

Emancipatory boundary critique

A set of questions to support non-experts in critically challenging an expert's suggested solution to a problem and the solution's social and ecological implications.

What is emancipatory boundary critique?	<p>Emancipatory boundary critique consists of a set of questions to empower non-experts to uncover normative assumptions underlying an expert's solution to a problem along with the solution's social and ecological implications. It is one way of using Critical Systems Heuristics, a framework for reflective professional practice developed by Werner Ulrich.</p>
Why should it be applied?	<p>All solutions to a problem include underlying assumptions ("boundary judgments" in Ulrich's terminology). In the critical discussion of these underlying assumptions and their consequences the expert is as much a lay-person as the non-expert. This is why these assumptions must be discussed and decided upon by those who have to bear the consequences.</p>
When should it be applied?	<p>The method serves the critical reflection on, and discussion of, a specific solution to a problem. It can be applied as soon as solutions are developed.</p>
How does it work?	<p>The key to emancipatory boundary critique is the following "Checklist of boundary questions" (Ulrich 2005, p 11), that the non-expert poses to the expert:</p> <p>Sources of Motivation</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1) Who is (ought to be) the client or beneficiary? That is, whose interests are (should be) served? 2) What is (ought to be) the purpose? That is, what are (should be) the consequences? 3) What is (ought to be) the measure of improvement or measure of success? That is, how can (should) we determine that the consequences, taken together, constitute an improvement? <p>Sources of Power</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 4) Who is (ought to be) the decision-maker? That is, who is (should be) in a position to change the measure of improvement? 5) What resources and other conditions of success are (ought to be) controlled by the decision-maker? That is, what conditions of success can (should) those involved control? 6) What conditions of success are (ought to be) part of the decision environment? That is, what conditions can (should) the decision-maker not control (e.g. from the viewpoint of those not involved)? <p>Sources of Knowledge</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 7) Who is (ought to be) considered a professional or further expert? That is, who is (should be) involved as competent provider of experience and expertise? 8) What kind of expertise is (ought to be) consulted? That is, what counts (should count) as relevant knowledge?

- 9) What or who is (ought to be) assumed to be the guarantor of success? That is, where do (should) those involved seek some guarantee that improvement will be achieved – for example, consensus among experts, the involvement of stakeholders, the experience and intuition of those involved, political support?

Sources of Legitimation

- 10) Who is (ought to be) witness to the interests of those affected but not involved? That is, who is (should be) treated as a legitimate stakeholder, and who argues (should argue) the case of those stakeholders who cannot speak for themselves, including future generations and non-human nature?
- 11) What secures (ought to secure) the emancipation of those affected from the premises and promises of those involved? That is, where does (should) legitimacy lie?
- 12) What worldview is (ought to be) determining? That is, what different visions of 'improvement' are (should be) considered, and how are they (should they be) reconciled?

How are thought styles bridged?	Enabling a dialogue on equal footing between the experts who propose solutions and the affected non-experts bridges thought styles.
What's the output/outcome?	The output is a dialogue about a proposed solution, that openly deliberates underlying normative assumptions as well as social and ecological implications. The overall outcome is a broader (and emancipated) understanding of the proposed solution amongst the people involved in the dialog.
Who participates in what role?	At least one non-expert and one expert. For bigger groups, a moderator might be helpful.
What do I need to prepare?	With his background in systems thinking, Ulrich uses expressions that might not be easy to understand (e.g. witness, decision environment, client, guarantor). Each of the twelve boundary questions cited above is therefore followed by a second question (beginning with "That is, ...") that defines the respective boundary category in plain language. To understand the underlying rationale, we recommend reading Critical Systems Heuristics. Further, it is useful to prepare more concrete questions with respect to the solution at stake. Ulrich gives helpful examples of such concrete questions, e.g. for introducing a new type of land use: "I am not sure who among the people in the region will have the means and skills to adopt this new agricultural method; doesn't that mean the plan will serve only those who do have the means and skills?" (emancipatory use of the 'client' question)." (Ulrich, 2005, p 13)
Where can I learn more?	Selected references: Check Ulrich's website www.wulrich.com for additional online information. Ulrich W 2005. A brief introduction to critical systems heuristics (CSH). Milton Keynes, UK: The Open University. Check the online profile on www.transdisciplinarity.ch/toolbox for updated resources (e.g. most recent publications, experience reports, videos, links).

Suggested citation

Pohl C 2020. Emancipatory Boundary Critique. td-net toolbox profile (1). Swiss Academies of Arts and Sciences: td-net toolbox for co-producing knowledge. www.transdisciplinarity.ch/toolbox. doi.org/10.5281/zenodo.3717029

SDGs: The International Sustainable Development Goals of the UN

In this publication, the Swiss Academies of Arts and Sciences make most notably a contribution to SDGs 4, 16, 17:

> sustainabledevelopment.un.org

> eda.admin.ch/agenda2030/en/home/agenda-2030/die-17-ziele-fuer-eine-nachhaltige-entwicklung.html



IMPRESSUM

PUBLISHER

Swiss Academies of Arts and Sciences (a+) • Network for Transdisciplinary Research (td-net) • www.transdisciplinarity.ch • td-net@scnat.ch • @td-net
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ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

For quality assurance of this profile, the publisher thanks the editorial board of the td-net web portal which is elected by the scientific advisory board of td-net. The web portal and its toolbox profiles were initially developed in partnership with the Transdisciplinarity Lab (TdLab), ETH Zurich, and financed by Mercator Foundation Switzerland.

This publication is part of a series of tools and methods compiled in the td-net toolbox for co-producing knowledge. All profiles are identically structured and accessible online.

