



MethodenForum Witten

Notes on the 1st MethodsForum Witten

The first “*MethodsForum Witten*” took place online on March 11-12, 2021. Guided by the question “*Qualitative research with people living with dementia – quo vadis?*”, about 30 experts with an interdisciplinary range of backgrounds – including nursing sciences, social sciences, gerontology, psychology and communication science – from Germany, Austria and Switzerland met for a scientific discourse and networking.

The conference idea was developed by the DZNE (*Deutsches Zentrum für Neurodegenerative Erkrankungen*) site Witten and carried out with the financial support of the *German Dementia Aid Foundation*. The *MethodsForum Witten* is designed as an annual event. Its aim is to bring together experts in qualitative research with people living with dementia, to outline challenges and potentials of selected research approaches and specific methods in application in the research field and to further develop them in a joint effort.

At the center of this launch event was input and discussion on methodological issues in qualitative research with people living with dementia. Taking stock, *Jonathan Serbser-Koal*, representing the scientific team,

explained the background of the idea for the *MethodsForum Witten* and gave an overview of current methodological issues in qualitative dementia research. *Prof. Jo Reichertz* from the Institute of Advanced Study in the Humanities (KWI), Essen, and *Dr. Anja Rutenkröger* as representative of the Dementia Support Stuttgart could be won as impulse speakers. *Jo Reichertz* spoke about the methodological background of his current project *Communication and Dementia*, in which he and his team accompany couples, one of whom is diagnosed with dementia, with observational participation in their everyday life. *Anja Rutenkröger* presented the work of the Dementia Support Stuttgart and drew special attention to the diverse actions for the empowerment of people living with dementia. This was followed by discussion and debate in small groups and in plenary on the basis of guiding questions on the status of method development, the research attitude and the handling of a prevailing deficit orientation in the context of dementia.

At the evening get-together in a relaxed, virtual setting, the discussions that had begun could be continued and deepened and then taken up again in the intensive work phases of the next day with completed and ongoing projects.





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In tandem each, *Dr. Christoph Karlheim* and *Dr. Verena C. Tatzler* guided the participants through specifically applied interview methods: narrative walking and focus groups with people living with dementia. *Dr. Karin Welling* and *Dr. Beatrix Döttlinger* explained the requirements for the use of video analysis. Particular attention was paid to the differences and interfaces between the documentary method and videography and the possibility of detailed micro-analyses of interactions. *Dr. Christian Meier zu Verl* and *Anna-Eva Nebowsky* presented the possibilities under the conditions of ethnographic procedures in nursing homes and in the home environment.

The focused methods (interview, videography, ethnography) each show strengths and weaknesses in the field of qualitative dementia research. At the same time, dementia is a complex phenomenon that requires tailored solutions also in research. It was discussed that this complexity can be addressed by a combination of different disciplines, methods and perspectives adapted with regard to the research question and the research situation.

The topic of participatory research with people with dementia, which is still relatively new in German-speaking countries, is currently of interest to many qualitative

researchers. The potential of these approaches is seen; at the same time, there is still a lack of clarity with regard to the methodological implementation in research projects.

Those working in qualitative research with people with dementia in German-speaking countries bring different epistemological and methodological premises into the discussion (e.g., phenomenological or interactionist). A meta-dialogue about this within this scientific community would create the basis for a fruitful collaboration in which the different perspectives can contribute their respective potential depending on the concrete research question. During the *MethodsForum Witten* it was possible to make the differences visible and discussable in a first step.

Further intensified networking and scientific exchange was welcomed by all participants.

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