some problem in the education system, so that's why we have this chapter on education also, so[...] this was [...] the starting point, and so all the stories [in the survey] are on this [problem] of productivity slowing down in [the country.]* (Interview).

From the initial statement (observation) that the country is lagging behind in productivity, the analysts conduct an analysis which in economic terms is called decomposing: "Why does the country rank as it does"? This is not the same question as merely "What is the cause of this and that? or "What seems to be the main explanation of productivity slowing down?"). Decomposition analysis doesn't establish the causes, but rather the "sources" of the problem: "Where does the main problem seem to lie?". In this decomposition, we are told, the Desk begins "from the most aggregate way of looking at the country" (the ranking, the benchmark), and then tries to go down:

> *The main idea is to see how the country ranks when you look at the GDP pro capita. To see: Is it a rich or not a rich country, basically; and then to see: where does it come from? I mean, I can have high GDP per capita, because I don't know that there is a high level of employment, or because people are very productive. So it's a way of decomposition to determine why [some country] ranks quite well and not far from the most wealthy countries; but also to see where the problems are. We start here* [at the ranking, MDL], *and then we try to go down to see, where are the problems?* (interview).

For the analytical purpose of understanding the intersection between the horizontal and the vertical dimension, it is of course interesting when we are told

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[41] "*We used to know more about less*", one informant commented on this structural turn in the OECD under the headline of "better policies for better lives". The context of this quotation was the increasing number of topics (e.g., green growth), which Country Surveys are being asked to cover We may say that this contributes to a levelling of the Desk's knowledge practices which have heard described as "holistic"; rather than detail oriented: "*You can point them to almost any topic*".

that the country specific analysis is conducted "from the cross-country perspective "and down", by means of econometric analysis. Its starting point is the cross-country level, but Economic Surveys should never stay at this most aggregate, (over) general level This is another conclusion to be drawn from the account of how the analysis - at the Desks, too - proceeds largely by way of a cross-country comparative analysis, and looks for problems in places where the country seems to be deviating from what is generally considered best practices. The next chapter will give some more detailed examples of this by concentrating on an analysis of the housing sector in one member country.

Appendix: Progress in structural reform

In my early reading to familiarize myself with the Economic Surveys, one aspect of the Surveys that struck me as strange was their very direct and outspoken commitment to a reform agenda. This was expressed in the obligatory *Annex* (appendix) called: "Progress in structural reform". This annex will over 2-3 pages list recommendations from previous surveys classified under major headlines like "education", "fiscal framework and taxation", "competition", etc., and will then record "action taken" on these recommendations in quite some detail, if such policy action has indeed taken place. If not, the annex simply says: "No action". As I was told, this annex has become part of the Surveys on the initiative of the EDRC (which we will in the next chapter see described as a "reform committee"); in fact, this annex fulfills the function of following up on recommendations, and making sure that neither the recommendations, nor the policy action (or the absence of such action) on the part of the country under review), fall into oblivion:

> *We need to take stock of the structure reforms done by each country, on the issues that we have raised in previous Surveys. So in theory, we should have a box with all the issues that have been there. But it is becoming more and more complicated because we do a lot on each Survey. So we can choose now. We can either still have this kind of table with the recommendations and then give the action made by the country. But another way to do it is to integrate this by referring that it is an issue and explaining what the country did or did not do"[MDL: "And what is sort of the philosophy behind this stock-taking?"] It's really to give credit to the country for the action they did. Because otherwise, each time we ask them, for instance to do some stuff [...]on education. And*

then, in the next Survey, we won't speak about education much, while they actually did do something. So it's to give credit to the country. And it is also a way to say: "Well, we don't have a chapter on health in this Survey, but there were some recommendations that we did before that are still valid, and they didn't do anything (interview).

As we can see, these tables are not merely historical, but are active tools reminding the countries of possible unimplemented policy recommendations. We may interpret this as an important *horizontalizing* move: Although the recommendations are still considered valid and important for the country, they are not merely included in the Survey as part of the in-depth analysis of the problem of that Survey, but also as a commitment to the ongoing work of keeping what are considered structural priorities on the agenda. They are also there to ensure that countries are rewarded (given credit) for taking action on the Surveys, or, conversely, "shamed and blamed" if they do not. (See also OECD 2003; Guilmette 2007, Armingeon 2004; for similar "stock-taking in the Going for Growth-publication see section 5.4.3 this dissertation).

As such, we may say that the Annex does quite important design work in the sense of making sure that the Surveys do not merely attend to actual, selected problems for the country here and now, but also do the ongoing work of continuously promoting recommended policies. Hence, the progress on structural reform is one area which exemplifies the dual task of Economic Surveys - and consequently also the proactive design dimension of Economic Surveys, as formulated by an informant:

In fact, in the Economic Surveys, we do [two things]. We have discussed priority setting [i.e. what structural priorities the countries should have, MDL]. But in fact, the flip side of this is that we follow up on the recommendations that we make. We follow up on the actions taken by countries in each of the areas. So... there are sort of deep questions here" (interview).

The next two sections will look more into these "deep questions" of the work, which the surveys are designed to do.

4.3. Practices and paradoxes of evidence-based policy recommendations

Working on conventional forms when they are shaken by doubt about their practical use or difficulties in their establishment, brought to light the paradox of coded forms [paradoxe du co-

dage] (Thévenot 1984) which is already expressed in the banal request for more and more detailed classifications. The clash results from two incompatible orientations: making more general; doubting the relevance of generalization. [...] Unfolding this paradox helps tackle the structural tension within any engagement and its quest of guarantee: the quietude deriving from the trust or even faith placed in institutionally coded forms faces the inquietude aroused by the sacrifices which forms require and which provoke criticism of arbitrariness and abusive power (Thévenot 2011: 37)

We have so far followed the weaving together of the horizontal and the vertical threads in the identification of structural priorities for the Survey, as well as (briefly) in the economic analysis of the issue chapters. It is now time to discuss the topic of the *policy recommendations*. This section will continue to analyze what is recognized as "good OECD-recommendations" using the prism of the identified form and aesthetic of OECD messages: The zone between the (over) general and the (too) country specific. I opened this section with a quote by Laurent Thévenot about the inherent paradoxes involved in institutional processes of generalization - what he calls the paradox of coded forms "resulting from two incompatible orientations: making more general; doubting the relevance of generalization" (see immediately above). I shall argue that one advantage of focusing on the aesthetics of OECD knowledge claims is exactly that it helps unfold such paradoxes of generalization which are at the core of both OECD knowledge practices and central to how they enter into economic policy debates, and how they are received in the member countries.

The following section will unfold some 'practices and paradoxes of evidence-based policy recommendations' – or in this context 'practices and paradoxes of operating within the zone between the (over)general and the (too) country specific', with its inherent tensions between the horizontal and the vertical. Here, I use this form as a way of describing what good OECD-recommendations are. The section begins by presenting the role of the Policy Studies Branch and the publication "Going for Growth" in developing a body of work of evidence based policy analysis. After this – and still following Riles' approach – I analyze the OECD line as a commitment to "follow international consensus". In this way, I open for a discussion of the analytical potential of focusing on this commitment to shared forms of knowledge (the evidence-based paradigm) rather than focusing on its convergence with neo-liberal economic theory and methodology. The following two sections present,

first, how Desks deal in practice with the "One Size Fits All" problem; and secondly, the so called "antagonistic dimension" of good OECD-recommendations, which we shall later learn to recognize as an important part of the design dimension of Economic Surveys. I conclude by underlining the general message of the chapter: that the result of this levelling of the general and the particular should not be interpreted as an equilibrium – a perfect balance reached once and for all, and in the same way, by all Desks and all publications.

4.3.1. Deciding on evidence-based policy recommendations

So far, this chapter has briefly covered how topics are selected and how the analysis of structural chapters proceeds. The third step in this account of the drafting process is the policy recommendations; and as we shall see, for the OECD, the practice of providing policy recommendations "from a strictly economic point of view" equals providing evidence-based policy recommendations, whenever available and applicable. To locate the work of evidence-based policies in the Economics Department, we need to leave for a second the Countries Studies Branch and pass through the quiet corridors to the offices occupied by the Policy Studies Branch. The cross-country work of identifying evidence-based policies belongs to the horizontal, cross-country thread, since evidence defined as "links between, for example, education policies and productivity" is "difficult to establish at a single country level" (interview). What should be counted as evidence-based best practice cannot be identified and established at the local (or single-country) level but at the level of international comparisons – the cross-country level.

The Policy Studies Branch deals with the continuous cross-country benchmarking, and performs the empirical policy analysis establishing evidence for successful policies.[42] This cross-country (horizontal) work is reported in the "flagship publication" for economic policy: Going for Growth (2005 onwards) – an annual publication which, according to the OECD-webpage, "provides an overview of structural policy developments in OECD countries from a comparative perspective"; "takes stock of recent progress in implementing policy reforms to improve labour productivity and utilization" and "enables countries to assess their economic performance and structural policies in a broad range of

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[42] It should be noted that apart from these publications, the peer review meetings are another arena for circulating policy experience.

areas" (Going for Growth webpage[43]). The purpose of this work is here explained by a senior economist at the Policy Studies Branch:

> *When we started the Going for Growth exercise, the idea was that we would come up with some policy recommendations for each country that would be based partly on expert judgment - basically the assessment of country Desks of what are the priorities for each country - but partly, and increasingly so, on empirical studies that would try to provide - in quotes – "scientific evidence" of the link between certain policies and outcomes. So on our side of the Economic Department, we do this kind of research which is mostly based on the cross-country view* (interview)

Thus, the evidence-based paradigm should support more "scientific" policy advice, that is to say: policy advice derived from empirical studies, not merely from theory. This again situates the zone of OECD expertise as being placed beneath the (over) general (in the sense of theory). OECD policy advice should not only be based on good theory; the cross-country view claims that if the OECD proposes, say, property taxes rather than taxes on labour, this should be because there is sound evidence that this is the best policy. The institutional ethnography of the present study should of course neither agree nor disagree with this view, but merely point to how "the cross-country view" - the emphasis on empirical evidence - is a central matter of concern for the OECD as an organization (see, for instance, Cartwright 2012 for a discussion of evidence). We may even, paraphrasing Marshall MacLuhan say that the medium (methodology) is indeed the message: OECD messages should not merely convince "people and governments" about the practical reasons for selecting one policy over another in concrete situations; they must also, at a more general level, do the work in the national policy debates of advocating the view of "more scientific" evidence and trying to create agreement about the value of international benchmarks.[44]

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[43] http://www.oecd.org/eco/growth/going-for-growth-previous-editions.htm Last accessed 23.3.2014

[44] Marshall McLuhan: "What you print is nothing compared to the effect of the printed word. The printed word sets up a paradigm, a structure of awareness which affects everybody in very, very drastic ways. And it doesn't very much matter what you print as long as you go on within that activity" (Marshall MacLuhan lecture: "The medium is the message" - lecture made available at http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ImaH51F4HBw (last accessed 23.3.14). In the same way, we may point to the ongoing effect of the medium (evidence based, cross-country paradigm) which can sometimes be quite independent of its individual propositions (content). Of course, MacLuhan's statement here is quite bold and general, and for the empirical purpose of

To further understand the work that Economic Surveys are designed to do in terms of the form (or aesthetic) of its knowledge practices, we may turn to the first issue of Going for Growth (2005) which was introduced in the following way:

> *Surveillance processes at the OECD already include country-specific and sector-specific surveys that cover all member countries. What they do not yet include, however, is cross-country surveillance of growth, based on systematic benchmarking and with a view to advising member countries on national priorities. In the context of stalling convergence, benchmarking may help expose more clearly the areas where countries are lagging. Successful benchmarking may also be easier to accomplish at a time when substantial progress has been made in cross-country data availability and econometric analysis* (OECD Going for Growth 2005, continues)

And the introduction continues:

> *The main aim of this new publication is [..] to facilitate the transfer of successful national experiences while avoiding the pitfalls of "one-size-fits-all" policy prescriptions that would impinge on legitimate international diversity".* (OECD Going for Growth 2005).

We recognize Thévenot's paradox of generalizations here behind the words of the editor making the institutional claim that "Going for Growth" should on the one hand "facilitate the transfer of successful national experiences" while, on the other, "avoiding the pitfalls of "one-size-fits-all" policy prescriptions that would impinge on legitimate international diversity" (Going for Growth 2005).

We also see how the institutional solution to this paradox lies in the close coordination of the horizontal and the vertical dimensions. Hence, one analytical virtue about stating that OECD-recommendations operate at the level between the (too) country specific and the (over)general is exactly that it enables us to analyze how the work on Country Studies and the work of the Policy Studies Branch are coordinated. As I was told, Economic Surveys and Going for Growth must be analyzed *"as an integrated product"* (interview). Indeed – as we shall see more clearly in the next analyses - to analyze the work of Coun-

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capturing the dynamics of OECD messages, I shall in Chapter 6 raise a somewhat related argument about the relations between the epistemological dimensions (content) and the design dimensions (message) of Country Surveys following Verran.

try Studies alone will – to borrow a metaphor from Bruno Latour – "be like watching half the court during a tennis game; it appears as so many meaningless moves" (Latour 1992: 247).

However, another way to miss out of half of the game would be to analyze the published Economic Surveys merely as a system for disseminating evidence-based policy analysis. This would indeed be (over)general. Economic Surveys and the peer-review institution is also an organization of knowledge designed to share experiences[45]:

> *Another thing about being helpful to the debate is trying to find new ways of presenting information, of finding other evidence, which may help people to be more conscious about what should be done. And maybe other countries have found a way which is helpful to look at, in order to solve their own problem. So this is one way of helping the debate; one way in which you can - I would say - open new domains of reflections to enrich in a sense the discussion* (interview, continued from above).

Indeed, in the institutional discourse of the OECD, this intersection between Policy Studies and Country Studies, between the evidence paradigm and the peer review, is presented as the warrant for the relevance and quality of the organization. The form is indeed central for justifying the validity of the work and the relevance of the organization. As such, we may even say that the aesthetic placement of Economic Surveys between the (too) country specific and the (over)general comes close to being presented as as a solution to Thévenot's problem of the "montée en géneralité" – the inherent paradox in evidence-based, comparative policy advice.

4.3.2. The OECD line
The main message of this chapter – that Economic Surveys are proportioned to operate in the zone between the (too) country specific and the (over)general – also has implications for how we interpret what one might call the "general OECD line" or, in the institutional discourse, "what we [the OECD] normally recommend" (interview). Some actors speak of the "OECD-paradigm", and this may therefore be where the ethnographer seems called upon to either con-

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[45] Indeed, at the EDRC you would hear many remarks from national counsellors like: "Look to [country A] to see what they have done; or : "Do you remember the discussion we had at the review of [country B]? Maybe you want to put that into the Survey" (field notes from observation at the EDRC).

firm or deny that OECD is peopled by – in the caricaturing words of an OECD economist - "soulless horrible liberal marketeers" (interview).

In my engagement with OECD knowledge claims, I consider the analysis of the OECD to be what one could call an "intra-liberal" analysis: The latin prefix ('*intrā*' meaning *within or on the inside*) at one and the same time places the OECD as belonging to a diversified class of neo-liberalisms, and emphasizes the inside-out commitment of institutional ethnography to move the playing field from discussing the OECD as a center disseminating neo-liberalism into its periphery (member countries), to discuss questions like "how does the evidence based-paradigm operate in a transnational sphere?" or "how does evidence perform design work?" But of course, this interest in the form and generality of OECD knowledge claims does not prevent us from noting how OECD-recommendations as a rule go in the direction of the market- oriented and growth-friendly:

> *It is indeed so that the normal approach from the OECD would be: "What can the market do about this problem?" Before we look for some kind of interventionist solution, we will always look to find a market solution. So that's it. There is nothing secret about that. Furthermore, one could say that this is also something representing a consensus, an international consensus: that this is a sensible and reasonable role for an international organization: Before throwing more sand into the market machine – and this can indeed be a sensible thing to do in the many cases where it doesn't function very well - [...] could we identify something simple, which we could repair so that the market actually functions. That will be our first step* (interview).

And the informant continues in a way which captures very well the meaning of providing analysis "from a strictly economic point of view":

> *People here can indeed have very strong commitments to, for instance, green issues, but they would tend to focus on identifying the relevant economic instruments. And similarly, individuals who care strongly about equality and social distribution would still point to instruments which do not, so to speak, "diminish the cake as a whole" and hence to make the needed redistribution in the cheapest possible way, so to speak, for the economy as a whole* (interview).

This lengthy interview quotation is interesting, because it describes the OECD line in terms of an "international consensus": What the OECD recommends is

largely what "most economists would say" (interview).[46]. Another informant described the OECD line as a general acceptance of "economic theory as it is today" (interview). In the institutional discourse used by OECD staff in my interviews with them, the OECD line is not one simple line dictated from above:

> *I am not sure there is a simple OECD line. Based on talking to others, I suspect the OECD philosophy is one of a commitment to a mixed market economy where the government and private sectors play a role in a society supported by democratic institutions. Given that the membership includes the United States and Nordic countries I suspect there would be a variety of views about what this might mean for the role of the private sector and government* (e-mail from Desk).

What this inside-out, intra-liberal analysis unfolds is how this OECD line is constructed when the Desks perform the exercise of coordinating the horizontal (cross-country, evidence-based OECD consensus) with the vertical ("what goes on in the country"). This more symbolic interactionist approach also allows us to understand the interpretative flexibility with which the OECD may, from Desk to Desk, from one country to another, position itself somewhat differently in relation to the OECD line as it was formulated above, and as we shall see it unfolded in more detail in Chapter 5; as one means of balancing relevance to the member countries against the general line of OECD-recommendations.

4.3.3. One Size Fits All?

> *People always criticize the OECD for being "One Size Fits All", and then I say: "You would be surprised to what degree one size actually will fit most – and we do go to great lengths to find out where they do not fit!* (Conversation, field notes).

Furthermore, to discuss the OECD line in terms of concrete *proportioning* practices rather than in terms of neo-liberalism helps us – to quote Riles – focus on understanding "the concrete moments of neo-liberal reform" (Riles 2011: 2).– such as the problem and paradoxes of "whether one size fits all"? or Laurent Thévenot the paradox of generalization is inescapable; a "structural

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[46] As well as in the constant development of data, standards and methods allowing for what Going for Growth calls "deep benchmarks" or "intelligent benchmarks" – benchmarks which can discriminate between best policies for different policy purposes (growth vs. redistribution) (information from interview, also Going for Growth (OECD 2005 quoted above).

tension": [...] The quietude deriving from the trust or even faith placed in institutionally coded forms faces the inquietude aroused by the sacrifices which forms require and which provoke criticism of arbitrariness and abusive power" (Thevenot 2011: 37). And, as expressed in Going for Growth (2005), the coordination of the horizontal and the vertical dimension at the OECD can largely be explained as a strategy for dealing with this trade-off of generalization; "the pitfalls of "one-size-fits-all" policy prescriptions that would impinge on legitimate international diversity" (Going for Growth 2005).

This section will move from the organizational and programmatic to the knowledge practices at the Desks, and examine some concrete practices and strategies used by Desks to avoid "one-size-fits-all" recommendations. We open with the following excerpt from an interview where a Desk analyst summarizes the problematic in the following way:

> *The big leverage [of the OECD] comes from the comparative, and that then leads to the question: Does one size fits all? And, you know, the answer generally is no. There are spheres of policy where we see a lot of convergence; and where it seems to make sense. But there are a lot of spheres of policy where, even if the basic principles are accepted, there is a lot of variation because they do depend on the kinds of distributional choices societies make because of the institutions they already have, etc. etc. So I would never want to be associated with a cookie-cutter-kind-of-recommendation. There are times when I think we have produced work in this organization which can look dangerously like cookie-cutter-kind-of-recommendations, particularly when we have published big cross-national studies, you know, that have brought findings. But I think when you talk to people who work on country reviews, by and large [those] people know better* (Interview).

In my interviews with OECD economists, I was told about three options or strategies used with regard to this problem of how to avoid "cookie-cutter-kind-of-recommendations" - a problem which is obviously immanent to OECD knowledge production.

One strategy is for the OECD analyst to stick to the general recommendation, but to "try to make the recommendation fit the country" and adapt the recommendation to local institutional structures. One example I was given comes from the field of education and the PISA (Programme for International Student Assessment) programme. The PISA programme is arguably the most widely known and most controversial OECD-programme, which, as my informant

described it "gives cross-country, comparable measurements of the fifteen-year-olds, and then links the statistics of that type of cross-country variation on the scores to various pieces of information that we have about education systems" (interview). He continues to recall how he in one survey applied PISA conclusions:

> One of the few things that is both plausible and seems to be a statistical regularity is that systems where you push or classify children too early into academic and non-academic streams, [...] do worse. And so we would say: You know, you shouldn't do that! Logically, what you have to do is just not put people in[to] different schools until a year later. But that would in fact be the 'one size fits all'-policy", for to propose that – given the fact that the students actually physically change schools – that recommendation would reduce the size of the other schools by twenty-five percent, and increase the size of the middle school by twenty-five percent. That would be 'one size fits all', and it would be stupid [.] It's better if we say: You should aim for that, but in practice because of the [institutional structure], the very least thing you could do is [to] stream people for the first year of the upper school, but try to make sure that the two kinds [of schools] actually have the same character (interview)

Another strategy/outcome is where the analyst goes for a general recommendation and insists that "in this case, one size does actually fit all".

> Sometimes you would have a 'one size fits all' thing because you've got some economic reasons for it. One thing could be that we propose, for instance, some kind of users' fee, and you know that this is not going to be very popular in that country. But in this case, we're pretty sure of ourselves. There is not some kind of fundamental thing that's different about Country A from elsewhere. But there's a resistance to doing it in the country. And then the trick is to [present the evidence: the studies]. So you produce a 'one size fits all' policy. We do say: Well, this looks like an example of 'one size fits all', but in fact, in this case, one size does fit all (interview).

In this example, where there is a resistance to a general recommendation (users' fees), the OECD analyst has to discuss with the country under review why that country is not an exception to the general rule. He makes a point of intentionally, explicitly "*producing a one size fits all*"-argument, for the purpose of documenting why that country is no exception to the general rule.

A third strategy would be for the OECD (the Desk) – or probably more often: the country - to argue that the country is in certain cases actually an exception, and that the general line of recommendations should be abandoned because of some special features. I observed this line of reasoning at two occasions at feedback meetings, and it was later explained to me by one Director: "If there is a convincing argument that the OECD position is wrong in this case, then that's fine, but not just because the Desk feels that way. That's not good enough" (interview). So the third strategy for avoiding a potential "one size fits all" recommendation is to make the case why some principle doesn't apply in a particular instance. This policy story should – as expressed in the quotation above – point to "some fundamental thing that is different in [that country]". This third strategy – just like the other two – operates from a logic which begins in the - horizontal - general recommendation: "What we would normally recommend", and then either presents the policy story about why this country is an exception to the rule; the policy story about why the general recommendation holds in the actual case; or the policy story about why the general recommendations holds, but should be modified somewhat due to particular institutional realities in the country.

4.3.4. Design qualities of good recommendations

We have heard how good Surveys – defined as reports which operate in the zone between the general and the particular – should not be "one-size-fits-all"; they should be relevant for the country and demonstrate a sound knowledge of "what goes on in the country" (interview). At the same time – most importantly – they should reflect comparative, evidence-based policy analysis. However, there is one more key quality to good recommendations: They should be "a bit antagonistic", I was told:

> *I think sometimes our job is to antagonize our principles a bit by pointing at what first best would be, even if we know that the chances of its adoption are pretty much zero* (interview)

They should try to push something extra into the debate: "We like to be ahead of the debate", as I was told (OECD). It was this slightly provocative aspect of OECD Surveys which initially caught my interest, and I learned to recognize it as a central dimension of what it means "to be helpful to the debate" and hence of the design dimensions of the OECD[47].

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[47] The opposite to this is "the boring Survey" (interview); a Survey without any antagonistic qualities would not be very well respected among OECD staff; in terms of the analysis of this

This dimension of OECD-messages can also be characterized aesthetically in terms of a particular proportioning of the recommendations. As shown in the following quotation, we may also understand this in terms of an intensive tension between *horizontalizing* and *verticalizing* practices, which the Desk officer must try to achieve in her/his analysis: This involves, at one and the same time, inserting cross-country items (propositions) into a national debate; making reference to cross-country evidence; and paying continual attention to proposing structural priorities which are a little bit beyond or outside of what the country under review itself has on the agenda.

The recommendations should not be "too country specific", in the sense of being already fully in line with what the government already intended to do:

> *Sometimes, in some cases, it is more important to convince the government, and in other cases, convincing the government is not enough. Because the government is fully agreeing on what you are saying – so at the end of the day you have to convince the people. I mean helping the debate is not trying to repeat what the government is saying* (Interview, Desk).

On the other hand, policy recommendations should not go completely beyond the debate:

> *We have become more nuanced over the years, and more aware of the countries' institutional details. Among other things, I think this evolution has also resulted from that we could see that some of our recommendations were [...] <u>never</u> followed. To take one example: [a particular policy] – it would never happen. It has never been on the agenda of <u>any</u> political party – not even the fairly right-wing ones. So basically: Do you want to keep repeating the same thing forever? Or do you want to tailor your recommendations to the specific situation of the country? I think, obviously we moved towards the second [...] option* (Interview).

Obviously, an experienced Desk official, who knows the country well and possibly speaks the language, has more possibilities than a newcomer of striking this balance and proportioning the recommendations so that they actually have an impact. Here, the same experienced Desk economist reports how he attunes his recommendations to what he calls "the center of gravity of the debate":

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chapter: because it does not fully meet the expectations concerning the work that Surveys should do, since it does not comply with the aesthetics of the Surveys (in this case: by conforming too closely to the country view)

We say: Look, this is what has been done by other countries with similar problems; this is a way to proceed. But here, it is important to understand where the [center of] gravity of the debate is [in the member state], if you want to understand the possible consequences of what you write. So you have to follow the debate! One example could be [a country] which uses a lot of coal. Such a country would need a lot of investment in infrastructure, and sometimes the question would be if it is too costly for the country to do that, since producing electricity with coal is cheap whereas producing electricity with wind or solar energy may be much more costly. So here the question is: Should the country be a leader in the effort to reduce CO2 emission or should it be a follower?". "In this case, the country was somewhat in favour at least of trying to solve the problem by being a leader in this domain and push forward for agreements at an international level. But at the same time, it was unsure if it would be too costly, and if should rather wait for the US to decide what to do. So this part of the debate is important, and for most questions, you have to know what you are telling in the moment you are writing. I mean, this was really a hot potato, and maybe not really helping the debate by creating more turbulence. So it is important to know exactly where the center of gravity is, just to know to what point you can push in one direction if you are discussing something a bit sensitive (Interview).

Here, the Desk economist describes his careful considerations about how to help the debate "by not creating more turbulence" in a situation where the country (government) was already moving towards the desired outcome of pursuing greener policies. In this case, the Desk made great efforts to "understand the possible consequences of what you write"; what he calls the "*center of gravity of the debate*": where it is going, or might be going. At other times, according to my interviews, it seems quite unpredictable what parts of a Survey will be picked up, make headlines and have immediate impact in the country under review (interview). This again is a characteristic of the design order which will be developed further in chapter 5. What we can note here is that to be helpful to the debate, recommendations must again operate between the too country specific ("day to day business"; "kicking an open door in"; "the actual"; "repeating what the government is saying") and the over general (the irrelevant, the non-starter). Good recommendations, I was told, *"do not attempt to kick in an open door*" (conversation reported in field notes); nor is the purpose of the recommendations to propose something which is too far beyond "the center of gravity of the debate in the member countries". As we have seen in

this section, both of these lines of argument would fail on the design dimension of Economic Surveys, and hence also fail on the criterion of the relevance of the OECD as an intergovernmental organization, which should not merely to propose correct recommendations, but in each case work towards "having a concrete impact on the welfare of people" (see above, 4.2.2.). What we see is that the zone between the (too) country specific and the (over) general is also a zone between the redundant and the irrelevant. To be relevant – a central claim for the organization – Economic Surveys must sustain the connection between the horizontal and the vertical dimension.

4.3.5. The Making of OECD messages: Not an equilibrium

The analytical form of pointing to the zone between the (too) country specific and the (over) general has proved useful for pinpointing significant aspects of the work of the OECD. It has also proved useful for demonstrating how this particular knowledge aesthetic is not merely an arbitrary, superficial style but a profound institutional principle of organization. But - to be sure - the point of the inside-out ethnography is not to persuade the reader that all OECD-surveys strike the perfect balance between the relevance for the country, and the cross-country perspective. Nor is the aim to construct an analytical form so general and explanatory that it manages to explain away all controversies, silences, etc. involved in the enactment of such proportioning knowledge practices. For this reason, it is at this point important to emphasize that not all Country Desks would agree that, for instance, the horizontal and the vertical dimensions expressed in Going for Growth strike the right balance, and that most desks would probably agree that "*work has been produced in this organization which comes dangerously close to being one size fits all*" (interview, quoted above).

One informant expressed ambivalence towards "Going for growth" in the following way:

> *Some of us are not too fond of the Going for Growth – it lacks fi-nesse, it lacks nuances; it's just dakadakadakadaka! But it is of course a way to get our message across, and then we can always say: Read the Surveys, they are full of detail. So on the one hand [...], we're a bunch of cautious bureaucrats, but on the other hand, we also want to get into the media and make a story. And here, Going for Growth is probably a somewhat more effective means of communicating to journalists, than [giving] them a 130 pages survey and say: Read this till tomorrow* (interview).

I take this quotation to express two general points: First, that if OECD's Economic Surveys operate at the level between the (over)general and the (too) country specific, this does not imply a simple (false) dichotomy between the single country perspective and the cross-country perspective, between the singular and the general, between authenticity and technology or discourse. On the contrary: My research shows that Country Desks are *as* committed to the "OECD-paradigm" as are staff the Policy Studies Branch. Instead, what I hope to have shown in this analysis of the practices of drafting the Surveys is how this *proportioning* of OECD messages is not an automatic stabilizer. Rather it an intentional, at times controversial operation. As we have seen, it involves many coordinating practices (horizontal and vertical), stabilizing technologies and artefacts (economic theories and models), the making of consensus, of journals, organizational practices, and so on, as part of the work of connecting to the various recipients of OECD messages (publics, governments, other OECD countries). Secondly, it is an achievement; not an equilibrium, some recommendations get closer to the ideal than others, and there can be – even fierce – disagreement about where the line goes. I see the above quotation as the expression of such a discussion. But as I saw them, these were indeed discussions about where the line should go, not dis*c*ussions for or against the comparative approach of this international expertise. Hence, the point that I hope to have made in this chapter is that the line between the general and the particular should not be interpreted as an equilibrium – a perfect balance achieved once and for all and in the same way by all Desks and in all publications. Instead, this should be a reminder of the constant work involved in establishing this level of expertise, and of the possible controversies and paradoxes at play in defining the level and in the reception of the messages which enter into the national debates from this level of generalization. Of course, we may also use the line between the general and the particular as a reminder of the constant work done *by* this aesthetic form, not only by justifying the proportionality of OECD-messages ("between the (too) country specific and the (over)general"), but also (as we shall see in the following chapters) by forming the way in which OECD messages do the work of being helpful to the debate.

4.4. Conclusion

In this chapter, I have argued that directing attention to aesthetic knowledge practices – the form and formatting of OECD knowledge claims and the Economic Surveys - is one way in which the inside-out-ethnography can provide

insights into the work done by the Economic Surveys. To make this claim, I have demonstrated how one particular form – the level between the (over) general and the (too) country specific - repeats itself in the organization of the Economics Department and the peer-review process, as well as in the concrete drafting of Surveys, the practices of selecting reference data and evidence, identifying structural priorities (problems) for the countries, and proposing policies.

This fractal form repeating itself can in different situations address different aspects: What "(over)general" signifies may at one time be "too theoretical" or "too much of a text book analysis"; at another time: "too general in basing itself on the empirically established standard recommendations"; "too "one-size-fits-all""; insufficiently sensitive to the institutional details of the country". At times, the zone between the general and the particular defines how comparative, empirical, evidence-based "international expertise" should look; at other times, the zone defines the special concerns of the intergovernmental organization and its need to be relevant to both individual countries and the ongoing project of promoting "better policies for better lives". It is by pointing to the antagonistic dimension of good Surveys - how they continuously move to find ways to insert OECD-recommendations into the national policy discussions - that this chapter has demonstrated the design dimensions of OECD knowledge design. This will be further elaborated in chapter 6.

 The chapter concludes that that OECD messages are designed to operate within a zone between the general and the country specific. This zone, I argue, should not be understood as an uncontroversial and unchallenged equilibrium or perfect balance, but should instead be treated as what the sociologist Susan Leigh Star calls a "high tension zone" (Star 1991: 44-46). The active proportioning into this zone is achieved in the drafting process, through careful coordination of the horizontal and the vertical dimension in a complex process involving theories, models and the developing of epistemic communities devoted to the knowledge base of this work (policy studies). At the organizational level, it also involves controversies, disagreements and discretionary powers.

Lastly, the chapter has made the argument that "the form between the (over)general and the (too) country specific" is not merely a template for how "appropriate" Economic Surveys should normally look, but that it also operates as an argument for the validity of the organization itself. This argument is one example of how the Riles-inspired analysis shifts the focus of what I have

called an "intra-liberal" analysis of the OECD from analyzing the OECD as committed to shared norms (ideas) to analyzing the organization as committed to a particular set of shared forms of knowledge (Riles 1991:31). I should like to finish this chapter by indicating how such a shift may open for new inquiries into the contemporary role of the OECD as an organization - not least in the current situation, where the OECD is engaging further with the emerging economies of the South and East, thus stretching its original identity as an organization facilitating co-operation between like-minded economies (for discussions of this see, e.g., Woodward 2009 and Carroll & Kellow 2011; also Ougaard 2011). The general impression from both the literature and conversations with OECD staff is that this enlargement process forces the OECD to somehow re-think itself. For instance, I was asked the following question: "*Can we say that China, for instance, belongs among the like-minded economies?*" (recorded in field notes). Here, one answer from Riles could be: probably not in terms of shared norms and values; but these emerging economies and emerging welfare states are definitely interested in learning "what works". Here, Riles' quite challenging proposition is that to focus our analyses to shared commitments to forms may open our eyes to how the described knowledge practices, like intelligent benchmarks which show "what works" for different policy purposes, do not merely serve the purpose of "tailoring the recommendations" to existing members. They may possibly also serve the institutional purpose of facilitating the transfer from "the old OECD" as a community of Western, more or less like-minded countries to being an intergovernmental organization bridging both old and emergent economies on all continents around shared commitments to evidence-based, cross-comparative forms of knowledge.

Chapter 5. Not (merely) for national consumption

The day following the meeting is reserved for bilateral discussions between the examined country and the Secretariat to arrive at agreed drafting on the principal points of the Survey, in light of the discussion in the Committee as reflected in the Chair's conclusions (From OECD Policy Brief)

This chapter continues where the last chapter ended, by focusing on the peer review at the EDRC, and in particular by analyzing one particular situation of engagement between the Desk and the member country under review: The post-EDRC redrafting session where the country Desk and the national delegation together redraft the Economic Survey in order to incorporate revisions addressed at the EDRC-meeting on the day before. In this chapter, I shall describe how "an agreed redraft" - a text which is acceptable to both Desk and country delegation, and which accommodates the discussions and comments raised at the peer review the previous day - is achieved. With this close ethnographic focus, I shall provide an answer to the questions arising within the theoretical framework of Dorothy E. Smith: *How do Economic Surveys coordinate different sequences of action? What is the coordinating role of the EDRC and the peer-review institution in the final redrafting of Surveys? And how is this symbolic coordination linked to the institutional role of the OECD?*

The chapter serves two purposes. First living up to the "sociology for people" commitment to give the reader an ethnographic description of the interactions between the OECD and government representatives in a situation which we may describe as a "peak moment" of the institutional order of which the Economic Surveys are part. The pragmatic sociologists Boltanski and Thévenot define the "peak moment" as "a situation […] that holds together and entails a pure and particularly consistent arrangement of beings from a single world" (Boltanski & Thévenot 2006: 143); and as I have argued in the introduction, the situation where the reviewed country discusses the final text of its evaluation with the Desk is a situation which really brings out the federal, intergovernmental and collaborative work practices of the peer-review institution, in stark contrast to purified metaphors of evaluation based on Mertonian and Weberian norms of detachment.

Secondly, the chapter moves beyond the immediate redrafting situation, and the description of the work of experts and bureaucrats in that situation, to demonstrate how the work locally (here: the redrafting session) is connected trans-locally with other sites, other courses of action and importantly with other "subjective consciousnesses" (publics) "in different places, and at different times" (Smith 2005: 165f). Here, following the conceptual vocabulary of Dorothy E. Smith, I call such connections *sequences of action* - or, in short, *tracks* - to make the central argument that the redrafting process systematically places the Economic Survey within multiple sequences of action, and that this *multi-tracks-structure* is a key to understanding how the Surveys "enter into and co-ordinate" sequences of action connecting the OECD, governments and publics (Smith 2006: 67). In this way, the chapter makes use of the ethnographic description of the redrafting session and the conceptual vocabulary of Dorothy Smith in order to improve our conceptual understanding of the work which Economic Surveys are designed to do, and hence how OECD Surveys are prepared with a view to being "helpful to the debate".

The title of the chapter is "Not (merely) for national consumption". This title points to a central conclusion of the chapter, namely that design dimensions of Economic Surveys can be found in the so-called "dual messages" of the Surveys: Surveys do not only tell the country under review what it could and should do in its particular situation; they are also written for general OECD consumption to indicate to other countries what they should do in similar situations.

5.1. The EDRC and the system of peer review

This Survey *is published on the responsibility of the Economic and Development Review Committee (EDRC) of the OECD, which is charged with the examination of the economic situation of member countries. The economic situation and policies of [the examined member country] was reviewed by the Committee on [date]. The draft report was then revised in the light of the discussions and given final approval as the agreed report of the whole Committee on [date]* (from the template of any Economic Survey).

The *grande finale* of any survey process is the review by *the Economic and Development Review Committee*: A full-day meeting in a peer review setting dedicated to discussing the Survey, its recommendations and implications. Before moving on to the redrafting session, I shall begin by describing the scene of the EDRC on the basis of my observations of one EDRC meeting, backed up

with background information from documents and interviews.[48] The EDRC meets in one of the large conference rooms at Rue André Pascal and looks – to the observer – like a cross between a formal evaluation and an academic or professional seminar. Indeed, the latter model comes closest to the deliberative ideal of the *peer review* as presented by the OECD:

> *The peer review is a discussion among equals, not a hearing by a superior body that will hand down a judgement or punishment. This makes [it] a more flexible tool; a state may be more willing to accept criticism, and its neighbours to give it, if both sides know it does not commit them to a rigid position or obligatory course of action. Peer reviews are not intended to resolve differences among states, but they may play some of the role of a dispute settlement mechanism, by encouraging open dialogue that can help clarify positions in a non-adversarial setting* (OECD Policy Brief).

The EDRC proceeds according to a well-rehearsed protocol: The country under review has sent a delegation, typically headed by top officials from the main economic Ministries, such as the Ministries of Finance, Economics and Labour, as well as from the Ministries covering sectors that receive special attention in the Survey. In addition, there may be representatives from policy institutions and Central Banks. In all, the delegation comprises six to ten people, including the country's Permanent Representation Delegate to the OECD. The OECD (the Secretariat) provides a matching delegation, with the Desk (including the Head of Division), the two Directors of the Country Studies Branch and, importantly, the Chairman of the Committee. Counsellors from all OECD countries (plus observers from the EU and the IMF) are seated at each of the long sides around of the table. A large number of observers (including, in the concrete case, myself) are seated along the walls of the large and spacious conference room.

Although all Counsellors share the responsibility for the peer review, two "examining countries" are appointed with special responsibilities for each peer review. These countries prepare a written assessment of the draft report and its recommendations ahead of the meeting; they participate with the Chair and Desk in deciding on particularly central topics for discussion ahead of the

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[48] I have interviewed both Desks, the present and previous Counsellors, and delegates who have participated at the EDRC representing a country under review, although unfortunately not the delegates of this particular EDRC redrafting.

meeting.[49] The meeting begins with an opening statement by the Chairman, who summarizes the main findings of the draft and its recommendations as well as the issues and questions for discussion raised by the examiners. This is also a way of symbolically marking the relative autonomy of the collective of the peer-reviewing Committee and to indicate that the work of the Committee is to review the economic policies of the reviewed country and to point to revisions in the draft prepared by the Secretariat. This opening statement is also used as an occasion to emphasize the spirit of the Committee as a "reform committee" (Interview). Notably, the Chairman opened this particular EDRC-meeting by quoting Schumpeter: "*What is the core of economics? Politics, politics, politics*" (fieldnotes from the EDRC*).*

The examined country makes an opening statement to mark agreement or disagreements with the survey-text or the underlying economic analysis. After this – in two separate sessions, the examiners open the discussion of the general macro-economic condition as well as the selected structural chapters. The examiners' job that day is to guide and structure the discussion (the peer review) of the selected topics, and to ensure that the discussion concentrates on these topics and questions. This discussion should clarify whether the Committee can agree with the main assessments and recommendations of the draft report (Manual of proceedings at the EDRC. In the written comments submitted to the EDRC, the country under review has expressed its views with regard to the analysis in the drafts, including its possible shortcomings. The country is also expected to indicate any material which might improve the analysis or facilitate textual revision.

After this, any Counsellor may participate in the discussion of the topic. This discussion can be linked to the concrete problems of that particular country or be more in the nature of a discussion of the principles underlying the line of EDRC-recommendations on the topics. The comments in the observed EDRC meeting fell largely into three groups: For instance, Counsellors may choose to give *direct advice* to the country: "*Look what they have done in [Country X]*; they may point to literature or OECD publications as *supplements or modifications* to the analysis in the draft; or they may express *hesitations* (*"I'm not sure this is the right recommendation"*) (all examples recorded in field notes). Both the Secretariat and the country under review are allowed to

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[49] I was also given access to see such notes from one country; again, for reasons of confidentiality, they are not cited here but only used as background material.

respond, explain and make observations. In this sense, again, the style of the meeting shifts from the academic/professional seminar to the intergovernmental forum of representatives. Indeed, a number of my informants said that "at best", the EDRC can be a forum for economic discussions of a very high quality, provided that it "sticks to the premise" of pure economic analysis from a strictly economic point of view. Just as Chairman opened the EDRC, so he also closes the meeting again, late in the afternoon with a summary of the discussions in the meeting. These closing remarks – called the Chairman's Conclusions – form the basis for the final redrafting on the following day, which will be examined in closer ethnographic details after a brief presentation of the theoretical framework of this analysis.

5.2. Theory and method. Dorothy Smith: Institutional sequences of action

> *Texts should not be analyzed in abstraction from how they enter into and coordinate sequences of action* (Smith 2006: 67).

In this chapter, the primary conceptual framework changes from Annelise Riles to Dorothy E. Smith's theoretical definition of *texts* as *coordinating (institutional) sequences of action*. Her *act-text-act* or *work-text-work* model begins by examining how the text is produced and then continues to explicate "*what it projects as organization for what comes next*" (Smith 2006: 69; also Smith 2001). In the conceptual framework of Dorothy Smith this indicates different ways in which texts (Economic Surveys) may coordinate actions, consciousness, and forms of organization extra-locally. *Figure 5.1* illustrates the act-text–act-sequence as a conceptualization of the demand to study "texts in action" (Smith 2005: 167f, 181f).
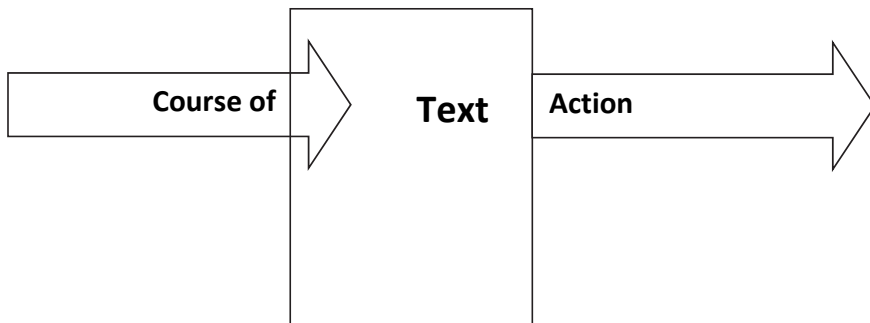
Figure 5.1. The act-text-work model (after Smith 2006: 67).

As described at more length in the theory chapter, Smith's theoretical conceptualization of how texts relate to action emphasizes a pragmatic understanding of knowledge as inseparable from its pragmatic consequences. In this pragmatic understanding, the *meaning* of a text or of an action of text production is not the content of the text (in this case the economic message), but is given in the way in which it is able to coordinate different sequences of action (Smith 2001: 78). For instance, sequences of action where the text (the Economic Survey) is developed as a solution to an actual policy problem for the government, in contrast to sequences of action where the text is doing the work of putting policy ideas which are not realistic yet (either in the country under review or in other countries) into circulation.

The theoretical interest of the institutional ethnography goes beyond merely trying to to understand how agreement is reached in the particular situation observed, and instead focuses on explaining the redrafting situation with reference to the sequences of actions which the participants are trying to bring about: The work which the Economic Surveys are designed to do trans-locally as they become activated as parts of national policy debates, or as they circulate in policy debates among OECD staff and government officials.

5.2.1. The Chairman's Conclusions as a significant symbol

The analysis of the *redrafting* situation makes use of a number of insights from symbolic interactionism (as already introduced in section 2.1.5.). Here, the situation is not defined within a framework, structure or institutional context, but is perceived as being socially constructed from the social act of interaction. In her version of institutional ethnography, Smith builds on Mead's analysis of the role of significant symbols in the social act, where the foremost characteristic of the significant symbol is its "capacity in the social act to evoke the same responses in speaker and hearer" (Smith 2005: 81). Significant symbols, again for Smith, are "a conventional sound or script to which both speaker and hearer respond in the same way" (Smith 2005: 82). Or rather, they hear the sound or read the script in the same way, but might "take it into different courses of action". Smith continues with the example of the response of different drivers to a traffic sign on the highway:

> *The written message is the same for all its readers, but at the same time it is taken up into different courses of action – depending on where the driver is going and what her or his options are." […]."Each driver can take into account that others have read what she or he has read. Each coordinates her or his driv-*

ing decisions with the message, all the while remaining respon-
sive to the ongoing traffic around her or him [...]. We count on
the messages being read by other drivers as we are reading them.
This is how a significant symbol is defined: a speaker speaks, and
both hearer and speaker respond to what has been said as mean-
ing the same thing: the utterance means the same to both (Smith
2005: 82-83).

In the following analysis, the Chairman's Conclusions in the EDRC will be treated as such a significant symbol. The Desk (the OECD economists responsible for a particular Economic Survey) is assumed to share with the delegation from the country under review a common understanding not only of what was said in the Chairman's Conclusions, but also of the context of the EDRC peer review. Just as we do not merely understand the message of the traffic sign but also the institutional context, so both desk and delegation are assumed to operate on the basis of a shared understanding of the meaning of the EDRC, as well as of the shared task of the redrafting session.

Moreover, just as Mead and Smith emphasize that the social act is not fully determined, but allows for interpretational flexibility (Smith 2001, 2005); we see how the coordinating role of the Chairman's Conclusions does not imply that there is no room for negotiating and for proposing different courses of action in the course of the redrafting process. Indeed, if the Chairman's Conclusions could be adopted automatically, there would be no need for nine highly skilled individuals to spend a full day on redrafting: one secretary could produce a final text reflecting the Conclusions[50]. What we can observe below is the interaction between individuals in order to arrive at a commonly accepted *interpretant* of the significant symbol - a version which everyone, including the Committee, can accept as being semantically equivalent to the Chairman's summary. However, as we shall see, on the way to this achievement, there is plenty of room for the parties to shape the remarks and the drafting revisions with a view to projecting into multiple courses of action.

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[50] It is an important ideal of symbolic interactionism that what happens here is not merely reproducing the institution but real action. The very idea of symbolic interactionism is not the "mindless" reproduction of the institution. Instead, it is the idea that the situation is actively created by participants within and with the use of the given institutional framework, institutional discourse, etc. Hence, outcome and process could have been somewhat different in substance in another constellation.

5.2.2. Method of analysis

Empirically, this chapter makes use of observational data from the explicit negotiations during redrafting (described in field notes), and combine these with the textual revisions to the draft document, and with follow-up interview data with the Head of Desk. To move from these data to the present text was a three-step process: 1) The first step was to map the elements of the situation, adopting Adele Clarke's methodological techniques of messy and ordered maps, by asking the basic question of symbolic interactionism: "What is going on in the situation"? (Clarke 2005: 298-299). As in the previous analysis, this is a way of abandoning the more abstract questions of relations between expertise, governments and publics in favour of a situated inquiry into some very concrete processes of knowledge organizing for the purpose of understanding how OECD messages are shaped to coordinate various sequences of action. 2) The second step of the analysis was to select the parts of the data material which I from the very beginning took to represent the most important elements of the situation: The input from the EDRC; the (different) ways in which the Secretariat and the national delegation take on the perspective of the EDRC (and, more broadly, that of the OECD); the role of the Chairman's Conclusions; the political and economic perspectives added to the text; and the work done to make sure that the draft remain relevant for other audiences than the country under examination. These elements, I shall argue, summarize fairly well what is going on in the situation. Lastly, 3) I have followed my theoretical preoccupations more directly in the present analysis, with the aim of identifying the various sequences of action which the Survey text "projects as organization for what comes next" (Smith 2006: 6); and hence of combining the observations, the draft Survey, and the supplementary interviews to produce an ethnographic account which makes explicit the work that the Surveys are designed to do

5.3. Minutes from the post-EDRC redrafting

5.3.1. Setting the scene

Eight men and one woman (and the observing sociologist) enter a rather bare meeting room under the roof of the Chateau. It is 9.45 on a Friday morning the day after the EDRC meeting. In sober contrast to the formality of the UN-like setup of the EDRC conference room with its large rectangular table, the name tags stating only the name of the country ("On my list, I have Germany, New Zealand, Korea"), and the well-rehearsed protocol, this meeting room is sparse-

ly equipped, with a large meeting table, a screen and a computer. It signals work. The Delegation of the country under review musters a total of 7 people: Head of delegation (a Director from the Ministry of Economic Affairs), two economists from the same Ministry, and one representative from each of the Ministries for the sectors discussed in the chapters of the Survey. Also present in the Delegation are the national Economic Counsellor accredited to the OECD and his assistant.

The Desk/OECD secretariat is fully represented with a Head of Division (supervisor), the main author of the Survey (Head of Desk/Senior Economist) and second author (the Desk economist). The atmosphere can be characterized as professional: "We have a day's work ahead of us". The group assembles rather loosely, informally and not quite punctually. A shorter (somewhat stylized) negotiation about who is to do the actual typing and about whether the text copy to be revised should be that of the OECD or of the Delegation is resolved, and people sit down. The Delegation takes up most of the seats around the table. At one end, by the computer keyboard, sits the Head of Desk.
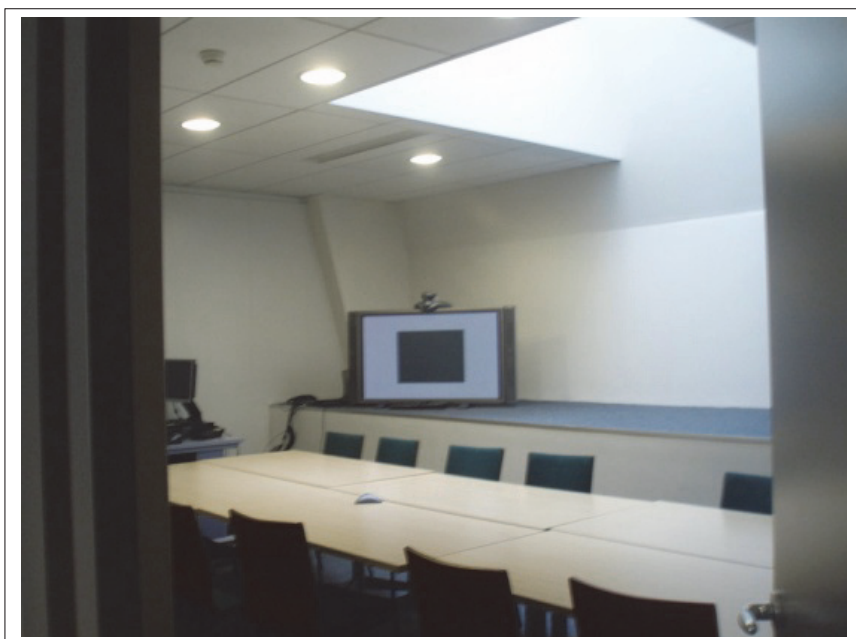
Photo. *Redrafting room.* Photo by author
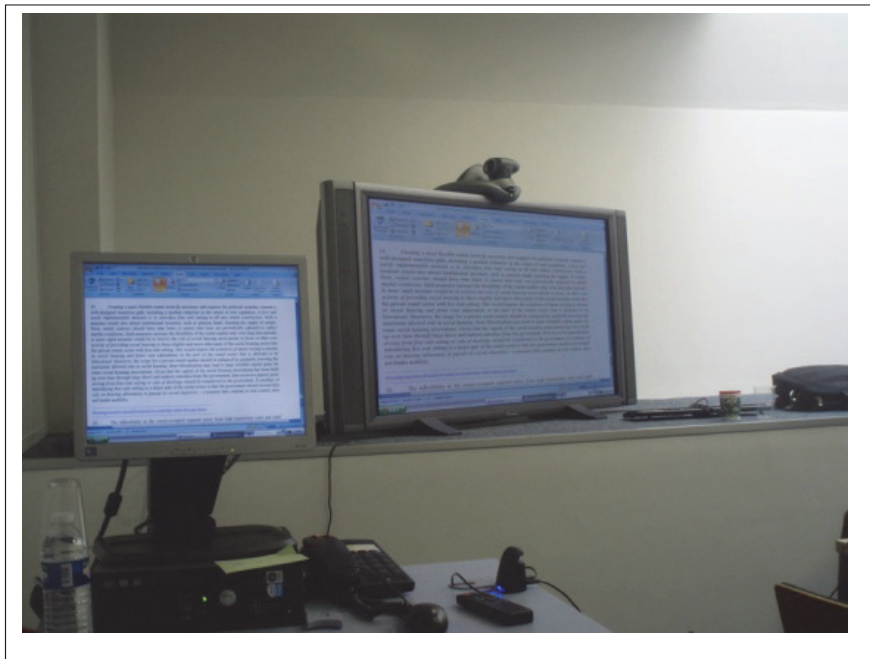
Photo. *Redrafting*. Screen set-up. Photo by author.

One's attention is already drawn to the screen, which shows a Word document, with the original text and with bright red letters reflecting the redrafting. This is the draft Survey with the national delegation's desired interventions in red letters. The OECD Head of Division proposes that "maybe the most flexible way" is to start with the Assessment and Recommendations section (the A&R) "which is what is really important":

> Head of Desk: "*So, we have put in your suggestions…*"
>
> Delegation: *"Not suggestions, improvements!"* [laughs]
>
> Head of Desk: [continues] … *"and this morning we shall try to sort out the problems in the A&R. Let's see how far we can get with the A & R before 12.30* [when some members of the Delegation have to leave, MDL] *and then later this afternoon look at the rest of the chapters. Of course, we have to take into account the Committee's comments. Here, it is a bit difficult for me, since the Chairman and the Committee were not very strong in their remarks".*

The subtext seems to be that not many substantial revisions of the draft are required. The Delegation protests by intervening:

> *I would say that in one or two cases, it* [the discussion at the EDRC, MDL] *will have an impact on the wording!*

For a moment, the atmosphere surrounding how to proceed is somewhat edgy. The Delegation provides the next step forward by proposing:

> *"Maybe it is a good idea to start with the Conclusions of the Chairman to see if this will lead to slightly different wording".*
> …..

5.3.2. The Chairman's Conclusions[51]

As a remarkable contrast to the firmly established procedures for the EDRC peer review, and the importance given to the task of assuring that the final text "[fully reflects] the center of gravity of the Committee's deliberations" (OECD webpage), I was rather surprised to learn that the Chairman's Conclusions were only present at the redrafting session in the form of handwritten notes by Desk and Delegation respectively. From a pragmatic point of view, this is productive for the redrafting process, I was told, as it "[ensures] that we do not have to begin by agreeing about what he said in the first place and putting that on paper before we can get started" (interview, Head of Desk).

However, we can learn more from these handwritten notes and the absence of an authoritative transcript of the Chairman's Conclusions. In the words of Lucy Suchman, these handwritten notes work as an 'ordering device' (Suchman 2006: 187f) - not merely as a symbolic representation of the collective will of the Committee, but as an artefact coordinating action in particular ways. As coordinators of action, the handwritten notes open for a pattern of situated action (context sensitive without being determined), where the task of this highly qualified group is not to merely to treat the Conclusions as a checklist, but to engage with the Chairman's Conclusions in a process of co-production of knowledge towards the common goal of *an agreed redraft,* a

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[51] I decided to focus on the low-tech technology of the notes from the Chairman's Conclusion as a central ordering device. This emphasizes how the EDRC and the institutional knowledge organizing are active also in this apparent micro-situation. Of course, another possible symbolic-interactionist analysis of redrafting could focus more strongly on the screen as an ordering device – see for instance Suchman 2006 (human-machine configurations; Karin Knorr-Cetina 2009).

text which (again in the words of the Head of Desk), is *"acceptable for the delegation and in line with the Committee"* (Interview).

The absence of an authoritative text from the Chairman means that the redrafting group has some diplomatic freedom. It gives the group something to work on, but it does also draw limits beyond which the negotiations cannot go:

> *[The notes from the EDRC] are extremely important since they mark the baseline for what will take place in the redrafting session. That means that the countries cannot the next day come sneaking and argue for some part of the text to be taken out. "No, no, the chairman said nothing about that". But of course, we can always try to be accommodating and try to understand what their problem is. Of course, if the message from the Chairman is that part of the text should be taken out, well, there is no room for negotiation there, it must go. But at other times, maybe, we will have some more room to manoeuvre.* (Interview).

For examples illustrating the point about the way in which the handwritten notes interact with group processes in the redrafting session, we may point to the call from the delegation to "start with the conclusions of the Chairman", as well as the fact that the Delegation's helpful, but possibly somewhat officious, opening remark that "he said something about including a source" doesn't bring the group to summarize the Chairman's proposed revisions, but instead to concentrate on the more immediate task of "taking the A&R" and "beginning revisions". As we shall see, the main objective becomes that of dealing with the country's concerns.

5.3.3. "Acceptable for the delegation"...[52]

As previously described, the country under examination has a number of opportunities to discuss the analysis and conclusions of the Economic Survey. During the drafting process, there is already an informal discussion about which topics could be examined in the next Survey. This becomes more formal when the next Survey cycle starts and relevant subjects are selected. The first possibility for discussing possible issues of concern and policy recom-

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[52] This was "the easiest redrafting session" that the Head of Desk had ever experienced. Each redrafting, I was told, varies with regard to the relation between member country and Secretariat (and the discussion of policy implications).

mendations is during the so-called structural mission, which is mostly a fact-gathering exercise. The second (so-called policy) mission has the purpose of presenting the national authorities with the Secretariat's findings and conclusions, giving the country concerned a possibility of reacting. At the EDRC, the Delegation is given the opportunity of making comments, pointing out factual errors and underlining areas of disagreement with the draft or with the comments from the two reviewing countries. Furthermore, the country must produce a so-called *one-pager* in advance of the EDRC. This is a document where the national government can state where it holds a different view from that expressed in the draft. Consequently, at the time of the redrafting, all parties know very well where there is disagreement. Nevertheless, during redrafting, Desk and Delegation engage not in bargaining, negotiations or compromise, but in yet another round of testing the arguments, as will become clear in the following discussion about the final text in a section where the OECD draft Survey discusses reforms of the housing sector.

In its chapter on housing and labour mobility, the Desk has pointed to "*numerous rigidities*" on the housing market in the examined country, in particular the size of the rental sector and the rigid rent control:[53]

> *The housing market is characterized by numerous rigidities, which may hamper geographical labour mobility. The rental segment is characterized by rigid rent control and an internationally large social housing sector. The below-market rents combined with eligibility checks only at entry have led to a low tenant turnover and almost sixty % of tenants having incomes above the eligibility level* (from draft survey).

Like all structural policies, housing policies involve a number of different regulations (housing policies, rent control, taxation); they also have particular institutional features, so that housing markets vary considerably from one country to another. For instance, the size of the rental sector is structurally linked to demand and supply in the private housing sector, and thus also to policies regulating where land can be developed.

From the point of view of the OECD, the social (or in the words of the Head of Desk "*the social* or what we should call it") housing-sector is simply too large, too regulated and not very well targeted, which amounts to a too

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[53] I had earlier been told An OECD-joke which runs like this: "What can destroy a society quicker than a nuclear bomb?" "Rent control!".

costly and inefficient housing policy. Moreover, since the only eligibility check comes when people are moving house, this makes it very attractive to remain in social housing, which in its turn means that geographical labour mobility is hampered (since people might be less inclined to move from a dwelling with cheap rent). From the point of view of the Desk, this is really the core problem. For the Delegation, however, which is reluctant to accept the suggested deregulation of land development, and protective of national housing policies, more is at stake than merely rent subsidies and housing policies.

Head of Delegation [looking at the screen]:

> *It can't be 60%. I don't have a problem with your saying some-thing in the text about this being a bit high, but we need to get the facts right. This number, I just don't trust it "*

Head of Desk [humourously]: "*A bit high?*"

OECD	Head of Section*: "So we just want "somewhere between 40 and 60%"?"*
Delegation:	*"A big number"* [laughs]*).*
Delegation [determined]	*"I don't care. I think the right level of [eligibility] should be* [mentions a figure close to the current one]*. If you think it's too high, then…* [indicates with his hands and body language: "do as you wish"].
Head of Desk:	*"The level of eligibility is not the issue here. The issue is that this sector is simply too large, and the problems which follow from this".*
Delegation:	*"I don't mind to exaggerate the problem. I am just saying that we need to check the facts, so we are sure the facts are right".*
OECD (Head of Section):	*"Yes, okay, you check your facts, you give us the number, we put it into the text, no problem!"*

5.3.4. "And in line with the Committee"….

The atmosphere is not completely relaxed. An SMS is sent to the national capital to check the current number of citizens whose income level has come

to exceed the level of eligibility for rent subsidies. Waiting for this figure, the Delegation moves on to try to resolve a number of related points of disagreements in the text. At the screen, text revisions succeed each other. With the basic question about the policy recommendations with regard to housing policies still unresolved, it is not entirely easy to find solutions which everyone agrees are good ones. At one point in the discussion, where the suggestions for text revisions become particularly detailed, the Head of Desk comments:

> *This is basically not for [your] national consumption; it is for other countries, to tell them what they should do*

A member of the Delegation interrupts the discussion on wording. The ministry has supplied the requested figure:

> *We have good news on the 60%. The Ministry writes that it is 60%*

At this point, the whole right-hand side of the group (i.e., the Delegation) seem synchronically to receive the same intuition: that the figures should of course be inverted. They propose - rhythmically, in chorus and fully coordinated:

> *Less than 40% of tenants having incomes below the eligibility level[54]*

Despite this point being settled, the question of who social housing is for has still not been solved in a way which is satisfactory for the delegation. The discussion continues and now focuses on the topic of eligibility rates (who can receive rent subsidies). Here, the delegation insists that the text should specify that the exact limit for this is EUR ▮ (despite the "friendly" advice from the Head of Desk that the country should probably not put in the actual figure "*you will be laughed out in other countries!*"). The discussion continues for a while, but the Head of Desk is now silent. A member of the Delegation notices his silence and puckered eyebrows and asks what the problem is. The Head of Desk is looking at the text and seems to be evaluating how far the group has come towards a text which reflects the directions from the EDRC:

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[54] The situation becomes somewhat absurd in its expressive force, and everybody stops, somewhat embarrassed - or maybe astounded? One member of the Delegation looks at the surprised sociologist, smiles with his eyes in acknowledgement of the scene, and says: *"Maybe they can do a little tap dance too"*.

> *The problem is the Chairman – he said: We want less social housing, so we want more of what? Hmmm. He wants to put a bit of political economy in everywhere* (from fieldnotes)

By this subtle move, attention shifts from catering to the interests of the Delegation to the common task of "making the Committee happy" (a standard term from field notes). The Head of Desk comments:

> *What is true in political economics is that some people will lose – at first! - but then later [stand] to win when [there is] more choice! But this [is] of course not an easy message to sell (from fieldnotes)*

He continues to propose the following text, not aloud but in writing on the screen (which by now again has everybody's attention):

On screen: Creating a more flexible rental sector is difficult from a political economy point of view and requires a well-designed transition path, including a gradual reduction in the extent of rent regulation.

Everybody reads the text in silence. Then the Head of Delegation nods approvingly:

> *"I'm fine with the text".*

5.4. "Not for national consumption"

With the words *"I'm fine with the text"*, agreement is established that the redrafted paragraph effectively captures the meaning of the discussion at the EDRC, as well as the Delegation's disagreement with the draft. We have heard how the elegantly timed call for the Chairman's Conclusions becomes the signal by which the two parties (Desk and Delegation) again reassemble into one group of peers united in co-producing the draft as an EDRC product. With reference to "the Chairman", the Head of Desk indicated the limit to how hospitable to the country's interests he was able (or willing) to be without departing from the ideal trajectory between the over general and the too country specific. This is one example of how redrafting continues to refine the Economic Survey to take on its particular form of transnational knowledge object, i.e., the peer-reviewed best-practice recommendations issued under the responsibility of the EDRC.

However, the description of part of the redrafting session exemplifies how the identification of the Chairman's Conclusions as a relevant symbol does not entail total consensus, full agreement, or a single perspective. What we have seen is not that the group is merely executing the decisions taken at the EDRC meeting on the previous day. (This would leave it quite unexplained why redrafting needs to take place at all - as mentioned above, one secretary could produce a final text reflecting the Conclusions - let alone why the participants engage wholeheartedly in the endeavour). On the contrary, what seems to constitute the production of an agreed draft is not the erasure of difference (a compromise or subordination) but the production of not one but *multiple* possible courses of action all within one draft. In other words: a sustained *difference* which allows for the Economic Surveys to address multiple audiences at one and the same time, and hence to be always working on several platforms at once: the national level and the trans-national level (for general OECD-consumption; contributing to the core knowledge base).

I shall now move on to further clarify this point about the dual messages of Economic Surveys: We saw above that, at one point of the redrafting session, where the discussion became rather focused on details within the particular national system, the Head of Desk intervened with a comment which in a classical, national expert advisor context would be quite odd: "This is basically not for national consumption; it is for other countries, to tell them what they should do"(field notes). Apparently, the argument was accepted and fully recognized as meaningful institutional discourse by the Delegation (although they did not fully abandon the discussion of detail). But as observers, we may reflect upon why this intervention was successful in moving the interaction forward, and what this tells us more generally about the nature of OECD messages. In a post-redrafting interview, the Head of Desk explained this rather curious sentence in the following way:

> *In peer review, there are always two messages: One for the country, and one which is targeted at other countries, for general OECD consumption). This is something we are fully conscious of. In the drafting process, I am constantly concerned with whether what I am writing is relevant. "Would this be of interest to anyone at all?" It may be of interest either for national consumption or for other countries. But I would say that most of the Surveys are for national consumption – maybe 75 or 80% (Interview).*

Indeed, awareness of this dual message, seems to convey one of the important codes for reading Economic Surveys, and again emphasizes the design dimensions of transnational expertise. However, in the situation, it is also one of the simple keys to understanding exactly how the group manages to resolve its problem and move on. We may explain its effectiveness in two ways: First, such dual messages are a key component of the peer review, the symbolic ordering of the meeting itself, which is based on the knowledge ideals of establishing best practices and extending their use among OECD members. In this explanation, the Head of Desk activates the group's compliance or agreement with these core principles when he articulates that this particular paragraph is not for national consumption.

We may however also, with Smith, take the analysis one step further and emphasize how such dual messages systematically establish a textual structure with multiple audiences, or - to stay within the analytical vocabulary - with multiple courses of action (Smith 2006: 66-68). They are projected to be activated on multiple spatial-geographical levels (the national level as well as being for general (transnational) OECD consumption), but moreover, they are projected to be activated in qualitatively different ways:

> *In the Surveys; there are the technical details, and then there is design. And policy design is always for the future, given that the political process is so slow and laborious that we can never expect that a recommended policy design will be implemented in any foreseeable future" […] "[To take the example of unemployment benefits] you can say that the technical dimension will be to say that the country's unemployment replacement rate is too high. Instead of the current 80%, it should be 75%. Now, this is not a very visionary [thing]; it's a technical detail which a government could implement rather quickly. But to say: "No, you should have a different system" - that is not going to be something they can implement on a short time scale. And how visionary or technical one should be in a Survey depends to a large degree on the topic* (Post-redrafting interview)

As we have seen, these particular vectors of *design* (visionary; for general OECD consumption) and *expertise* (technical, for national consumption) are instrumental in adjusting the A&R so that it becomes a text which is acceptable for the Delegation and in line with the Committee.

In the quotation given above, one Head of Desk estimates that the proportionality between the two vectors was roughly 20-80. In fact, metaphorically

speaking, the principle of coordination between the more visionary design dimension and the more technical expertise may indeed be said to work much like the second Pareto principle -– also called the law of the vital few or, in its most popular and widely used form, "the 80/20 rule" (see Koch 2005). In its popular form, the 80/20-rule principle states that 20% of the effort generates 80% of the effect. For the OECD, 20% of the A&R (the 'design' recommendations, which are not for the country's consumption) seem to generate 80% of its vital influence, and represents the Organizations main interest. For the Delegation, the remaining 80% (the expertise/technical analysis) can be useful as policy instruments or in the national debate. Despite its metaphorical lightness, the analogy illuminates or even explains the interaction between Desk and Delegation, without reducing the interaction to a symbolic enactment of the peer-review institution. As we have seen, the Desk is largely co-operative about the final formulation of the more technical parts of the text (after all, this is not the most important aspect from the point of view of the OECD); and for its part, the Delegation is inclined, in the spirit of "write what you like", to be forthcoming about even quite remote design recommendations formulated by the OECD, since the 20% "design" part of the survey is not what interests the Delegation the most[5556].

This differentiation by means of how texts in different ways may coordinate policy processes is captured quite succinctly above in Head of Desk's observation of the double messages as an integrated principle in the production of surveys: One message for the country (local consumption) and one message which is targeted at general OECD-consumption (either for other countries to read, or as a way of projecting a particular general recommendation into circulation). We may perceive this careful and "quite explicit" design of double messages in the A&R as different forms of coordinating policy discussions in the member countries or to stay within an institutional ethnographic vocabulary: As different institutional sequences of action by which Economic Surveys as parts of OECD-knowledge production is organized to coordinate policy discussions in the member countries.

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[55] In a similar situation, disagreement about a controversial proposition from the Desk was resolved with the following words: "Put them in; it will never happen, but just write it" (Field notes).

[56] This is a somewhat different analysis than the "criticizing without hurting interests" of Armingeon 2004: 237-38 (although this latter point is also relevant and should be noted).

5.6. "A bit of political economy everywhere[57]"

> *What is the core of economics? Politics, politics, politics* – Schumpeter (quoted by the Chairman of the EDRC).

This work of establishing two tracks: One directed towards national policy debates in the member state, and one directed towards general OECD consumption; one for possible immediate consumption and one for a more open-ended future, is not the only sharpening of the profile of the A&R which we can observe during the redrafting process. Possibly, the most central part of deliberations at the EDRC and of the subsequent redrafting work consists in strengthening even further the political economy dimensions of the survey. I have quoted a Head of Desk who commented that the Chairman "wants to put a bit of political economy everywhere". This is not trivial information, since it describes in a very substantive way how Economic Surveys are designed to be relevant to policy debates in the individual member states and more broadly, by systematically addressing issues of political economy.

Indeed, I was told that the most certain way of "making the Committee happy" is precisely to include in the Surveys references to the work on political economy of reform (interview[58]). This "political economy track" observed at redrafting does not present itself as neatly as an analytical category as the expertise and design tracks above, but connects directly to the substance of OECD work, i.e., the topics and the line of research which makes up a particular expertise - what I shall call "expertise in reform design" (see, for instance, OECD 2010). Written by experts in *reform design,* the economic analysis and recommendations take account not merely of the policy question of *"where to go"*, but also of the process question of *'how to get there"* (OECD 2010: 3). The following quotation from the report "Makings Reform Happen" – summarizes in a very clear way the object of political economy of reform:

> *When it comes to policy reform, there is […] a twofold challenge. The first is to design reforms that will enhance aggregate wel-*

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[57] Please note that the term – political economy - in the following will be presented as the terms is used in the institutional discourse of OECD, and the literature on the political economy of reform.

[58] Another political economy joke from the observed redrafting came as a casual remark about one particular economic compensation/incentive scheme which the Desk would like to country to phase out: "For political reasons they put them in; for economic reasons they kept them small"..

fare, even allowing for the costs that reform may impose on some agents. The second is to devise strategies for securing adoption of such reforms that prevent the opponents of change from blocking reform, but that also address their legitimate concerns about its distributional consequences (OECD 2010: 13).

As we can see, problems of political economy emerge as problems since structural reforms are not built from scratch, but involve complex re*designs* (Latour 2008) of institutions, incentives, and benefits, including disruptions and re-definitions of who benefits from particular policy arrangements. They are multi-dimensional problems, since they deal not merely with identifying the best reform line for a given situation in a given country, but also with how such a reform line can be "packaged up" (interview) in a way which makes it acceptable to people and governments.[59] As such, work on the political economy of reform has, from the perspective of governments, been in demand as knowledge about "how to reform and re-elect" (OECD 2010; also background materials). Hence (to anticipate the analysis in the next chapter), the conception of economic expertise which is expressed in what the OECD calls the twofold challenge of political economy is not merely the more narrow understanding of the policy design expert, who "design[s] reforms that will enhance aggregate welfare, even allowing for the costs that reform may impose on some agents" (what Verran associates with the indexical qualities of the classical expert role) but furthermore to "devise strategies for securing adoption of such reforms that prevent the opponents of change from blocking reform, but that also address their legitimate concerns about its distributional consequences" (what we have called "ordering" see section 2.2.3.).

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[59] Just as there is no simple equilibrium between the over general and the too country specific (chapter 4), the balance of political economy of reform is also a topic of possible disagreement among OECD staff (and governments!). One informant distinguished between "good" and "bad" political economy, and identified "good" political economy with the metaphor: *"Walk, don't run".* " [Good political economy] *could be a situation where the usual first best solution may not work because the institutions are not in place [...]I would want to distinguish it very carefully from political economy used in the way that people say: "This is what we should be recommending but it'll never fly; they'll never buy it". My view is that our job is to tell countries what we think they ought to do. We ought to point at what we think is the first best option for them, so if I fall [back] on a second best solution, it is not because I think they'd resist it or it won't be adopted; it is actually because I think in the given context what is usually regarded as the first best would not be [the best in this case]. Here, there is a huge difference, that has to be kept in mind, because down the other path you'd very rapidly find yourself headed for self-censorship"*

When the A&R is redrafted to emphasize the need for "well-designed transition paths" and "a gradual reduction in the extent of rent regulation", a particular institutional order between expertise, governments and publics is also evoked: Again, as *experts in reform design*, OECD officials do not merely provide analyses of "what to do", but also evidence based analyses about "how to get there" (OECD 2010: 3). When the EDRC, via the Chairman's Conclusions, insists on "putting a bit of political economy in everywhere" and hence also signals for future Surveys that this is one way of "making the Committee happy", this particular kind of reform design expertise becomes systematically inscribed in the Surveys, circulated in member countries, repeated in subsequent Surveys, EDRC meetings, and so on.

We may interpret this as one more track – or course of action – which the Survey is being placed on during *redrafting:* In all Surveys, the work done by OECD economists is systematically and, continuously being placed on the track of the political economy of reform[60]. Economic Surveys can do political economy work in a number of different ways (and the EDRC actively encourages such work), not merely by drawing upon OECD research on political economy, but also by directly introducing sensitivity to issues of process and distributional consequences into the economic analysis, and even by making the medicine somewhat less bitter to swallow for those people who "will lose first, but later are to win with more choice". One the basis of this, it seems warranted to claim that the political economy track not merely signifies a development in the knowledge base, but also points to a more active repositioning of the role of the *transnational expert*, so that he or she not only provides decision makers with information about possible solutions to policy problems, but also engages quite directly with both the problem of identifying best practices in reform design and the problem of "convincing people and publics" about the need for structural reforms.

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[60] In a written commentary to this chapter, Head of Desk remarked the following: *"Political economy was the flavour of the day at the time of the EDRC. Now it is green and inclusive growth. Maybe you should indicate this somewhere. Otherwise, it sounds like the OECD is permanently obsessed by political economy".* I interpret this remark as an example of how the EDRC – and hence member states - does design work by entering new topics into circulation and hence deciding also on priorities for economic development in the member countries (a.o.).

This also, as we have seen, becomes apparent in the work which the Surveys are designed to do. "To put in a bit of political economy everywhere" is not merely to identify and point to policy solutions: it is an active function of placing analysis and recommendations within the context of a "reform friendly" course of action. In the example from the redrafting process, this meant combining the message of the need for reform of the housing markets with the recognition of the need for "a well-designed transition path, including a gradually reduction in the extent of rent regulation".

5.7. A multi-tracked institutional order

> [T]he aim of the institutional ethnographer is to explore particular corners or strands within a specific institutional complex, in ways that make visible the points of connection with other sites and courses of action. (Devault and McCoy 2002: 17)

Above, I drew attention towards the sustained difference or multi-vocality which becomes visible in the redrafting group's work of co-producing an agreed draft which is acceptable for both Desk and Delegation, and which is in line with the directions given at the EDRC. Following Dorothy Smith, I interpret this multi-track order as three pragmatically different tracks entering into and coordinating policy debates within and across OECD member countries. Following the pragmatic ontology of institutional ethnography, I interpret redrafting as an open-ended situation where several possible sequences of actions (futures) are projected, and in which economic analysis – if actualized – will have been instrumental in different ways. What we observed in the redrafting process was that the Surveys were designed to do several different kinds of work which I shall, in the context of the general argument of the dissertation, call, respectively the *expertise sequence*, the *design sequence* and the *political economy sequence*.

The expertise sequence places economic analysis and economic recommendations in - more or less - a classical policy circle. It works by presenting concrete "technical" policy recommendations as solutions to policy problems, -by economic analysis or by matching OECD knowledge items about best practices with the given policy problem. The expertise track runs primarily between the OECD and the individual member country. It is "for national consumption", but in its level of detail and specificity, it is still kept at the analytical, somewhat elevated level between "the too country specific and the over general" (Chapter 4).

In *the design sequence,* economic analysis and recommendations for policy are more detached from the immediate day-to-day connection of technical policy solutions to problems. Economic analysis and recommendations in the design sequence is not primarily for national consumption (solutions to immediate policy problems under particular national constraints) but are often targeted towards general OECD consumption, "telling other countries what they should do".

The political economy sequence is to some degree a middle position between design and expertise. The OECD does play the role of telling governments how they should respond to particular problems, but with regard to the processual problems of political economy. However, "to put in a bit of political economy everywhere" goes beyond the task of telling policymakers what they should do (and telling general audiences what needs to be done). Economic Surveys actively do the work of political reform when they place their general recommendation for reform (in this case of housing policies) on a processual course ("a well-designed transition path"), in order to pave the way for structural reforms. At the same time, this particular (national) Survey works as an exemplar for other countries, demonstrating how controversial reform agendas should be approached.
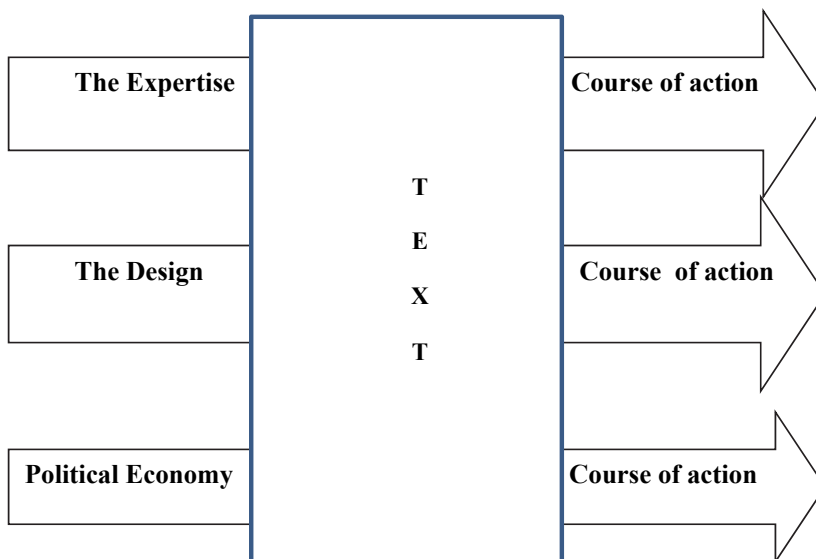

Fig.5.2. The act-text-act model (see page 46) adapted to illustrate the multi-track order observed

Figure 5.2 is an adaptation of Smith's basic act-text-act model to demonstrate the multiple tracks projected during redrafting. The purpose of the model is simply to illustrate the object of knowledge (the Survey), and the work which the Surveys are being prepared to do, during redrafting. My general argument is that this observed multi-track structure can qualify our discussion of the role of transnational expert organizations on two important dimensions:

First, as I have discussed previously, one purpose of the project is to move beyond simple "hard-causality" models which measure the OECD's influence in terms of policy implementation (see for instance Armingeon et al. 2004). I have argued that although this is indeed a relevant (although somewhat crude) measure of the influence of OECD deliberations and knowledge production, we cannot use national policy implementation as the singular end target of individual Economic Surveys or, in pragmatic terms, the most relevant test of their value. This goal, it seems, is too narrow and immediate to explain the way in which Economic Surveys are composed. Rather, the model seems to illustrate a *maximizing* strategy where the goal is that all Surveys should perform on all of these three tracks or courses of action. According to this interpretation, a given policy recommendation is not a failure just because it didn't make it into legislation in the given country (maybe the recommendation falls in this country, but flies in another; or fails at this time, but flies five years later). The vocabulary of expertise and design provide us with concepts for discussing such different impact courses.

Secondly, the model emphasizes the relations between the work primarily targeted for national consumption and the work targeted for general OECD-consumption and thus opens up for a discussion of the significance of the fact that OECD messages are *transnational* knowledge objects, and hence that the nation state is not necessarily their only or even primary arena. As Ulrich Beck has argued (Beck 2000) the social sciences are today presented with the challenge to break with what he calls "methodological nationalism", i.e., the tendency always to understand the social from the standpoint of the autonomous nation state: "Economic and social ways of acting, working and living no longer take place within the container of the state*"* (Beck 2000: 87). This should not, of course, make us turn towards a methodological globalism, treating nation states merely as provinces oriented towards new global centers. Instead, it points to a development towards looking at the dynamic relations between national and transnational forms of what Beck calls economic and social ways of

acting, working and living (see also Fourcade 2009). Here, the finding that OECD messages sometimes address national audiences while at other times (or simultaneously) being designed for general (transnational) OECD consumption, emphasizes the particular transnational dynamics which define the relations between the OECD, governments and national publics, not only at the general level of the institutional order, but also in the direct interactions during *redrafting*, as we observed them in this chapter.

5.8. Conclusion

This chapter set out to try to understand the directionality of the Surveys by observing how Desk and Delegation give directionality to the final, agreed draft of the Survey. From a theoretical point of view, the chapter seeks to understand the work which the Surveys are designed to do, with reference to the act-text-act sequences, which textual decisions project. The purpose of focusing on the post-EDRC redrafting, where government representatives and the OECD Secretariat together agree on the final version of the Economic Survey, was to describe this "peak moment" of inter-governmental peer review. My purpose has not been to explain away any potential "controversy" or "disconcertment" of these knowledge practices and the institutional order that they co-produce (Verran 2013), but instead to clarify the pragmatic logic which constitutes the textually mediated relations between international economic institutions, national governments and the general public.

These pragmatic logics are exemplified by the image of the *multi-tracked order* which structures the interactions in redrafting and shape the outcome of the agreed draft. This idea of the multi-tracked order is developed from Smith's act-text-act model, and again emphasizes the "patterned qualities" of the Surveys identified in the previous chapter, by identifying three distinct courses of action into which the Survey is steered during redrafting. One such course of action was called the *expertise* sequence, emphasizing that a large percentage of the recommendations are "for national consumption" (of a somewhat more technical character). As a second course of action, the *design course* is not primarily meant for national consumption, but for general OECD consumption: it is meant to tell other countries what they should do. Here, one main conclusion is that the primary arena for a particular Survey need not be the individual nation state under examination. Economic Surveys are designed to produce economic analysis which can be relevant for national policy debates within and across OECD member countries. Lastly, the *political economy course of action*

expresses concerns with whether recommendations are "properly packaged" to be helpful to the reform process of the country.

To understand redrafting as a situation where the negotiations and the co-productive work of Desk and Delegation bring out this multi-tracked order in the draft is a way of theorizing and understanding how participants reach agreement, but also how they actively seek to shape and influence the draft Survey. It demonstrates how the EDRC (represented in the situation by the Chairman's Conclusions as a "significant symbol") was able to produce closure in situations where the country would tend to drift away from general OECD-recommendations ("the Chairman said nothing about ..."), and pushed redrafting in the direction of collaborating with the aim of bringing political economy dimensions out more strongly in the text. But the conclusions from the meeting left ample room for the redrafting to focus on making the draft acceptable for the country under review, without watering down the general message. Again, the idea of the multi-tracked order was able to demonstrate some interesting transnational dynamics. For example, we saw how a country seemed to be more insistent concerning the outcome of the expertise sequence of action, while it expressed a more laissez-faire attitude concerning the design proposals (*"Put them in, it will never happen"*). And vice versa: The OECD was largely accommodating towards proposed text revisions from the country under review, as long as these were primarily country-specific in character and did not change the content of the economic messages meant for general OECD consumption (for instance, that reforms should take place, that frozen preferences are a bad thing, etc.)], and as long as the revisions did not go directly against the Chairman's Conclusions.

Chapter 6. Economic Facts and Economic Messages

The previous chapters have, each in their own way, unfolded design dimensions in Economic Surveys. Chapter 4 did so predominantly by pointing to how Economic Surveys are shaped to be operating at a level between the (over) general and the (too) country specific. The demand, among other things, that OECD-recommendations should have a somewhat antagonistic dimension – also called a design dimension – is one aspect of not identifying too strongly with the particular, day-to-day problem solving in the countries under review. Chapter 5 pointed to the *dual messages* of each Survey, and in this respect pointed to the difference between writing Survey for national consumption and writing Surveys for general, OECD consumption.

This chapter will move towards a more precise definition of the design dimensions by mobilizing Helen Verran's concept of design as 'ordering'. The analytical contribution of the chapter is therefore to propose a definition of *economic messages* expressing the design dimensions of Economic Surveys. Here, the chapter takes as its point of departure Verran's claim that the modern fact has "cut loose from epistemic practices by instituting market mechanisms at the core of governance" *(*Verran 2012a: 66), and proposes that we may in a similar way understand the economic message as participating in an institutional order which has to some degree cut loose from modernist epistemic practice by instituting design mechanisms at the core of knowledge production for policy.

Empirically, the chapter focuses even more closely on messages as texts than has been done in the previous chapters. It minutely follows the changes made in one draft Survey as a result of the detailed feedback at the meeting with Directors. The chapter is based on data from a feedback meeting where the Directors of the Economics Department give feedback on one almost finished Economic Survey. This meeting with Directors is one particularly useful site for the institutional ethnography, since it enables us to see how the draft Survey becomes sharpened to fit the desired properties of the institutional order in which it is designed to perform.

After this brief introduction, the chapter will set the scene by describing the meeting with Directors. Afterwards, the method and data for the chapter –

including the track change analysis recording and categorizing text revisions will be presented. The chapter then proceeds to present and give examples of the four classes of text revisions – or interventions – which I see in the material: 1) writing economics, 2) shaping the general look of the economy, 3) horizontalizing, and 4) the policy story. All four are selected for the purpose of demonstrating how the message is brought out more strongly in the draft survey. The presentation of these four types of intervention forms the first part of the chapter. The second part focuses on theorizing OECD messages, on the basis of the material from the track-change analysis, by drawing on Verran. Here, following Verran, I investigate how OECD knowledge claims may operate as the Peircean index, symbol and icon, and develop a practical distinction between knowledge claims doing the work of the fact in an order of epistemology/governance, and knowledge claims doing the work of the message in an order of design.

6.1. Setting the scene: The meeting with directors

The meeting with Directors is a final feedback/quality check of the almost finished draft report. Chronologically, it is held a month or so before the report will be presented to the Economic and Development Review Committee. We have heard how the fact-finding mission is succeeded by a drafting phase in which the two economists on the country Desk are given quite a large autonomy to come up with policy recommendations and identify structural problems. Following this early phase of large autonomy, an increasing harmonization – or horizontalization, as it was called in chapter 4 - sets in. The analysis in chapter 4 brought to the fore how a horizontal/vertical structure repeats itself again and again in the OECD as an organization, both as a principle of division of labour between the Country Studies Branch and the Policy Studies Branch, and between Economic Surveys and Going for Growth, and as a delicate coordination principle to make the Surveys strike the right balance between the (too) country specific and the (over)-general. We saw how the value added to Economic Surveys could be explained with reference to this level.

On the one hand, the Survey should provide concrete, structural guidance based on evidence-based policy recommendations; on the other hand it should not just give "standard" textbook advice. As such, this levelling – I have argued – is constitutive for the relevance and validity of OECD knowledge claims. As we shall see, the meeting with Directors play quite an important role

in this horizontalizing process. The following quotation from an interview with one of the Directors[61] sums up the purpose of the meeting:

> *I guess … it summarizes all sorts of things. It's a bit [like] quality control in a large sense. We do drafting control and stuff like that, but that's a minor part. But it is also to make sure that the messages and policy recommendations are ok in the sense of [being] consistent with recommendations we are giving to other countries that are in similar situations, but which the desks might not know about (but we're supposed to, because we see them all). [And also:] consistent with OECD positions generally if such positions exist* (interview).

In setting the scene for the analysis, we need to understand that this is a four-hour meeting, with no breaks, no coffee, and no stretching of legs. The two directors simply go through the paper and comment on literally everything. This is *detailed* feedback, as the track-change analysis will exemplify. Present at the meeting are the following: The Director of the Country Studies Branch, the Deputy Director of the Country Studies Branch, the country Desk - the Head of Desk and a more junior economist - and finally the senior economist who functions as Head of Section with supervising responsibilities for the Desk in question[62].

Before the meeting, each of the (very busy) Directors has spent a full day reading and commenting on the drafts – and these stacks of printed papers is all there is on the table. No laptops, no supplementary material or documents; it's just the reports which must stand the test. After about one minute of small talk, the meeting begins with the Director making some brief general comments on the Survey:

> *It's focused, well written, clear. But the messages do not stand [out] quite so clearly. You go into a lot of details. I expect the reader will think it's a bit of a tough read. You could shorten and lighten it - as I delicately put it - and make the message stand out. The messages do not stand up quite so clearly* (Field notes)

The Desk doesn't respond. From here, the meeting proceeds in the following way: The Directors go through each paragraph in the Assessments and Recommendations section (A&R) systematically –although allowing themselves

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[61] At the meeting, both the Director and the Deputy Director of the Country Studies Branch were present. Both will for the sake of confidentiality be referred to as "Directors".

[62] Of course, at this particular meeting, the observing sociologist was also present.

digressions at certain points to chapters or to graphs on spread sheets. The Assessments & Recommendations section summarizes the main messages of the Economic Surveys in 16 paragraphs covering both the assessments (evaluations) and the main policy recommendations (marked in italics) in the text. Above (4.4.4), we saw how the A&R in the Survey is followed by a number of chapters and annexes providing the full analyses and accounting for methodologies, sources, etc. For our purpose, the A&R is a particularly interesting site as this is the part of the Survey which most people (policy makers, journalists etc.) will see; and it is therefore also a site where the design dimensions will be very visible.

6.2. Method and data: Track-change analysis

I have briefly set the scene by describing some interactions going on at the Directors' meeting, as these were recorded in field notes and dealt with in interviews – thereby indicating some of the social processes of the shaping of economic messages in the OECD Economic Surveys. However, apart from observations and interviews, we have one more resource for describing the changes which the drafts undergo during the Directors' meetings (thereby shaping the knowledge in the Economic Surveys) – and that is the documents themselves (Smith 1990a, 1993; Prior 2008 about the integration of documents, interviews and observations; also Lindstrøm 2014). Since I am in possession of the edited version of the A&R, I have been able to supplement my observations with quite factual accounts describing the shaping of the Assessment and Recommendation. Simple word processing technologies – the 'track-changes function' of the word processing programme - allow us to register the revisions involved in the editing of the text. In order to gain a detailed insight into the principles of the drafting, I began by registering and broadly categorizing all text revisions (in total 417 for the 8 pages of text).

Figure 6.1 (next page) is taken from this material, and illustrates the data from which the analysis builds, plus the early crude categories trying to register if revisions are about changed substance, changed tone/modality or purely about improving the prose). Analytically, these revisions are treated as what one could call knowledge "design moments" giving the economic messages their distinct shape (see Lindstrøm 2010). Nevertheless, for the purpose of reserving the term "design" for the design dimension (and its semiotic/pragmatic functions), I shall in the following stick to the term "intervention" to show that we are not witnessing a transla-

tion or distribution process from *science* to *communication,* but the continuous shaping of a distinct institutional form of knowledge.

Revision number	Substance– e.g. deletion of part of text, changed recommendations..	Shaping tone, modus	Language/correction	Content + comment (MDL)
249,50				From 'total' to 'general' profit
250-1				Figure changed: It wasn't 4,6 but 4,7
252-55				Nuance: from 'and others [in worse shape] to 'though others [desk revision]
255-56				Nuance – shaping: [Supervisor] changes from relative to absolute:. *In all jurisdictions, trend spending growth must be lowered to put the public finances on a sustainable path.*
256-58				simplification: Not sustainable fiscal path; just sustainable
259,60 -63				*from* urgency *to* need to (desk)
264				Intervention in recommendation: *From:* With the recovery solidly under way, *fiscal consolidation should start now* (emphasizing risk for recovery)
265				To: With the recovery solidly under way, *fiscal consolidation should start*
…….				----

Figure 6.1. Extract track-change-analysis

6.3. Four classes of text revisions/interventions

Above, I quoted one Director's statement that the meeting with Directors *"summarizes all sorts of things" (*interview). To capture "what sorts of things" in a way conducive to better understanding of the work which Economic Surveys are designed to do, we may distinguish four kinds of interventions in the original draft. The first series – or class - of interventions summarizes interventions related to the craft of *writing economics* and thereby, I argue, using a concept by Vincent Gayon, to the shaping of a textual aesthetics of the "international épistemocrate" (Gayon 2009:338). A second class of interventions relates to the *shaping of a general look of the economy*, and thereby addresses the theme of the professional judgment from the approach of the institutional ethnography. Thirdly, I highlight a class of operations as *horizontalizing* interventions, expressing the particular situated view of the OECD. Following the analysis in chapter 4, this section demonstrates how revisions of the substance of recommendations does not merely involve epistemological concerns (is this the right and best recommendation? Do we think these forecasts are right? etc.), but also to a large degree involve the inscription of horizontal perspectives and the integration of the OECD's horizontal publications. Fourthly, under the headline of *"the policy story"*, I identify one class of interventions which I particularly identify with the "interventionist" dimension of OECD messages, with the convincing of publics, and hence with the distinction between economic messages and economic facts which I am trying to capture in this chapter.

In what follows, I shall provide examples of text revisions of all these kinds taken from the track-changes analysis. The purpose of the following four categories is not to give a full and comprehensive account of everything happening at the meeting with Directors (including face-to-face-interactions); and of course, these four classes are not a natural categorization of differences but – like any criteria – are created for the purpose of separation (Stengers 1999) - a "tool for thinking" (Stengers 2005: 185). In this case, it is a tool for theorizing the design dimensions of OECD knowledge claims. Hence, although the categories have been developed in a grounded way on the basis of the registered textual revisions first clustered under the rough categories of interventions related to the substance (recommendations), interventions related to the tone, and interventions related to prose and factual corrections, this final categorization into these four classes goes beyond inductive categorization. It anticipates the further theorizing of economic messages by breaking up the category of the

substantial revisions into two, one emphasizing the institutional *horizontalizing* of messages and a second one emphasizing how the *policy story* with its action recommendations is made to stand out clearly and strongly.

6.3.1. First class/level of text revisions/interventions: Writing economics

The first class of text revisions relate to what the directors call *"draft control"* and therefore to interventions which most directly relate to the "style" and prose of the text. Commentators on international expert bureaucracies have often noted how very important the style of writing is, and how much emphasis is being laid on drafting in international expert organizations (see not only Riles 2000, but also, for instance, Holmes 2013, Gayon 2009, Harper 1998, McCloskey 1998). This is also the case at the OECD, where senior economists and supervisors spend a considerable amount of their time revising the drafts of country Desks, and while all OECD economists at the beginning of their career are highly skilled economists – they often need substantial training in their writing skills (interview). This is particularly true since English is not the first language of many - indeed most - of OECD-economists. It is therefore not surprising that many of the interventions in our examined draft operate at this level of writing economics. The style which Economic Surveys should try to approach is here summarized by a senior economist:

> *[The style] has to be readable, which means that a non-economist audience has to be able to understand what it is we are saying. It should not be over-academic in the sense of over- technical: A paper which is full of equations with some math gibberish prose in between: saying "this implies 'that and that'" is not at all the type of product we are supposed to produce. We are supposed to write in readable decent English; it has to be very concise and efficient prose, avoiding repetitions and clearly structured. For the reader, it has to be easy to find the thread of the story and to know from the first sentence of the paragraphs what that paragraph is probably going to cover. There has to be a beginning and an end to the story – and there has to be a story in the first place [!]The evidence which is to support the case has to be directly related and not peripheral. And finally, the committee puts a premium on brevity; they much prefer 80 or 100 page reports to 100 or 140 pages* (interview)

To demonstrate the meaning of *writing economics* in the present design context, I wish to go back to the opening statement of the meeting with Directors where the Director made a few general comments on the draft:

It's focused, well written, clear. But the messages do not stand out quite so clearly. You go into into a lot of details. I expect the reader will think it's a bit of a tough read. You could shorten and lighten it [as I delicately put it] and make the message stand out The messages do not stand up quite so clearly (from field notes).

In the following paragraph, we follow the interventions which might be said to do the detailed work of *"making the text an easier read"* and *"making the messages stand out"*. As such, it makes the case that close attention to even minor text revisions may guide us towards a stronger comprehension of the constitutive qualities of economic messages. When examining the tracked changes to the document, we see a variety of different interventions, each working to shape the draft towards being "an easier read" and "making the messages stand out", as emphasized by the Director in his opening statement. We see sentences made more "easy reads" by restructurings and simplifications of the text, as for instance:

> From: "*but the deceleration could be even more pronounced if the financial and economic crisis turns out to have long-tern negative effects, for instance on the trend rate of growth of multifactor productivity, which has already been incomprehensibly low for many years"*

> To: "*There is even a risk that trend multifactor productivity growth could stay as incomprehensibly weak [not "low"] as it has been in recent years".*

Interventions can also be done by omission of institutional (analytical) detail

> [Deleted]: "*and relatively more east of [region] than elsewhere"*

or by deletion of excess "technical" detail:

> [From]: "*For most jurisdictions, simulations suggest that it should be   possible to balance budgets without outright cuts to total spending or   tax increases"*

> To: [nil]

And we may also at this level of "writing economics"/drafting control see interventions in the form of a change of words to express the intended message with precision.

> From: "*Reform is needed"*

To: *"Progress is needed"*

Together, these minor text revisions have the effect of shaping the text in the direction of the particular desired style or format, as described above. It should be noted that this desired *form* of writing economics is not unique to the OECD. Indeed, some informants pointed out that precisely the skill of *writing economics* is one which is transferable from an organization like the IMF to the OECD, or vice versa. Following this line of reasoning, we can argue that even small-scale text revisions like the deletion or inclusion of some institutional detail may be regarded not as merely superficial skills (drafting, training, shaping), but as constitutive of the comprehensive boundary work involved in maintaining the OECD as an *institutional author,* or, in Gayon's sophisticated and almost untranslatable terminology, an *"épistemocrate international"* (Gayon 2009: 338). The small-scale work of text revisions, the careful choice of words and their modalities all add up to shaping (or at least maintaining) relations between the OECD and its member states; between the Economics Department, the delegates in the EDRC and national decision makers and civil servants. The previous analysis of the redrafting session also bore witness to how the aesthetic expertise of the Head of Desk in picking out exactly the right word produced closure in the negotiations, and even made the national delegation spontaneously exclaim: "You're the best!" (from field notes)

However, if we only concentrate on such "federal dimensions" of the reports, on the ontological and bureaucratic justification practices, and on how the documents (as tools) are used (by social actors and economists) to negotiate relations to other social actors (politicians, EDRC), then we risk ignoring how attention to the need to get the message across is an integrated part of *writing economics* by the OECD. As a senior economist puts it:

> *One of the difficult things for younger staff who join us is to understand that they can do beautiful econometrics or very sophisticated research, but as long as they haven't written this up in a clear and compelling way, nobody will really care about what they did* (Head of Desk).

This, I will argue, is constitutive of the OECD-aesthetic, and marks a distinction between what we find in this analysis, and what Riles found in her analysis of the drafting of the UN charter. Annelise Riles' analysis of the general *aesthetic* builds on observations of the shaping of UN documents, where the text acquires at least a quasi-legal status. She describes how UN documents are

produced as documents exactly by inscribing the compromises and negotiated results of participants into such quasi-legal documents, which then again will constitute the basis for future conferences, negotiations and compromises (Riles 1998, 2000). But Economic Surveys do not have these formal qualities: They are not quasi-legal, nor are they supposed to express compromises and negotiated results. Instead, they are designed to ensure that analysis "from a strictly economic point of view" have an impact on policy making in the member countries (see Chapter 4); and they cannot do this work unless they are "presented properly", so that the audiences will be responsive to the research and the recommendations. In this sense, the interventions related to "writing economics"/drafting control or "making the text an easier read" should not be reduced to superficial activities. Instead, we should pay proper attention to the great care taken by the OECD in "making the text an easier read", even when this means deleting excess "technical" detail. We may argue, along the lines of Verran, that in these interventions of writing economics, truth has to some extent been repositioned, in the sense that design concerns are placed at the core of the knowledge practice.

6.3.2. Second class/level of text revisions: Shaping the general look of the economy (assessments)

> *This time [in the Economic Outlook], we were a little bit more optimistic about, well about the world. So that should be reflected in the Country Surveys. That's just a really good reason that the Country Surveys shouldn't go on and on and on about how bad things are anymore. Unless there's some reason for it – which there might be for some particular country. But for most countries now, there's less reason [to] worry then there was last time. And it's part of getting the tone right* (Director in interview)

A second class of text revisions addresses not the recommendations as such, but the assessment of the economies; what one Director called "the general look of it all" or "the tone". This general look and tone has two dimensions: First, to reflect the assessment of the general outlook for the economy (as expressed in the above quotation); secondly, to indicate how well or bad the country in question is doing relative to other OECD countries. What are we looking at here? An economy doing well and better than the others? Or a "basket case" as one of the Directors put it at the Directors' meeting:

> *You make it sound like a basket case. It gives the wrong impression: As if this is really bad. Whereas the tone is: [The Country] is doing better than the others!* (Field notes).

Again, the "correction" of the general tone of it all (or the assessment) may be executed in a number of ways. In this case, it was primarily done in the revised draft by repeating the message that the consolidation should start *now* – not *as soon as the sustainability of the recovery is secure.*

> From: *[underscoring the desirability of eliminating deficits and reducing public debt] as soon as possible but without undermining the recovery*
>
> To: *"With the recovery solidly under way, fiscal consolidation should start now".*

We have at some length described such instances of co-ordination in the previous chapters. For the purpose of this chapter, which is to theorize economic messages, I merely want to point out that these interventions related to the general look of the economy; the assessments and forecasts are the interventions which most strongly relate to the epistemological/indexical concerns of the "fact" dimension of messages. One should remember Verran's point that epistemological concerns (truth, correctness) have not been re-placed; but they have been *re-positioned*. It's not that epistemological concerns are not there – only that the truth of the matter is only half the story. For theorizing purposes we may therefore say that this emphasizes how economic messages are indeed *knowledge claims* designed to do the work of the international economic organization by placing emphasis not merely on "*getting it right*" – but also on "*getting it out*", as one informant quite strikingly phrased it (Field notes; general conversation). The interventions in this class are at one and the same time based on two concerns: being right (capturing precisely the right assessment) and getting the proper messages (best recommendations) out as clearly as possible (viz, : *"The economy is looking better; fiscal consolidation should start now"*).

6.3.3. Third class/level of text revisions: *Horizontalizing* (recommendations)

Whereas the previous class of text revisions related to the assessment part of the A&R, a third class of text revisions is of the kind where the outcome is *changed recommendations* or *added recommendations*. This may of course be straight corrections or rejections of the recommendations given by the desk; but this is very rarely the case, and did not happen at all at the meeting in question. Rather, a great many of the substantive changes of the draft have to do with the continuous integration of the OECD's cross-country comparisons and

best practices into structural reforms, as these are developed by researchers in the policy studies and in the flagship publication 'Going for Growth'. Following the analysis in the last chapter, I have called these *"horizontalizing"* interventions, in order to emphasize the relation between the country specific, institutionally sensitive vertical perspective of the country desks and the more general OECD-recommendations. For instance, the following input was given at the meeting (Field notes)

1st Director: *You could push more structural reforms in here. Go back and see what they haven't done, and then press them on that.*

2nd Director: *Yes, don't hesitate about putting in stuff about "Going for Growth.*

1st Director :   *Drag them to the other publications and avoid saying too much.*

And in the final report, the following text was added to the draft:

> Inserted: "Other desirable structural policy reforms identified in the OECD's latest *Going for Growth* report that could boost potential output growth include *further reducing barriers to foreign ownership, strengthening competition in network industries and professional services, and reducing work disincentives in the income-support system.*

We see that the substantial discussions about what the recommendations should be are to a large extent structured by the existing network of recommendations and best practices. In this sense, the meeting with Directors seems aptly to be described as what Latour calls a "centre of calculation" "Any site where inscriptions are combined and make possible a type of calculation. It can be a laboratory, a statistical institution, the files of a geographer, a data bank and so forth" (Latour 1999: 304). According to Latour, the advantage of the term 'centre of calculation' is that it "locates in specific sites an ability to calculate that is too often placed in the mind" (ibid).

   In a similar way, the institutional ethnography also attemps to make the analytical move *"from eye to infrastructure"* as Adrian Mackenzie has called it (2013: 142). We can see how the meeting with Directors is an important specific site for the horizontalizing integration of recommendations; but also how

this site tends to localize this centre of calculation in the human Directors –
"those who see them all" (Interview with one of the Directors, quoted above).
This is emphasized by the setting of the Directors' meetings, where only the
draft, but no computers or supplementary materials, seems to come to the aid
of the memory and synthesizing capacities of the Directors. But it is also true
that these individuals are characterized by a striking, almost 'old-worldly' con-
centration: a silent pen-and-paper culture bearing not much resemblance to the
hectic technological "screen-fetishism" reported in much of the performativity-
of-economics literature (see for example: Knorr-Cetina 2009; Suchman 2009).
For a moment - at the meeting with Directors at least - it is as if the intense
coordination work of the OECD and the strenuous effort of following trends in
the never-sleeping global economy, is not distributed and delegated within the
organization, but concentrated in the almost glowing skull of these individuals.

However striking this observation, the institutional ethnography is careful
not to place the subjectivist dimension of human *judgment* in economics
against an objectivist view of economics as *calculations* of the best thing to
do.[63] Instead of such a strong subjectivist/objectivist dichotomy, emphasis is on
the careful coordination of the horizontal and the vertical dimension, achieved
through the coordination of textual, human and technological agents (section
1.3.1;1.3.2.) This institutionalized and distributed judgment emphasizes how
this particular centre of calculation (the Economics Department) is not the
think tank or the place for thinking "out of the box".[64] As we have heard be-
fore, a key competence of OECD-economists is not to invent new unique rec-
ommendations, but lies rather in the ability to identify relevant best practices
and to evaluate whether there exists good specific reasons why these general
best practices should not be recommended in the present case. This exercise of
harmonizing and integrating recommendations across reports is once again
repeated at the meeting with Directors, as reflected in the textual revisions of
recommendations.

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[63] See, for instance, Marcus 2008 for such a discussion concerning the case of Alan Green-
span's judgment/decision making, and Karin Knorr-Cetina (2009) for a similar critique of
subjectivist actor explanations in the sociology of finance.
[64] Using a design vocabulary we may therefore emphasize how good recommendations are not
unique inventions or creations "ex nihilo", but are rather carefully selected and appropriated *re-
designs* (Latour 2008; Lindstrøm 2010) from the "OECD-collection".

6.3.4. Fourth class/level of text revisions: *The policy story*

Finally, I wish to highlight a fourth class of text revisions which is most closely related to the OECD's interventionist function. Under this class of revisions, I include various attempts to draw the bottom line of an argument in a way which leaves the unmistakable impression that the reviewed member country ought to follow the recommendation in question. This is really the opposite of a change" from could to should". For instance:

> From: *It is important to proceed with plans to establish a single national securities regulator by renewed efforts to get all [parts of the country] on board.*

> To*: It is important to proceed with plans to establish a single national securities regulator whether or not continued efforts to get all [parts of the country] on board succeed.*

In these situations, where a policy case is established to make a unanimous recommendation from the OECD, or where the text subtly reflects a discussion with a member state which might be known to be in opposition to a given line of policy reform, we may see a range of further justifications added to the text, all pointing unanimously in the same direction:

> From: *Banking contestability could be enhanced by a less politiced merger and acquisition policy, further lifting of the maximum permitted single shareholding and liberalised entry for foreign banks into the lucrative retail sector.*

> To: *Furthermore, aspects of the banking culture and context that happened to be advantages in crisis – its relatively closed and oligopolistic market structure, and a traditional and low-risk approach, which has nonetheless been highly profitable – reflect a lack of competitive pressure. To underpin future bank performance, banking contestability could be enhanced by removing the need for political approval for mergers and acquisitions, further lifting the maximum permitted single shareholding and liberalising conditions for foreign-bank entry into the lucrative retail sector.*

This stylistic character of drawing the bottom line so that a particular conclusion is unavoidable, of pointing to missed opportunities and under-performance *("to underpin future bank performance")*, or of stressing the undesirable implications of a given policy or practice in the member country, is obviously central to the way in which the OECD engages with national socio-economic debates. These kinds of interventions are meant to establish what (in the

OECD's own terminology) is called "an evidence-based case for change" (see OECD 2010: 27).

6.4. Theorizing OECD messages

Through the 'track-changes' analysis, I have highlighted four important classes of interventions involved in the shaping of economic messages, and indicated how these may be understood as significant moments in designing economic messages as distinct knowledge forms. After having identified these four types of interventions to the text, which together work to achieve the desired OECD-aesthetic, I shall continue to theorize these dimensions more clearly, using the design vocabulary of Helen Verran, which enables us to define the knowledge orders of design end epistemology institutionally, in terms of their pragmatic implications (the work that they are designed to do), and semiotically, in terms of whether this work corresponds to the Peircean dimensions of firstness, secondness or thirdness (section 2.2.2) The outcome of this analysis will allow us to distinguish between knowledge claims operating as facts in an epistemo-logical order (science, governance), and knowledge claims operating as messages in a design order. In order to make this point, I shall briefly return to Helen Verran and her contention that facts, numbers and values may today be *engaging with policy making* by means quite different from those described in rational models of decision-making.

> *Formerly measure and value and the epistemic orders they speak to and justify, as these orders in turn justify particular forms of measure and value, were central in doing policy. That centrality is now fading as science increasingly functions as a service in-dustry* (Helen Verran 2010: 1).

The case discussed in Verran's article "Measures/values and their contribution to policy" is environmental politics, but I will argue that her argument may be generalized to cover other policy areas, including macro-economics. *"In the public and political place that epistemology used to occupy",* Verran proposes, *"we now have design"* (2010:1). By "design" Helen Verran means *ordering* (ibid). Socio-technical policy design is the design of particular policy orders. This is in contrast with the epistemic process of establishing a factual and sub-stantive basis for decision-making, which Verran calls *valuing*. The diagnosis which Verran proposes is that *valuing* and *ordering* which used to be closely, lineally (and indexically) tied together in justifying policy making, have now split into two independent components of the policy process. In order to make

this contention, Verran presents two cases from environmental policy making and a river restoration project in a remote part of Australia. River restoration projects are hugely expensive, materially uncertain, ripe with uncertainties – and hence controversial and politically dangerous. The service industry (large consultancy firms) has developed into a profitable industry engaged in preparing the basis for political decisions, and decision-making has simultaneously to an increasing extent become subject to citizens' hearings and participatory processes. We are now witnessing a situation where "*epistemic matters are becoming a private and technical [practice] within a privatized science of significance in practitioner communities*" (2010: 4), whereas the real difference as to whether one or the other project is bought (selected) is largely a question of its design qualities. Using an illuminating concept, Verran makes the observation that facts and measures have been not re-placed but *re-positioned (*ibid). It's not that epistemological concerns are not there – only the truth of the matter is only half the story. And rather than operating in the way that "good old facts" did, in an order of epistemology as ends in themselves, facts, numbers and values are now operating as evidence in a project of policy design, as means/instruments.

Needless to say, we cannot automatically translate Verran's quite special case from environmental policy into our case of economic monitoring and policy advice. Nonetheless, there might be lessons to learn from this ethnographic story, since Helen Verran does not simply make the observation that facts and knowledge – value and measure - have been re-positioned. She goes on to try to understand what difference it makes for values and measures that they now share the spotlight with design visions. I shall argue that this clear concept of re-positioning and the distinction between valuing (making facts) and ordering (making orders) – or between indexing and design – may add some clarity and precision to the conceptualization of knowledge claims from international organizations and regulatory bodies like the OECD.

The following conceptual table of possible relations/contrasts between economic facts and economic messages has been developed from this idea. I consider this as a case of theorizing *from* Helen Verran (see Swedberg 2012, Addelson 1999: 129). This implies that I am not testing Helen Verran's analysis, as if it were a theory of the relations between design and expertise in contemporary society, but rather attempting to continue her theorizing of the rela-

tions between design and expertise in the context of the previous analysis of what happened, in terms of knowledge design, at the meeting with Directors.

6.4.1. A conceptual table of economic facts and economic messages

> *[A]n essence doesn't lie in a definition but in a practice, a situated material practice that ties a whole range of material phenomena in a certain specific way (Latour 2009: p. X)*

> *Only practical distinctions have a meaning – Peirce 1878, section III*

Taking this point from Verran, we may interpret and understand the textual revisions of the draft in terms of a re-positioning from working as *facts* in an *order of epistemology* to working as *messages* in an *order of design*. This is where the conceptual vocabularies of Verran and Riles coalesce: What was in the first analysis identified as policy scales (the level of recommendations from very local to very universal) in Verran's thought becomes synchronized to the "semiotic scales" of firstness, secondness and thirdness. The careful shaping of OECD messages to operate within the zone between the general and the country specific can, in the vocabulary of Verran, be translated as a knowledge ideal favouring strong ties between secondness (index) and thirdness (the symbol) - without of course fully severing the connection to the actual problems and conditions of firstness (see section 2.2.2.).

The conceptual table (next page) illustrates how the role and work of the international OECD analysts at the intergovernmental Secretariat can, on this basis, be conceptualized as semiotically - and hence pragmatically - different from the epistemological model of the national expert advisor or bureaucrat, as "different forms of social configurations", "different sorts of power flows through the institutions of governance", or "different ways of doing knowledge" (Verran 2010b: 14-15). As discussed at more length in Chapter 2, Verran distinguishes between the relational complexes of respectively *"knowledge, epistemology and governance"* and *"knowledge, design, governance"* (ibid).

Economic facts	Economic messages

Verran: Index
 	
   Valuing
	Verran: Symbol
	
	   Ordering

Knowledge, epistemology, governance	Knowledge, design, governance
Objectify	Naturalize
Work as evidence for a decision (justification; accountability)	Work as evidence for an order (vision)
Directed to peers (writing for governments, federal)	Directed to peers and publics
Economic Surveys as policy instruments	Economic Surveys as interventions
Speaking truth to power	Convincing governments and publics – "Being helpful to the debate

6.2. Conceptual table – practical distinctions

In the Peirce text *"How to make our ideas clear"* (Peirce 1878), Peirce connects the question of theorizing to the question of validity in his discussions of pragmatist methodological rules which encourage us to ask what the consequences of our theoretical propositions would be: "Consider what effects, that might conceivably have practical bearings, we consider the object of our conception to have. Then, our conception of these effects is the whole of our conception of the object" (Peirce 1878:6).

The above conceptual table should in this spirit be read as an attempt to identify some central and relevant practical distinctions, to buttress the claim that our understanding of the work of the OECD will become more clear, precise and productive if we stop thinking of the organization in terms of the "scientistic "epistemological connotations in the epistemology column, and instead embrace the pro-active, co-productive connotations of the right-hand, design model. Before I continue to test how productive this conceptual tool is for the

purpose of analysing OECD messages as objects of particular knowledge/policy orders, I wish to discuss its components and their relations to the design vocabulary suggested in Chapter 2 somewhat further. The critical question here is why the properties characterized in the right-hand column should be called design properties; or, in terms of the Peircean claims to validity above, whether they identify relevant implications of the idea of distinguishing between orders of epistemology and orders of design. The argument is based on Helen Verran's concept of 're-positioning' (2010a: x) and hence builds on Verran's observation that facts, numbers and values *"traffic a boundary"* (ibid.) as they become evidence in the process of (ongoing) policy design, rather than working as indexical warrants for particular policy decisions. The right-hand column associates the position of economic messages in an order of design with the following: As messages, they naturalize a whole policy order rather than objectify their own facticity (see, for instance, Latour 1999). They work as evidence for a vision, rather than merely for a singular policy decision; they do the work of interventions more than the work of accountability; and they are directed to peers and publics, not merely to peers (fellow professional economists and governments). Lastly, the design column articulates the relationship between knowledge and power not in terms of a formalized, rational policy model - as, for instance, Wildawskis famous motto of the expert as "speaking truth to power" (Wildavsky 1979; also Hoppe 1999) - but instead by reference to the purpose of convincing governments and publics. To express this extended meaning, the table argues that the difference between experts as "speaking truth to power" and the OECD as "convincing governments and publics" and "being helpful to the debate" is also constitutive for what I choose to call the design dimension of OECD expertise.

6.4.2. "OECD messages" – knowledge claims as symbols?
The question for analysis is whether this idea of a re-positioning of the modern fact is useful to describe OECD knowledge claims semiotically, given that the OECD as an intergovernmental organization differs institutionally from both universities and national expert committees or regulatory bodies, and since the OECD Secretariat must clearly in some way be said to belong to science as a service industry.[65] *"After all, they – the governments - pay our wages!"*, I was repeatedly told in interviews as well as in general conversation.

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[65] Marcusssen & Trondal (2011) talk not of the service industry, but about the OECD's multiple roles, one of which is the role of the consultant; see also Marcussen 2004. In their pa-

The argument from the conceptual table will be that when the draft – as we saw in the track-change analysis - is re-designed to make the messages stand out more clearly; when a general horizontalizing takes place; when brevity takes preference over institutional detail; and when the policy story "makes an evidence based case for change", then we have indices that the Economic Survey operates like the semiotic symbol. Its assessments and recommendations are not merely operating to support particular decisions in the narrow sense, but work as evidence for a broader economic order. This, I argue, is one example of the re-positioning of evidence and design expressed as the difference between facts and messages. Verran uses the term "naturalizing" to indicate "how numbers as indices of a partial order become lively measurements of value that can then be put to work to produce a naturalized order" (Verran 2012a: 66). It is of course still very important that the recommendation is the right recommendation from an economic point of view (see Chapter 4), but whereas the *fact* works as evidence for a (particular) policy decision, economic *messages* work more as evidence for a "vision" of a particular order: they evoke policy stories and place the recommendations within these policy stories. Importantly, in Verran's analysis, this "storytelling" is not merely a rhetorical practice, but a particular form of generalization – the *whole-parts* generalization: a situating moment that enables the abstracting generalization (the symbol) (see Verran & Winthereik 2012: 38). This again demonstrates the semiotic infrastructure of the argument about the order of design as defined by a repositioning which makes the message act more as a generalizing symbol (thirdness) than as an icon for a real, concrete situation (firstness). As such, the analysis seems to confirm that the textual interventions from the meeting with Directors do indeed re-design the draft to work semiotically more as a message in the design order than as a fact in the epistemology order.

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per,"The OECD civil servant: Caught between Scylla and Charybdis", Marcussen and Trondal describe this as a "Creating the Largest Consultancy Firm on Earth" scenario, and comments on the implications of this scenario in the following way: *"According to this [..] scenario, the OECD is basically a business organisation which is constituted by practical men and women who know how to resolve problems. The organisation and its civil servants would be on the ground, assisting in the implementation of concrete reforms. To image the OECD as the largest consultancy on earth would require that it deliver concrete solutions to concrete problems. [..] Emphasis will not be on basic research. [...] [This would] imply that over time, the basic profile of the existing OECD civil servants would have to be changed gradually. From identifying primarily with epistemic features, the OECD civil servants would have to identify with bureaucratic features highlighting regular service to the member states"* (2011: 2016f). Furthermore, based on interviews with OECD staff, they identify how this role ambiguity puts great work pressure on OECD staff.

But before we go too far in this direction, we must remember that the chapter builds on the Assessment & Recommendations section of the Survey, a section which is short, to the point, and directed at busy policy makers and journalists – and which leaves the detailed analysis for the following analytical chapters. Possibly, therefore, the A&R is the part of the Survey which operates most unanimously like the symbol, and although the A&R is a poignant case of demonstrating the design dimensions, we must not forget the main message that Surveys are carefully designed to be relevant *both* for epistemological/governance purposes *and* for design purposes (to be helpful to the debate). In the previous chapter, this point was called the 80/20 rule, and we may understand the conceptual table as a translation of this insight into the semiotic vocabulary of Verran. The table should therefore not be read to signify that OECD messages are permanently re-positioned into the design order. I am rather in favour of a more modest conclusion, viz, that the table enables us to differentiate between when the OECD is doing the epistemology work of the left-hand column (or something close to it), and when the organization is doing the design work of the right-hand column.

Another example will illustrate how attention to the semiotic position of Economic Surveys may help to clarify the role of the organization – or at least clarify some of the on-going controversies about what the role of the organization should be. We saw in the first analytical chapter how the Surveys are designed to operate at a particular level "between the (too) country specific and the (over) general". We can translate this levelling into the vocabulary of Verran as a knowledge ideal favouring strong ties between secondness and thirdness (without of course fully severing the connection to the actual (national) problems and conditions of firstness). As such, these policy scales (the level of recommendations from very local to very universal) are synchronized to the "semiotic scales" of firstness, secondness and thirdness. And just as I described the ongoing levelling of the messages as a part of the knowledge politics inside and outside of the organization, the semiotic status of Economic Surveys is also constantly debated in terms of the role of the Secretariat: Should OECD staff be consultants for the member states, or should they be analysts? (see Marcussen & Trondal 2011; Marcussen 2004) One informant reported that some governments have "been pushing" for a more "hands-on" consultancy role; or, in one informant's words: *"a kind of technical assistance capacity"* within the Secretariat (interview). The same informant continued to emphasize how such a technical assistance capacity would require quite fundamental

changes in the organization which is today for example mostly staffed by "*ana-lysts, not practitioners*":

> *[I]t would really require the recruitment [of] different kinds of people into the Secretariat, as well as a very different organiza-tional structure of work, a very different culture* and a very dif-ferent sense of what constitutes outputs. I*n other words, it would require a hell of a lot of time and a lot of additional resources* (interview, my emphasis).

Who would have guessed that, at the heart of the OECD, we would find an ongoing war based on the knowledge politics of Peircean semiotics? Neverthe-less, in the quotation, I have emphasized the statement that a re-scaling towards the more country specific, the more concrete, technical and operational would require "*a very different sense of what constitutes outputs*" - a different ap-proach to the work that OECD analysis is designed to do. This echoes exactly what Verran's semiotic re-appropriation of Peirce seeks to capture: How the institutional in the organization – its sense of purpose and direction – comes together in its particular sense of *"what constitutes output"* – or what work the surveys are designed to do. Here, what this informant considered ought to be constitutive of OECD output can semiotically be described in terms of its cor-respondence to an institutional order emphasizing strong ties between second-ness (the fact/index) and thirdness (the generalized action imperative; the rules identifying "better policies for better lives").

6.4.3. "Killer Facts" – knowledge claims as icons?

> *Killer facts' are those punchy, memorable, headline-grabbing statistics that make reports special. They cut through the techni-calities to fire people up about changing the world. They are picked up and repeated endlessly by the media and politicians. They are known as 'killer' facts because if they are really effec-tive, they 'kill off' the opposition's arguments. The right killer fact can have more impact than the whole of a well-researched report"* (Duncan Green: "Creating Killer Facts and Graphs". Oxfam 2012).

So far, largely on the grounds of the data and the early texts, we have empha-sized how OECD knowledge claims - as signs – operate more as the Peircean symbol than as the Peircean index. However, towards the end of this chapter, I wish to suggest – on much looser data grounds – that sometimes, OECD knowledge claims may work more like the Peircean *icon*. As previously intro-duced, we relate to the sign (knowledge claim) as an icon in an immediate way:

"[...] something bothers us, but we do not know what it is. We may feel irritation or perhaps joy, but we do not know as of yet how to conceptualize such diffuse feelings" (Bertilsson 2009: 200; see also 2.2.3. above). As an icon, the knowledge claim appeals not first and foremost to the rule; instead, it provokes a reaction, a sense of urgency, an intervention.

One example of when OECD knowledge claims operate as icons is the so-called *killer fact* or *killer graphs* – policy stories with the iconic quality of being read and understood quite instantly ("in an immediate way") like, for instance, the graph reproduced below, which was pointed out to me as one example of a killer graph.

Figure 2.1. **Labour productivity growth in Denmark has slowed to well below that in other OECD countries**[1]
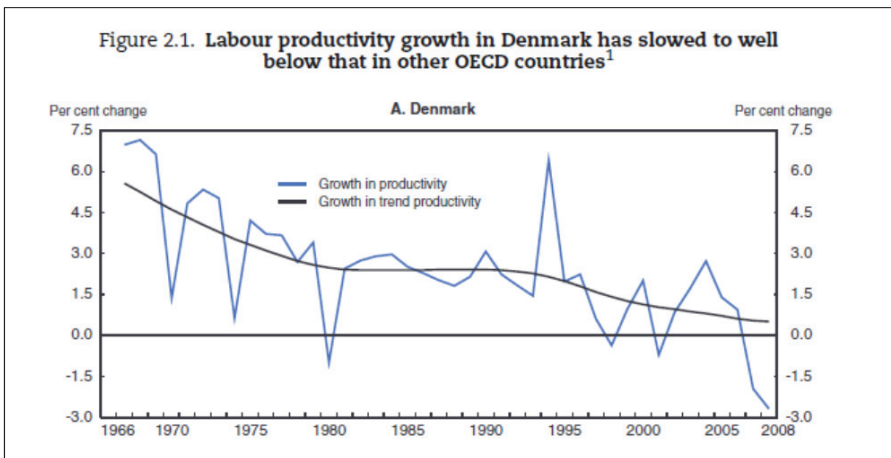
The graph bears the - for a Dane – quite disconcerting title: *"Labour productivity growth in Denmark has slowed to well below that in other OECD countries"* (OECD Denmark Survey 2009: 69[66]). Here, the graph illustrates the declining productivity trend which we can imagine extending into an apparently not too promising future. The knowledge claim – here as a figure – works as an icon by way of the text-reader relationship it projects. This sign (the figure) is designed to be activated in the intense, immediate state of firstness (above). In the semiotic relation of firstness, we respond quite immediately to this iconic confrontation with the status quo. From the point of view of the author (the OECD), this experience of firstness can hopefully be constitutive for a text-reader relationship (Smith 2001; see section 2.1.4) in which the reader is more

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[66] OECD 2009 Figure 2.1. Productivity growth has been trending down in many sectors: Per cent change, in OECD Economic Surveys: Denmark 2009.

prepared to make the generalizing move to accept the comparative paradigm and look for policy solutions to improve this situation; it works to make the reader (in Smith's broad sense of the word) reject the status quo and accept the international benchmark[67].

Rankings and comparisons – in particular comparisons in which a country compares unfavorably with countries which it either competes with or feels superior to – are particularly suited to work as icons. Despite their strong impact, some informants expressed a certain hesitancy towards rankings - a hesitancy which we, in this context, can interpret as a hesitancy towards 'overdoing the icon'[68]

> *Benchmarking is a great thing to get attention, but the next step is to look not only for the comparative benchmarking but also to begin looking elsewhere for solutions* (interview).

Rankings (icons) were described by my informants as somewhat immature or inferior to the policy learning paradigm (symbols), since the work which OECD knowledge claims should really do is not the immediate shock effect of the icon, but instead the integrative work of the symbol where countries, policy makers and individuals try to learn what policies the best-performing countries are using. One challenge for the OECD, I was told, is to get the message across that the highest goal of the Economic Surveys is not ranking for the sake of ranking, or comparison for the sake of comparison. Instead, the aim of the intergovernmental peer-review system – "A tool for co-operation and change" (OECD 2003; OECD webpage) is the continuous policy learning between member states. In this regard, the role of the OECD-secretariat is to facilitate this identification and dissemination of best practices; the inspiration, motivation and even peer pressure to make member states move towards what, according to the "international consensus", is considered to be best practice. Furthermore, if the ranking exercise is not accepted by its audience, the killer fact may backfire at the OECD and provoke resistance to OECD policy recommendations.

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[67] Law and Whitaker talks about 'rhetorical technologies' instead of representations - a choice of words which points to the independently evocative qualities which graphical representations may hold (Law and Whitaker 1988: 169; also Lindstrøm 2010).

[68] In relation to this, one informant made the following remark: "You would be amazed [at] how countries' attitudes [to the ranking exercise, MDL] can change depending on where they turn up in the pecking order" (Interview)

This brief presentation of knowledge claim as the Peircean icon goes beyond the empirical analysis of this chapter. Nevertheless, it does testify to the dynamic analytical potential of the triadic thinking of Verran in analyzing how OECD knowledge claims may perform different versions of the *"three-step epistemic dance of "modern facts""* (Verran 2012a: 65-66) – sometimes working as an *icon* for the need for policy action, at other times working as an integrative *symbol* for the ongoing transnational project of promoting evidence-based policy reforms. And yet again, much of the time, OECD knowledge claims in the Economic Surveys do the epistemological work of the index – or, to paraphrase, an interview: "the traditional work as policy instruments" - and provides policy advice on how governments should act to solve particular problems. This dynamic is expressed by Verran in the following quote:

> [a]ll three modes are deeply implicated in the others and something that acts as 'sign' in one situation might act as 'object' in another, or what is 'object' here can become 'interpretant' there. For those of us who wish to use Peirce's semiotics instrumentally, this triad effects a continuum and provides a basis from which to consider the participation of enumerated entities in assemblage (Verran 2012a: 65-66).

The following figure illustrates these dynamic relations in the context of this study:

Facts/policy instruments -
the index - SECONDNESS

Ranking, "killer graphs"/killer facts
- the icon - FIRSTNESS

Policy learning, the message,
symbol - THIRDNESS
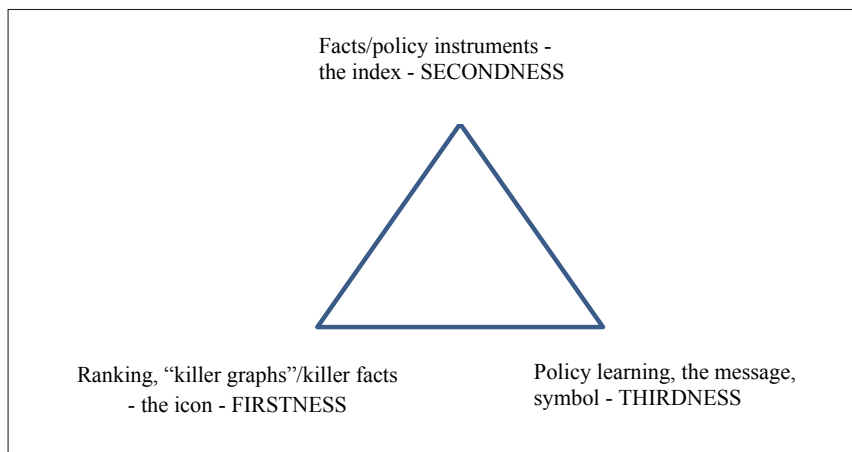
6.3. *Firstness, secondness, thirdness* in Economic Surveys

The figure is an attempt to re-insert the triadic structure which we collapsed in the conceptual table above, which distinguished between epistemology (index)

and design (ordering) and, by implication, between the fact and the message. It illustrates the analytical use of regarding the knowledge claim as a sign activating different text-reader relationships. By unpacking the triadic structure again, we become able to move beyond the empirical basis of this chapter and to capture how OECD messages may in other cases choose to emphasize not the general rule (thirdness) but instead the drama of the status quo (firstness).

6.5. Conclusion

This chapter has provided a semiotic answer to the question of the work that Economic Surveys are designed to do. It began by registering how one draft Survey went through textual revisions "to make the messages stand out more clearly". Methodologically, this was done by integrating document analysis, interviews and observation data, and this multi-methods strategy made it possible to demonstrate at a close level of detail the knowledge design of OECD messages. Four classes of interventions were identified: Writing economics, shaping the general outlook, horizontalizing, as well as interventions related to making the policy story strong and persuasive. The chapter then continued to theorize this textual revision in terms of Helen Verran's distinction between epistemology and design, arguing that economic messages should be defined as knowledge claims within an order of design defined by a number of pragmatic distinctions.

The main contribution of the analysis is to make the reader sensitive to the different semiotic repertoires which Economic Surveys evoke. I argue that by understanding the design dimensions of OECD knowledge claims, we may learn to identify two different approaches to *"being helpful to the debate"*: In some cases, OECD messages work as symbols to emphasize best practices and policy learning; at other times, OECD messages emphasize instead the drama of the status quo by working with rankings, benchmarks and so-called "killer facts".

Chapter 7. Conclusion

My claim for the relevance of this dissertation is that, although it is quite clear and well described in the literature that the OECD and other international organizations take part in processes of idea dissemination and policy debates, the links between the making of professional knowledge at the international secretariats and the purported role of these international organizations have not been made explicit. It is this gap in knowledge to which this dissertation responds. This is especially important since such a lack of knowledge stands in the way of a clear perception of the contemporary role and significance of international knowledge organizations.

This closing chapter will provide a reading across the three analytical chapters to conclude what we have learned about how OECD Economic Surveys are drafted and what work they are designed to do. The chapter also provides a concluding discussion of the value of the concept of Design for understanding how the OECD engages with economic policy debates in the member countries. The chapter begins by returning to the research problem and research objectives. I restate the main purpose of the dissertation as being an attempt to make clearer how the OECD enters into our national policy debates in the form of concrete economic messages. After repeating the research questions, I move on to recapitulate my main empirical answers to the research problem and research questions. This will be the first part of the conclusion. Besides these synthesizing conclusions, this first part also comprises a project map of main findings from the three analytical chapters.

The second part of the conclusion deals with the value of theoretically defining what it means to *be helpful to the debate* in terms of Design dimensions of Economic Surveys defined in terms of *ordering*. The third part of the conclusion recapitulates the analytical steps which the dissertation has taken in order to arrive at these conclusions: The decision to pursue a strategy focusing on the micro processes of the Secretariat as key to understanding the OECD as an organization, and the decision to combine insights from Dorothy E. Smith, Helen Verran and Annelise Riles into an institutional ethnography focusing on knowledge organizing and knowledge design. This third section summarizes some strengths and limits of this research approach and presents some perspectives for future research in continuation of the findings of this study.

7.1.   Return to the research problem and standpoint

The aim of my dissertation has been to try to understand how OECD processes of knowledge organizing (a term covering both the drafting of Surveys, the organization of work and the comparative methodology) relate to the institutional objectives of this (knowledge) organization. An initial fascination with the comparative interventions of the Economic Surveys, and curiosity concerning the kind of hybrid knowledge organization that the OECD really constituted, made me set out to understand the work that OECD Economic Surveys were designed to do with regard to national policy debates. More specifically, I wanted to understand how processes of knowledge organizing and knowledge design were linked to, and worked towards, these objectives.

7.1.1. Focusing on knowledge organizing and economic messages

The dissertation has been framed as an institutional ethnography focusing on knowledge organizing and the knowledge design of economic messages. At the outset, I gave three reasons for letting economic messages be the object of analysis. The *first* reason, directly inspired by Smith's approach to situated ethnographic research, was the analytical intention to write a study of OECD messages from the standpoint of the person encountering such messages as they enter into national policy debates; and, from such a standpoint, to seek to explain where the messages come from, the work that they are designed to do, as well as their outward appearance. The *second* reason was to focus on economic messages as a way of repositioning the OECD, from being analyzed as an object of federal and epistemological relations between the OECD and national governments (with the general public as quite passive audience) towards being analyzes with a view to how knowledge claims textually mediate the relations between the organization itself and economic policy debates in the member countries. The *third* reason was methodological and emphasized that the focus on economic messages as supplying concrete knowledge claims taking shape during drafting processes, enables us to study the links between the epistemological content (of knowledge claims) and the institutional intent of the organization. The argument was that by understanding the form of OECD messages, we may also understand the function and purpose of the institution. The focus on economic messages as key links between (knowledge) organizing and institution clears the way for an analytical strategy for moving beyond the local ethnography and understanding the broader institutional relations of which OECD messages are a part.

7.1.2. Focusing on Design Dimensions

Furthermore, this focus on economic messages served important theoretical purposes in the analysis by articulating how economic messages differ from economic facts not merely by the way they look, but especially by their pragmatic implications, i.e., the work they are designed to do. In my search for an empirically sensitive vocabulary for conceptualizing the various ways in which OECD actively seek to move countries closer to its own beliefs about best policy, I have focused on what I have called the Design dimensions of Economic Surveys, in order to pinpoint how these Surveys seek *to be helpful to the debate*. These three decisions - to focus on knowledge organizing, to focus on economic messages and to focus on the Design dimensions of the Economic Surveys – have shaped the analytical strategy of the dissertation.

7.1.3. Research problem and problem formulation

In order to unfold the epistemological problem of how knowledge practices relate to institutional objectives and form institutional relations in the institutional ethnography, the research problem of the dissertation was articulated as the empirically oriented question of *how Economic Surveys are designed to engage with economic policy debates in the member countries*. This question was further made operational in three sets of sub questions, each targeting different aspects of how knowledge organizing shapes institutional order, and each structured around somewhat different conceptual approaches to institutional ethnography[69].

7.2. Knowledge organizing - the ethnography

This section will provide a horizontal, synthesizing reading of what one can learn about knowledge organizing at the OECD when employing and combining insights from Riles, Smith and Verran.I have selected four main topics which demonstrate the institutional order and knowledge organizing from and by which OECD messages enter into national policy debates: The dual messages of Economic Surveys; the zone of OECD expertise, peer review and

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[69] *The questions from Riles were the following*: "What is the aesthetic form of OECD knowledge? How is it achieved? And how is this form linked to the institutional role of the OECD"? *The questions from Smith were:* "How do Economic Surveys coordinate different sequences of action? What is the coordinating role of the EDRC and the peer review institution in the final redrafting of Surveys? And how is this symbolic coordination linked to the institutional role of the OECD?" *The questions from Verran were:* "What is the semiotic function of the economic message? What defines design dimensions of OECD knowledge claims theoretically and empirically? What semiotic work are the Surveys designed to do? And how are different semiotic forms of knowledge practices linked to institutional order?"

country surveillance; the international benchmark; and the evidence-based paradigm.

7.2.1. The dual message of Economic Surveys

If only one finding from the ethnography could make its way into the conclusion, it should be this one: In order to understand OECD-messages, we must learn to recognize the dual messages of Economic Surveys and bear in mind that Surveys are both for national consumption and for general OECD consumption. This demonstrates quite forcefully one important transnational dynamic of OECD knowledge claims, which is that country reviewing is not an issue between the country under review and the Secretariat alone, but that OECD messages are always targeted at more than one audience at once.

This figure of the dual message, or the dual purposes of Economic Surveys, reappeared in different versions in all the three analytical chapters. It was most clearly expressed in Chapter 5 (from the redrafting session), which clearly illustrated how a dual message is written into every Survey: It must at the same time tell the country what it could and should do in the current, particular situation, while indicating for other countries what they should do in similar situations. This latter dimension of the Surveys was even explicitly articulated as a *Design* dimension by one informant. In the analysis of text revisions following the meeting with Directors (Chapter 6), the dual messages were theorized in terms of epistemology and design, where the analysis concluded that Surveys are written in ways which enable them to do both the work of Epistemology (i.e., concrete and elaborated enough to be used for practical policy purposes) and the work of Design (i.e., making the general messages clear beyond the particular cases; bringing in other OECD work; strengthening the horizontal dimensions). In Chapter 4, we saw how the Surveys operate in the zone between the (over) general and the (too) country specific. Here, the dual messages were articulated as proportioning practices to ensure that the Surveys as a whole should neither be an irrelevant non-starter for the country, nor be so country specific as to be of interest to the reviewed country only. Both messages: one for the country, and one for general OECD consumptions are woven into the text of the Survey.

The dual messages appear side by side in the Surveys, where some very country specific recommendations can stand next to recommendations with stronger OECD generality. The analysis explains this patterned quality as a multi-track, maximizing strategy where each Survey is designed to be relevant

– and hence active - on multiple sequences of action at the same time. Nevertheless, as a whole, the dual messages serve the purpose of *horizontalizing*, that is to say: of making sure that Economic Surveys serve the horizontal purpose of being relevant not merely for the country, but also for the larger purpose of policy sharing and identifying best practice policy solutions.

7.2.2. The zone of OECD expertise

A second topic emphasized by the analysis is that OECD knowledge claims enter into national policy debates from a particular level of generalization which in the dissertation was called "between the (over) general and the (too) country specific". The dissertation concludes that the social organization of knowledge at the OECD Economics Department is characterized by constant *proportioning* practices at all levels of organization, from the division of labor at the Economics Department to methodology, analytical practices and drafting control. This zone of expertise is used as an analytic figure to capture the coordination of horizontal (cross-country) and vertical (single-country) aspects at all levels of knowledge organizing. I conclude from the ethnography that the level of generality (how horizontal, or how country specific) is an important indicator of whether a knowledge claim is prepared so as to operate as a message in an order of design, or as a policy instrument in an order of epistemology. This constant proportioning appears as an important aspect of Design dimensions, since it works, in each case, towards establishing a *high tension zone* between relevance for the country and the moving the debate forward in or beyond the country under review.

The analysis of the zone of expertise was most fully developed in the Riles-inspired chapter which analytically focused on the form of knowledge. But there are parallels between what I have called the policy scales of the level of recommendations - from very local to very universal – and the "semiotic scales" of *firstness*, *secondness* and *thirdness* identified in Chapter 6. As knowledge claims move up or down this line of generalization, they may also take on different semiotic functions in what Verran calls the "three-step epistemic dance of 'modern facts'" in an "evidence-based policy era*"* (Verran 2012a: 65-66; 2010a: 6). And Chapter 5 - from redrafting - also revealed how shifts in scale from attending to the country specific to attending to the cross-country OECD level is used for the dynamic negotiation of relations and interests between the country and the OECD. Hence, what we see in all cases are

significant examples of how knowledge design (here: the proportioning of knowledge claims) shapes and directs institutional action.

This insight that Economic Surveys enter into national policy debates from a particular level of generalization, which in the dissertation was called "between the (over) general and the (too) country specific" has three more implications, all of them related to what I, following Laurent Thévenot, call the practices and paradoxes of generalization. First, it articulates why OECD messages by their very form of knowledge are inherently controversial knowledge claims, which in its turn opens up insights into how OECD staff respond to this in their drafting strategies. Secondly, it focuses attention on possible controversies in establishing where exactly the line should be drawn ("not an equilibrium"). Thirdly, it demonstrates how this zone of expertise is presented as a claim for validity presented almost as a solution to the problem of "whether one size fits all" - the empirical equivalent of Thévénots dilemma of the "montée en génerale".

7.2.3. Peer review and country surveillance
A third topic which the ethnography brings to the fore is the federal character of Economic Surveys. One of the things which one must know to be a competent "reader" of OECD messages (in Smith's extended meaning of the word) is that the OECD is an inter-governmental organization, not an independent think tank, and that Economic Surveys are not a voice "simply from the outside", but rather the voice from a composite body of governments peer-reviewing and self-evaluating on the basis of a shared commitment to international benchmarks and policy learning. The institutional ethnography shows how Economic Surveys are written on the basis of a high degree of consultation - even cooperation - between the Desk and the country under review, but also how this consultation and co-production is coordinated and mediated by the EDRC (see Chapter 5 for examples of how the Chairman's Conclusions become a symbolic coordinator of relations between Desk and country under review).

The ethnography not only reminds the reader that the OECD is an inter-governmental organization and that Economic Surveys are produced in the context of the peer review; it also seeks to identify how this gives direction to the knowledge organizing of the Economic Survey, and in some cases shapes individual Surveys issued under the responsibility of the Economic Development and Review Committee (EDRC). We have seen how this shaping can take place when, for instance, Desks include certain topics "to make the Com-

mittee happy", when discussions at the peer-review hearing are written into the Survey at redrafting, as well as through the expectation that certain research topics initiated at the initiative of governments in the EDRC or other committees are covered in the Surveys at one point or another. Examples from the time of research were, e.g., green growth and the political economy of reform. With this, the ethnography demonstrates how the EDRC is not merely a "reform committee", but also a "design committee", doing the work of bringing new topics into the Surveys, facilitating policy learning, pointing to interesting but sometimes somewhat disconnected OECD-recommendations to be added to the surveys and sustaining the pressure for policy action also on recommendations from previous Surveys (see "Appendix on Progress in Structural Reform").

7.2.4. The international benchmark and the evidence-based paradigm

The fourth point emphasized by the institutional ethnography relates to the content of work following the methodological principle that we cannot know an organization if we do not know – in quite some detail – the content of its work (see Chapter 3 for elaboration). Institutional analysis cannot be a formal analysis of institutions doing something – we don't quite know what! – but must direct its attention towards the actual doings of OECD staff, and hence towards the significance of the comparative methodology and the evidence-based forms of professional knowledge. Some of the insights of this nature have already been reported in the discussion of the zone of expertise, and much further work remains to be done before we fully understand how cross-country comparisons and the evidence-based paradigm engage with and intervene in national policy debates. However, one conclusion from the analysis should be mentioned at this point, namely that an important aspect of Design dimensions is to promote the OECD methodology itself. The analysis concludes that promoting the value of international comparisons, the potential of the benchmark for policy learning, growth and innovation, and the scientific attitude of evidence-based best practice, is in itself a way of paving the way for future reform and consequently belongs to the ongoing, pro-active ordering Design work performed by OECD messages as they engage with national policy debates. As the analysis concludes (Chapter 4): OECD messages should not merely convince "people and governments" about the practical reasons for selecting one policy over another in concrete situations; they must also, at a more general level, do the work of advocating the "more scientific" evidence view and build-

ing agreement concerning the value for national policy debates of international benchmarks.

7.2.5. Knowledge organizing: The institutional link

The institutional ethnography has, in a number of different ways and at the level of the shaping of messages, identified the active, responsive, ongoing, forward-looking, proactive, antagonistic, horizontalizing qualities with which the Desk tries to imbue the Economic Survey. It has also documented how these qualities are part of the intention, the institutional purpose, of the Economic Survey: that of seeking, in all cases, to be relevant, to make an impact and as such to *be helpful to the debate*. I have demonstrated the (multi)directionality of the Economic Surveys, its distinct form and levelling of knowledge, and most importantly, I have explored *what it is the OECD is trying to achieve*, as graphically described by one informant (section 4.1.1). This is how far this inside-out approach to the institutional ethnography goes in the direction of demonstrating the institution ethnographically: It identifies and documents ethnographically how Economic Surveys project institutional action; it provides knowledge of how Economic Surveys, through the *doings* of OECD staff (and governments), are placed in particular sequences of action, and as such makes visible how Economic Surveys form part of and actively actualize a particular institutional order beyond the locally observable practices of the Secretariat. In its turn, this institutional order is part of a broader complex: the OECD, governments, the media, as well as other sites of global economy and broader policy networks (the IMF, the EU, University Departments of Economy, etc.).

7.2.6. Design dimensions of Economic Surveys – ethnographic conclusions

By analyzing the knowledge organizing of Economic Surveys through a process of integrating documents (several stages of the draft Surveys, and relevant other publications) with interviews and observations, these ethnographic observations provide the empirical answer to the question of how *Economic Surveys are designed to engage with economic policy debates in the member countries.*

On the basis of these empirical findings, I conclude that a focus on Design dimensions of Economic Surveys has proven useful for the purpose of understanding how OECD messages engage with national policy debates. It has served to identify the ongoing, proactive work of promoting not merely indi-

vidual policies but also the comparative, evidence paradigm. It has helped to identify important transnational dynamics in relation to the OECD. It has been successful in connecting an account of the local knowledge practices and methodologies of the OECD with an analysis of the work that the Surveys are designed to do, and it has furthermore provided an explanation of why Economic Surveys look the way they do. As such, the institutional analysis has contributed relevant insights not only to the overarching research question, but also to the sub question of how *knowledge organizing* links to the institutional objectives of *being helpful to the debate*.

Having demonstrated the processes and practices involved in the drafting of Surveys, I shall continue to discuss the analytical contribution of the Design concept. But before leaving the detailed ethnographic level and the horizontal, synthesizing answer to the problem formulation, the following project map (see Clarke 2005) will summarize the main empirical findings. The map, next page, furnishes relevant details from each of the three chapters, and hence from each of the three theoretical approaches to institutional ethnography.

7.3. Project map:

PROJECT MAP – CENTRAL ELEMENTS OF KNOWLEDGE ORGAIZING - OECD ECONOMIC SURVEYS

Chapter 4: Riles

- The form of OECD knowledge. The inside-out ethnography

- The zone of OECD expertise. Coordinating the horizontal and the vertical. Going for Growth and Economic Surveys as "an integrated project".

- The drafting process: From identifying structural practices to preparing for the EDRC. International expertise. Relevance.

- "One size fits all"? Practice and paradoxes of evidence-based policy recommendations. "Not an equilibrium". Political Economy of Reform. Antagonistic dimensions of good recommendations.

Chapter 5: Smith

- The direction of Economic Surveys. Sequences of action.

- Redrafting: An agreed draft. Federal knowledge. The role of the EDRC.

- The Chairman's Conclusions as a significant symbol. Coordinating, but not overdetermining."Keeping the Committee happy". Flexible interpretation. Design and the 20/80 rule.

- Not merely for national consumption. The multi-track structure. Economic Surveys have three audiences: National governments, national publics, for general OECD consumption.

- Design and "the 20/80 rule".

Chapter 6: Verran

- Semantic positions. Track-change analysis.

- The meeting with Directors. Track-change analysis. "The messages do not stand out so clearly".

- The four classes of interventions: 1) writing economics, 2) shaping the general look of the economy, 3) horizontalizing, 4) the policy story.

- Design and epistemology. Symbol, Index, Icon. Economic facts and economic messages.

7.4. The theoretical argument: Design Dimensions of Economic Surveys

7.4.1. Design as ordering

One decision of this study was to begin by repositioning the OECD into a position where design dimensions were made observable. This was done by taking a determinedly pragmatic stance on the role of knowledge as always linked to action with regard to the knowledge practices which I study, as well as for my own knowledge practice (section 1.2.4.) This pragmatic stance has influenced the research focus on links between practices of knowledge organizing and the pursuit of institutional objectives, and also the methodological logic which, for instance, does not seek to measure the impact of the OECD in objective terms (policy implementation, media citations etc.), but instead seeks to demonstrate how the OECD, via its economic messages, actively and intentionally works towards shaping future social orders and outcomes.

The concept of design is used for the purpose of bringing out even more clearly this pragmatic link between knowledge organizing and the institutional work which the Economic Surveys are designed to do. The pragmatic insight that knowledge claims actively shape different institutional orders is present in both Smith's and Riles' writings, but it is most strongly articulated by Verran, who actually calls these different institutional orders "epistemology" and "design" (see Chapter 2). In the analysis, I have used this conceptual distinction to give to "Design" the specific meaning of *ordering*, to assist the analysis in moving beyond the locally observable practices of drafting, negotiating and organizing the work and to indicate – at the conceptual level – what kind of orders, what kind of relations between knowledge and policy, the Survey seems to be pointing towards. Following the logic of inquiry of the institutional ethnography, these orders should be interpreted not as free imaginaries, but as attempts to clarify the order, which the Surveys seem to be projecting as the "what-comes-next" of the social act as Smith has phrased it (2005: 86).

The validity of this distinction between epistemology and design is a matter of proving that these different knowledge orders refer back to the different lines of knowledge organizing which have been locally observed and described above. If so, they add a clearer understanding of the work that the Surveys are designed to do, by demonstrating how the knowledge claims can either operate as facts in an order of epistemology or as messages in an order of design. This argument is a theoretical re-articulation of the ethnographic observation of the

dual messages and patterned qualities of Economic Surveys, but it adds to the analysis by providing a vocabulary for the different institutional orders which the two messages evoke.

7.4.2. Economic Facts and Economic Messages

In this conclusion, I shall again point to two sets of analytical distinctions which are derived from Verran's Peirce-inspired analysis of the modern fact, and both of which serve the purpose of analytically clarifying the links between processes of knowledge organizing and institutional orders.

As mentioned above, the first of these distinctions is that between *economic facts* belonging to an order of epistemology and *economic messages* belonging to *an order of design.* The semiotic definition of the two is that whereas the fact does the work of indexing or grounding decisions, the message does the work of *ordering* or preparing an open space of "what-comes-next". This distinction between knowledge claims doing the federal/epistemological work of the fact, and knowledge claims do the ongoing, pro-active, ordering Design work of the message was in the dissertation presented in a table of so-called "practical distinctions" to indicate that the table illustrates "different ways of doing knowledge" and as such *"different sorts of power flows through the institutions of governance"* (Verran 2010b: 14-15)..

Chapter 6's table of practical distinction is one way of expressing the links between the concrete practices of knowledge design and the institutional order which these practices are part of, and it was constructed on the basis of a close examination of textual revisions to one draft Survey after the meeting with Directors – a meeting in which the messages were designed "to stand out more clearly" (reproduced next page).

Economic facts	Economic messages
Verran: Index *Valuing*	*Verran: Symbol* *Ordering*
Knowledge, epistemology, governance	Knowledge, design, governance
Objectify	Naturalize
Work as evidence for a decision (justification; accountability)	Work as evidence for an order (vision)
Directed to peers (writing for governments, federal)	Directed to peers and publics
Economic Surveys as policy instruments	Economic Surveys as interventions
Speaking truth to power	Convincing governments and publics – *Being helpful to the debate*

Conceptual table – practical distinctions (from chapter 6)

7.4.3. Symbol, index and icon

The second analytical distinction taken over from Verran is a distinction which makes use of the full Peircean repertoire of both symbol, index and icon. The distinction between economic facts and economic messages was the basis of the argument that OECD knowledge claims as messages do the work of *ordering* and paving the way for future reforms. Here, the mobilization of both the symbol, the index and the icon brings out how Design dimensions actually come in two versions: One version emphasizing the validity and soundness of the comparative and evidence based paradigm (Peircean *thirdness*), and another version emphasizing the dramatic consequences of the status quo (Peircean *firstness*). This argument is developed more in the Chapter 6, as well as in Chapter 2).

One preliminary conclusion from that chapter is that one way in which this semiotic repertoire could be applied to institutional ethnography is by using the symbol, the index and the icon to sensitize the analysis to how the texts of Economic Surveys open – or rather try to foreclose - text-reader conversation: Do they try to evoke a sense of competitiveness by taking the place of the icon (ranking, killer facts)? Do they try to make the reader accept the practical wisdom of the policy learning paradigm and international comparisons (the symbol)? Or do they operate by convincing the reader with arguments about why one particular policy is preferable to another (the index)?

The empirical analysis of the iconic function of the economic message is too brief to be conclusive. But in the context of this dissertation, I conclude that analysing Economic Surveys as signs has proved empirically useful. For example, such an attention to the semiotic infrastructure of knowledge organizing helps to clarify what it means to be "an analyst, not a practitioner" in terms of different "senses of what constitutes output". It may also serve to further unfold the paradoxes of generalisation, pointing to the practical dilemmas faced by OECD staff as to whether to go for the immediate effects of the ranking or try to develop and convey more complex policy stories, pointing to what countries can learn from the benchmarks and rankings.

7.4.4. The analytical value of the concept of design

I conclude that to theorize Design as ordering has proved to be a useful strategy, raising the concept of Design from the level of an intuitive proto-concept into a concept with a precise meaning which makes it possible to define Design dimensions of Economic Surveys as the dimensions of the Surveys which do not primarily do the indexical work of being evidence for a particular policy decision, but instead do the ordering work of promoting a broader policy order. Beyond adding theoretical justification, I also argue that Verran's concrete, ethnographic adaptation of the semantic argument from Peirce has proved to be analytically useful for uncovering the links between the knowledge practices of the OECD and its institutional objectives. We may add that one further advantage of this shift from the ethnographic to the conceptual vocabulary is that it enables us to move beyond the case of the OECD to study other cases of how transnational knowledge contributes to policy debates. It is also a vocabulary which allows us to discuss how the role of intergovernmental knowledge organizations like the OECD may differ from (or converge with), for example,

the role of university economists, government officials or national policy insti-
tutes.

7.5. Strengths, limits and implications of the study

As a concluding discussion of this approach, I shall in this third part of the
conclusion take the opportunity to reflect on some of the steps taken to reach
these conclusions, and also reflect on some limits to the approach I have cho-
sen (see also chapter 3). I shall discuss three topics: "the sociology for people"-
aspect, the combination of Riles, Verran and Smith, and the knowledge politics
of this institutional ethnography. Following these discussions, I shall present
some perspectives for future research arising from the conclusions of the dis-
sertation.

7.5.1. Institutional Ethnography as 'a sociology for people'?

One goal of this dissertation has been to conduct the single-institution study of
the OECD in a way which made the research relevant for understanding broad-
er relations between science, expertise and the public in the sphere of economic
policy. This situated engagement has been a central driver for both fieldwork
dispositions (what questions should be asked, what is the focus of observations,
etc.) and subsequent analysis (mapping exercises), as I pursued the goal of
"explain[ing] the behaviour of the economy; or the society; or the political pro-
cess to people particularly as these enter into, organize and disorganize peo-
ple's lives"? (Smith 1999: 32).

As such, the basic interest in understanding the work that the Surveys are
designed to do, and how they are shaped to do this work, came first and fore-
most from the standpoint, not from discourse (to use Smith's distinction): I
wanted to write a text which could ideally help transform the reader into what
Smith calls a *competent reader,* meaning someone who understands how par-
ticular texts and significant organizations like the OECD help co-ordinate so-
cial, political and institutional orders. Hence, although the text cannot be read
as a simple, general introduction to the OECD for the average reader, it has
nevertheless been written as a situated engagement with the problem of how to
write an ethnographic text which does not take the standpoint of governments,
experts or other decision makers, but instead takes the standpoint of the person
who encounters OECD messages only in passing, as the messages are briefly
discussed in the media for a day or two and then mostly continue their federal

life in peer-reviewing processes, committees and policy work inside and outside of government.

I have made active decisions to discuss the OECD in terms of concrete text-reader conversations between the OECD and its multiple audiences, and not in terms of decision-making or the dissemination of ideas. And I have done this to make sure that the standpoint of the study was not identical with the OECD standpoint, but instead worked towards creating and keeping open *a high tension zone* around the institutional intention of "convincing people and governments" about concrete policies and the larger comparative paradigm. In this way, I have been inspired by (primarily) Dorothy Smith to generate research of transnational economic relations which does not treat "people" as merely the objects of the OECD, or of the study. But although I shall maintain that this situated ethnographic engagement with how texts coordinate transnational textual relations can aptly be described as an institutional ethnography, to call it *a sociology for people* would probably be going too far, since the study presents no new knowledge about how any individual receives, actualizes, problematizes or responds to OECD knowledge or broader paradoxes of comparisons. This would quite obviously be an interesting next step from this study.

7.5.2. Dissembling Smith, Riles and Verran

Another issue to debate is the decision to delegate one analytical chapter to Smith, Riles and Verran respectively rather than for example to develop a core set of research questions (see also Lindstrøm 2014). This decision has partly been taken for empirical reasons (see Chapter 3), but it also reflects theoretical concerns. As previously discussed, the analysis takes Dorothy Smith's symbolic interactionist approach to institutional ethnography as its core (social organization of knowledge, textually mediated trans-local relations, coordinating, text-reader conversations) and then adds specialized details from Riles (the form of knowledge) and Verran (the shaping of the message; Design dimensions) to capture the specific dynamics of this transnational, knowledge-intensive, economic expert organization. This "joining of forces" was methodologically justified with reference to the shared commitments to pragmatist methodologies, in order to understand how documents and/or enumerated entities co-produce institutional order. On the basis of the conclusions in this chapter, I feel that this strategy has proved useful both for bringing out different aspects of the material, and for adding validity to the analysis - for example

when all three approaches, in somewhat different ways, articulate that OECD messages must do multiple work (the dual message).

On the other hand, one can always ask if I should not instead have chosen one analytical strategy (or two), and pursued it more strongly. Personally, I am convinced that the three, somewhat different, approaches complement each other well if one wants to harvest significant Design dimensions from the material: Riles has enabled me to arrange the account of the level of the messages and the shaping; Verran has enabled me to theorize messages vs. facts as a way of emphasizing the significance of the Design dimensions; and Smith – besides providing the core "ontology" for the study - has cleared the way for an understanding of the different sequences of action.

But as Karin Widerberg (2006: 80-81) has remarked, the benefits of the integrative framework must be weighted against the loss of depth and space to fully develop the richness of each of the three analytical repertoires. In particular with regard to the very rich sociological repertoire of Smith, one could go much further, and on the basis of the present work, I would tentatively conclude that Smith's concepts of the text-reader conversation and the act-text-act model will be particularly promising starting points for a deeper understanding of how international organizations and comparative knowledge influence the way in which people act and understand the economy. Although the particular combination of the "complementary strengths and non-overlapping weaknesses" (see Onwuegbuzie & Johnson 2006: 48) of Smith, Riles and Verran has been productive in bringing out the Design dimensions of this empirical material from the OECD, there is still work to do in discussing how the potential of institutional ethnography to analyze what Eastwood called "nebulous" transnational institutional relations (and topics of economic expertise) can best be developed.

7.5.3. The knowledge politics of the institutional ethnography: The High Tension Zone

This institutional ethnography is not written in the form of a critique of the OECD and does not provide explicit normative judgments about whether the described organizational practices are good or bad. Instead, its central matter of concern has been to unfold and explain how transnational economic expertise engage with shaping public as well as government beliefs about economic policy-making. As mentioned, ethnographic approaches to understanding science and knowledge in the making have been met with critiques for being too "a-

critical"; for "playing the game of epistemological chicken" as phrased in a famous attack by Collins and Yearly (1992: 301f). And indeed, the challenge facing the practice approach of the institutional ethnography is how to explore knowledge practices and the institutional relations that they form part of, without explaining away all controversies and disconcertments of these knowledge practices.

Following Susan Leigh Star, I call this a knowledge politics of the *high tension zone*. It demands that the institutional ethnographer should find ways of faithfully representing the practices of the institution, whilst at the same time making an effort to make sure that the text evokes that knowledge production is not a neutral practice but a zone of diverging interests, values, opinions and positions (Star 1991: 44-46; Verran 2013:157f). Star argues for the need to develop this sensibility for multiplicity into the design from the beginning - which is what I have done by making the multiple audiences and multi-tracked structure visible. Further textual and methodological practices to support this include an attempt to make the institutional standpoint of the OECD clearly visible ("what work are they designed to do") and to articulate the ontology of the OECD in terms of the political economy of reform. To make the institutional standpoint of the OECD clearly visible is also a way to contrast it with the standpoint of the ethnography which is not concerned with convincing people and publics about OECD beliefs, but with creating a clearer understanding of where OECD-messages come from, why they are effective and how they take part of contemporary transnational institutional orders of knowledge and governance. Here, the relevant test of the concept is its ability to not reduce the Economic Surveys to disconnected objects, but to make sure that Economic Surveys are at this point represented as active and complex (see Latour 2004). In the institutional ethnography this is, among other things, achieved by pointing to the active processes of coordinating the Surveys: how they do not reach an equilibrium, but operate by series of decisions and flexible interpretation in an open process. But also by bringing to the fore the embedded paradoxes of generalization which make Economic Surveys controversial in themselves – at least until the day where the international benchmark and the evidence-based, comparative paradigm should become fully naturalized in the member states.

7.5.4. Institutional ethnography and the hidden face of power

The knowledge politics of the *high tension zone* brings out the power which resides in the textually mediated institutional relations by pointing out how

economic messages coordinate policy debates in and among OECD member countries, and by pointing out how the messages are indeed designed to actively intervene in and push forward such debates.

Nevertheless, as I retrospectively evaluate the research approach, I probably could and should have discussed more deeply whether some of the situational elements involved in what I call the *horizontalizing* of messages - elements that silence some voices, perspectives and ideas while promoting others - not only reflect epistemological concerns with "getting it right", or design concerns with "getting it out"; and that they do not only involve discretionary power, but most likely also aspects of the kind of power which Bachrach and Baratz have called "the hidden face of power" - the "mobilization of bias in the institution of inquiry" (Bachrach and Baratz 1962: 952; also Armingeon 2004: 237-8). Here, the issue I should have addressed would be the risk of group thinking, although it is not directly necessary for the purpose of defining the institutional work that the Surveys are designed to do. Institutional ethnography does not leave out the possibility of discussions of such manifestations of power where appropriate; but I have not gone into these aspects.

7.5.5. Perspectives for future research

Finally, I wish to briefly indicate some more perspectives for future research which this dissertation opens up. One interesting line of research would be to proceed directly to studying the paradoxes of generalization of OECD messages in the context of reception, and hence move from the inside-out ethnography to a research design emphasizing public responses to OECD messages; another would be to study broader comparative, evidence based forms of knowledge. A third line of research could apply the analytical framework of the symbol, the index and the icon to other cases of "best practice" implementation in current welfare reforms. A third line of research could continue the analysis of the proportioning of knowledge in peer-review processes, and possibly broaden the research to cover how peer review and the open method of coordination is practiced as part of EU committee work, or as part of the enlargement process of the OECD as discussed in Chapter 4. As part of this, I should be most interested in studying this co-operative, inter-governmental, federal form of knowledge production as a possible "civic epistemology" (Jasanoff 2005 :249-51). These research topics – and more! – could be ways of inquiring further into the role of professional knowledge and transnational knowledge institutions in the ongoing processes of welfare state reform, and/or pursuing research

into relations between economic expertise and public understanding(s) of the economy.

7.6. Bringing the institution into view

The dissertation has demonstrated and unfolded concrete processes of knowledge organizing at the Economics Department, which prepare Economic Surveys *to be helpful to policy debates* within and across OECD member countries, and has as such answered the problem formulation of *how Economic Surveys are designed to engage with economic policy debates in the member countries?* In doing this, it has been the intention with the dissertation to bring the Organization behind the OECD-messages into view, and to allow for the reader to get a sense of this international, inter-governmental organization, of its practices of knowledge organizing which produce the country reviews, international benchmarks and evidence based policy recommendations, of the peer review system and the culture of co-operation and consultation with governments, and also of this Organization's profound will, objective and mandate to continue to move policy debates in the member countries by means of economic arguments and persuasive communication.

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Dansk resumé

”Produktiviteten falder”. ”Skatten på arbejde bør sænkes – især topskatten skal lempes”. ”Hæv boligskatten”. ”Overvej brugerbetaling på videregående uddannelser”. ”Forbedringer i konkurrenceevnen er påkrævet”. Langt de fleste mennesker møder den økonomiske samarbejdsorganisation OECD, Organisationen for Økonomisk Samarbejde og Udvikling, gennem økonomiske budskaber som disse. Denne ph.d.-afhandling går bag om OECD's økonomiske budskaber og beskriver hvordan organisationens budskaber og analyser bliver til, samt hvordan de rettes mod at indgå i medlemslandenes økonomiske debatter.

Ph.d.-afhandlingen er en institutionel etnografi af OECD's *Economics Department* med særligt fokus på organisationens såkaldte landerapporter, som med en frekvens på ikke mere end to år evaluerer den økonomiske tilstand og udsigterne for hvert af OECD's medlemslande, identificerer politikker, som i OECD's optik kan forbedres og kommer med politikanbefalinger. I modsætning til andet af organisationens arbejde, som i højere grad cirkulerer gennem forskellige forvaltningsnetværk, er OECD's landerapporter både henvendt til regeringer og offentlighed i medlemslandene, og tjener derfor ikke alene til at give policy-anbefalinger til landets beslutningstagere, men også til løbende at bidrage til medlemslandenes økonomisk-politiske debatter. Her bidrager organisationen til debatten med sine anbefalinger til hvordan det enkelte medlemsland kan forbedre sin økonomiske situation, men også ved løbende at søge at fremme forståelsen for værdien af internationale landesammenligninger, benchmarks og evidensbaserede politikker.

Afhandlingens engelske titel "*On 'Being Helpful to the Debate' – Design Dimensions of OECD Economic Surveys*" kan på dansk oversættes til *"'At fremme debatten' – designaspekter ved OECD's landerapporter"*. Ved at tale om designaspekter lægger jeg i afhandlingen vægten på at forstå den dimension af OECD's arbejde, som handler om at introducere og fremme politikker og strukturelle reformer som OECD's analyser anbefaler som de rigtige, også selvom de pågældende forslag ikke nødvendigvis har politisk opbakning i medlemslandet. Dette pro-aktive arbejde med hele tiden at forsøge at flytte medlemslandene tættere på hvad OECD kalder for *Better Policies for Better Lives* kalder jeg i afhandlingen for designaspekter ved landerapporterne (*design dimensions*), og det er disse, jeg særligt er interesseret i at forstå og beskrive i afhandlingen, som svarer på den overordnede problemformulering om hvordan

landerapporterne bliver designet til at indgå i økonomiske debatter i medlems-landene.

Afhandlingens bidrag består i konkrete, empiriske beskrivelser af hvordan arbejdet med at skrive landerapporterne er organiseret, og af hvordan landerap-porterne og de økonomiske budskaber får den form, som organisation tilstræ-ber. Derigennem giver den institutionelle etnografi ikke alene viden om de konkrete praksisser, men tilbyder også ny, empirisk forankret indsigt i, hvad det er for en institutionel rolle, som OECD indtager som international videns-organisation og i forhold til nationale debatter.

Den institutionelle etnografi tager afsæt i den antagelse, at et centralt ken-detegn ved ekspertorganisationer som OECD er, at deres effekt og gennem-slagskraft bygger på produktion af forskellige former for tekster (rapporter, undersøgelse, lovtekster, forskrifter, standarder, evalueringsformer, data). Denne antagelse bliver den teoretiske ramme for afhandlingen, som i kraft af sociologen Dorothy E. Smiths arbejde analyserer hvordan institutionelle tekster koordinerer institutionel handling. Med afsæt i Smith, definerer jeg relationer-ne mellem OECD og medlemslandenes regeringer og offentlighed som tekst-ligt medierede institutionelle relationer, og analyserer hvordan landerapporter-ne indgår i og koordinerer sådanne institutionelle relationer. Smiths institutio-nelle etnografi og hendes teori om aktive tekster bygger blandt andet på George Herbert Mead og den symbolske interaktionisme, men Smith har på original vis udviklet denne interaktionistiske tilgang, så den fokuserer på teksters materielle forudsætninger for translokal koordinering, og på hvordan tekster kan tilstræbe at skabe social orden ved at forsøge at foregribe og organisere sin egen aktive-ring som tekst. Med denne teoretiske forståelsesramme undersøger afhandlin-gen ikke hvordan landerapporterne bliver modtaget og fortolket, men hvordan landerapporterne bliver designet med bestemte institutionelle formål i sigte. Det er ved at analysere dette, at institutionen OECD kommer til syne i sin situ-erede kompleksitet.

Afhandlingen bidrager selvstændigt til forskningen i internationale organi-sationer ved at inddrage analytiske perspektiver fra antropologen Annelise Riles og filosoffen og etnografen Helen Verran. Dermed kombinerer afhand-lingen to beslægtede – men typisk adskilte – tilgange til institutionel etnografi: Den STS[70]-inspirerede tilgang fra Riles og Verran, og den sociologiske institu-tionelle etnografi, som Dorothy E. Smith repræsenterer. Dette tilfører analysen et skærpet fokus på de transnationale, professionelle økonomiske relationer, som analyseres i afhandlingen. Yderligere bidrager denne integrerede teori-

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[70] STS står for Science, Technology & Society-studies.

ramme til at analyserne kan udfolde flere forskellige aspekter ved det, der er kaldt for landerapporternes designdimension, eftersom Riles, Smith og Verran – deres fællestræk til trods – har ganske forskellige tilgange til den institutionelle etnografi. Riles analyserer vidensproduktion og organisering som en æstetisk praksis – videns former – og åbner dermed for analyser af hvordan sådanne æstetiske praksisser former OECD's institutionelle rolle. Helen Verran analyserer tal og analyser semiotisk – som tegn i forskellige mulige institutionelle konstellationer af viden og policy, og Dorothy E. Smith fokuserer – blandt andet – på tekstligt medierede handlingssekvenser og symbolsk koordinering, og lægger dermed op til analyser af hvordan man ved at se på disse koordinerende praksisser kan tydeliggøre OECD's institutionelle rolle. Med andre ord ligger fokus i afhandlingen på selve arbejdet i OECD. I stedet for at stille mig i Danmark og studere modtagelsen af OECD-viden, har jeg valgt at stille mig i OECD's Economics Department i Paris, og derfra studere *afsendelsen* af de økonomiske budskaber.

Empirisk bygger afhandlingen på interviews, observationer og dokumenter. Det empiriske materiale blev indsamlet på tre datamissioner: Et indledende besøg med interviews, et centralt tre ugers besøg i OECD hvor hovedparten af materialet kom i hus (april-maj 2010), og et tredje besøg, hvor jeg præsenterede og drøftede foreløbige analyseresultater og foretog supplerende interviews. Udover generelle observationer af arbejdets organisering og hverdagen i Economics Department, foretog jeg strukturerede observationer af en række forskellige feedback-møder, hvor form og indhold af landerapporterne blev diskuteret, samt af peer review-høringerne, hvor landerapporternes evaluering af medlemslandets økonomi bliver diskuteret i en kreds af fagøkonomiske landerepræsentanter fra alle OECD-lande, og af det efterfølgende *redrafting*- materiale. Det er en særlig styrke ved afhandlingen, at jeg har haft adgang til at beskrive, hvad der finder sted ved disse lukkede møder. Udover interviews og observationer analyserer jeg i analysen også dokumenter i form af landerapporter i forskellige versioner af tilblivelse. Jeg har haft elektronisk adgang til disse og kan derfor som en del af datamaterialet inddrage dokumentation af de forskellige revisioner, som rapporterne gennemgår på deres vej fra tidlige udkast og mod publicering. I hver analyse af materialet har jeg lagt vægt på at inddrage og sammenstille både dokumenter (de konkrete formuleringer og revisioner), observationer og interaktioner samt de opfølgende og uddybende interviews.

Den empiriske analyse består af tre analytiske kapitler med hver sin specifikke analysestrategi inspireret af henholdsvis Riles, Smith og Verran. Den første analyse er inspireret af Riles og analyserer organiseringen af arbejdet i

Economics Department og udformingen af de økonomiske budskaber som æstetiske praksisser. Analysen viser, hvordan OECD's budskaber bliver formet, så de opererer på et niveau, som jeg i analysen beskriver som "hverken (alt for) landespecifik eller (alt for) generel". Ved at vise hvordan OECD's måde at gribe arbejdet an på "proportionerer" landerapporterne ind i en særlig zone af "international ekspertise", og ved at fokusere på OECD's metodiske tilgang (den komparative tilgang, evidensbaserede policy-anbefalinger, internationale benchmarks) demonstrerer analysen på en konkret måde, hvordan OECD's definerer sit bidrag til nationale policy-debatter. Kapitlet viser også, hvordan OECD-økonomer i deres praktiske arbejde forholder sig til problematikken om relevansen af *best practice*-tilgangen, og spørgsmålet om hvorvidt "one size fits all".

Afhandlingens anden analyse er inspireret af Smith, og foretager en mere mikrosociologisk analyse af det såkaldte *redrafting*-møde. Analysen beskriver OECD's peer review-system, som på særlig måde organiserer arbejdet med økonomisk analyse og anbefalinger i OECD. Landerapporterne bliver ikke bare udarbejdet af Sekretariatet og præsenteret for landene, men udgør grundlaget for en peer review-eksamination, hvor repræsenter fra samtlige OECD-landes repræsentationer og Sekretariatet diskuterer landets økonomiske performance, udfordringer og giver landet policy-anbefalinger. Det betyder også, at OECD ikke skal betragtes som en fritstående og helt uafhængig tænketank, men i stedet som en international samarbejdsorganisation, hvor arbejdet er baseret på samarbejde og løbende diskussioner med medlemslandene, men hvor rapporten i sidste ende skal forsvares over for peer review institutionen. *Redrafting*-mødet finder sted dagen efter denne peer review og består i at Sekretariatet og det eksaminerede land sammen udarbejder en fælles version af landerapporten, som indarbejder alle væsentlige kommentarer. *Redrafting* giver således et interessant indblik i interaktionen mellem OECD og medlemslande og i de mangfoldige institutionelle hensyn og formål, som den endelige version af landerapporten skal tage hensyn til. Ved at analysere disse slutforhandlinger beskriver afhandlingen hvordan OECD's landerapporter altid skal indeholde et dobbelt budskab: Dels skal de rådgive landet om, hvad det efter OECD's mening bør gøre her og nu for at forbedre sin økonomiske situation, men landerapporterne er også skrevet med henblik på at indgå i OECD's fortløbende arbejde med at definere og markere hvad god økonomisk politik – ifølge organisationen – består i. På den baggrund konkluderer analysen, at peer review systemet udgør et væsentligt element i at forstå designdimensionerne af landerapporterne.

Afhandlingens tredje analyse trækker på Verran og bidrager med en begrebsafklaring af designbegrebet, og af hvad der særligt kendetegner *økonomi-*

ske budskaber til forskel fra *økonomiske kendsgerninger*. Igen bygger analysen empirisk på kvalitativ data fra et feedback møde; denne gang det såkaldte *"Meeting with Directors"* hvor den næsten færdige landerapport skal godkendes af direktørerne. Analysen inddrager både observationer fra mødet, opfølgende interviews og en såkaldt "track changes"-analyse af de tekstlige revisioner, som rapporten gennemgik som følge af mødet. På den baggrund kan analysen blandt andet demonstrere, hvordan Organisationen tilstræber at få budskaberne til at stå klart frem og hvordan analyse og anbefaling i den enkelte rapport må koordineres og evt. justeres i forhold til andre analyser og publikationer, så Organisationen ikke modsiger sig selv, samt hvordan en effektiv *policy story* styrker argumentationen og giver rapportens anbefalinger større gennemslagskraft.

På denne empiriske baggrund – og med afsæt i Verrans skelnen mellem design og epistemologi – definerer kapitlet *økonomiske budskaber* ved at referere til disses fremadrettede, proaktive "ordnende" intentioner (*"design as ordering"*). Således bidrager afhandlingen også med en empirisk anvendelig definition af design-aspektet ved landerapporterne, som definerer design som de aspekter af rapporterne som ikke først og fremmest fungerer som evidens for bestemte policy-beslutninger her og nu, men i stedet bidrager til at fremme en bredere policy-orden.

På denne måde tilstræber afhandlingen gennem sine konkrete, empiriske beskrivelser også at få Organisationen, som står bag OECD's klare budskaber i den offentlige debat, til at komme til syne. Afhandlingen tilbyder læseren et indblik i denne internationale vidensorganisation, giver et indtryk af hvordan det økonomiske arbejde med at overvåge medlemslandenes økonomier, foretage landesammenligninger og anvise *best practice*-politikanbefalinger er organiseret og giver dertil læseren en fornemmelse for Organisationens institutionelle vilje til at indgå i (vores) hjemlige økonomiske debatter med økonomiske argumenter og overbevisende kommunikation.

English Summary

This PhD dissertation, entitled "On 'Being Helpful to the Debate' – Design Dimensions of OECD Economic Surveys", is an institutional ethnography of the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD). The dissertation analyzes the drafting of one of the OECD's flagship publications, the *Economic Surveys*, which at a frequency of no more than two years, monitor the economy of each of the 34 OECD member countries, identify policy areas that the Organization considers could be improved and provide policy recommendations. As such, *Economic Surveys* do not merely give advice to governments, but also provide regular policy inputs to the national policy debates promoting not merely the Organization's evidence best policy recommendations about how countries may improve their economic situation, but also the international cross-country paradigm and the value of evidence-based policy itself.

It is this aspect of the OECD working to bring the policy debates in the member countries closer to what the Organization promotes as "Better Policies for Better Lives" that is the topic of interest of this PhD dissertation. The dissertation asks *how Economic Surveys are designed to engage with economic policy debates in the member countries*. The core of the dissertation research lies in its close examination of textual practice and knowledge-organizing, which become linked to the institutional question of what the organization is trying to achieve. The dissertation goes behind the OECD messages that become part of national policy debates upon publication of the surveys, unfolds the drafting process and analyzes what work the surveys are designed to do. As such, it provides novel insights into the concrete ways by which economic messages from international knowledge organizations engage with national policy debates.

The claim of this dissertation is that this partial, situated, selective interest in concrete processes of knowledge-organizing and textual practice at the Economics Department is vital to understanding the OECD's role in the global knowledge infrastructure. This claim is theoretically supported by drawing on the institutional ethnography of, in particularly, sociologist Dorothy E. Smith. Smith's theorizing of active texts draws on George Herbert Mead and symbolic interactionism, but has been further developed to capture texts' material capabilities for trans-local coordination and their abilities to structure and seek to project their potential reader's responses to the text. As such, it serves to con-

ceptualize the institutional relations between the OECD and national governments and publics in terms of textually mediated institutional relations, and to emphasize the coordinating role of institutional texts like the OECD *Economic Surveys*.

One original contribution of the PhD dissertation is to integrate the analytical approaches of Annelise Riles and Helen Verran into this core conceptual framework from Dorothy E. Smith. This brings together two most often disparate strands of institutional ethnography: The Science, Technology & Society (STS) inspired institutional ethnography of Riles and Verran, and the sociological institutional ethnography of Dorothy E. Smith. This "joining of forces" brings a sharpened focus on the professional economic knowledge claims into the analytical strategy of the dissertation, and furthermore allows the dissertation to unfold multiple aspects of Design Dimensions of Economic Surveys, since Smith, Riles and Verran – besides shared commitments to pragmatism and institutional ethnography – also make use of quite different concepts and analytical strategies. Annelise Riles focuses on the aesthetic of knowledge-organizing and the form of OECD messages, and opens for inquiry into how aesthetic practices shape the institutional role of the OECD. Helen Verran analyzes knowledge claims as signs in various institutional orders connecting knowledge and policy, and opens for inquiry into how different semiotic forms of knowledge practices link to institutional order, and Dorothy E. Smith focuses – among other things – on act-text-act sequences and symbolic coordination, and opens for inquiry into how an understanding of such coordinating practices may clarify the institutional role of the OECD.

Empirically, the dissertation builds on interviews, observations and documents from a three-week field research in April–May 2010, supplemented with one earlier and one later follow-up visit. Interviews were conducted with all country desks, as well as with directors, selected supervisors and key informants at the OECD Economics Department. Documents in the form of draft surveys at different stages of revision are also part of the data, allowing for so-called "track change" analysis: detailed examinations of the textual revisions that the surveys go through in their course of revision. As a special strength, data also includes observations from feedback seminars, peer review hearings as well as from the so-called redrafting session where country and Desk co-produce the final agreed draft of a survey. Taking a qualitative mixed methods approach to ethnographic analysis, the analysis brings together documents, interviews and field notes from observations to account for the drafting process and to bring to the fore how OECD surveys are designed "to be helpful to the debate".

The empirical analysis consists of three analytical chapters. Each chapter analyzes one part of the empirical material, and employs its own set of analytical strategies and theoretical concepts from Riles, Smith and Verran respectively. The first analytical chapter is Riles-inspired and analyzes knowledge-organizing as an aesthetic practice. The analysis demonstrates how OECD messages are shaped to operate at a level described in the analysis as the "zone between the (too) country specific and the (over) general". This is also the title of the analysis. By way of showing how knowledge practices at all levels work to "proportion" OECD messages into this zone of "international expertise", the analysis is able to describe what work *Economic Surveys* are designed to do on the basis of the methodology of the OECD (rankings, benchmarks, evidence-based policy recommendations at the cross-country level). The chapter also describes how the OECD in their practice deals with the "one size fits all" problem of the cross-country, evidence paradigm of the OECD.

A second analysis entitled *"Not (merely) for national consumption"* analyzes what work the surveys are designed to do by way of a close micro-sociological analysis of the so-called redrafting meeting. One distinctive institutional feature about knowledge-organizing at the OECD is the peer review system, where surveys are written to form the basis for a peer review examination of member countries, and the situation of inquiry of this second analysis is the post-peer review redrafting session, where the Secretariat and the country under review work towards a final version of the survey, which accommodates the discussions from the peer review. Here we learn how *Economic Surveys* are not merely written for the national consumption of the country, but also for general OECD consumption "to tell other countries what they should do". Furthermore, the chapter analyses interactions between desk and delegation, and makes explicit how the OECD should not be understood as a disconnected think tank, but as an inter-governmental organization based on ongoing consultations with member countries balanced by the binding commitment to the peer review system. The dissertation concludes that the peer review system and its committee structure accounts for important design dimensions of *Economic Surveys*.

A third analysis entitled *Economic Facts and Economic Messages* analyzes what work the surveys are designed to do through close analysis of a feedback meeting where one draft survey is being prepared for publication by a revision process by the team of directors. Here we see how the messages are made to stand out more clearly, how survey recommendations are coordinated to not contradict with what the Organization is stating or recommending in other surveys and publications, and where central OECD-recommendations are

being included in the draft. Furthermore, the analysis develops an empirically grounded distinction between economic facts and economic messages; and hence a conceptual framework to define design dimensions of *Economic Surveys*. Here, economic messages are defined by doing the on-going, pro-active work of ordering (*design* in Helen Verran's terminology); in contrast to the more classical, epistemological work of the economic fact-providing professional grounds for political decision-making.

Together, the three analyses demonstrate and unfold the concrete processes of knowledge-organizing that prepare *Economic Surveys* to be helpful to policy debates within and across OECD member countries. Beyond this empirical work of demonstrating the concrete practices of knowledge design and knowledge-organizing, the PhD dissertation also contributes with its attempt to conceptually define the OECD work of "Being Helpful to the Debate" in terms of Design as *ordering*; a distinction taken from Verran, who again develops the concept from the pragmatic semiotics of Charles S. Peirce. By using this theoretical framework in empirically grounded analysis of what work the surveys are designed to do, the dissertation is able to clearly define Design dimensions of *Economic Surveys* as the dimensions of the surveys that do not primarily do the indexical work of being evidence for a particular policy decision, but instead do the ordering work of promoting a broader policy order.

As such, the dissertation brings the OECD, and the knowledge processes behind the OECD messages into view, and allows the reader to get a sense of this international, inter-governmental organization, of its practices of knowledge-organizing that produce the country monitoring, cross-country comparisons and evidence-based policy recommendations, and of the Organization's profound objective to move (our) debates with economic arguments and persuasive communication.

MARIA DUCLOS LINDSTRØM

On "Being Helpful to the Debate"
– Design Dimensions of OECD Economic Surveys

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